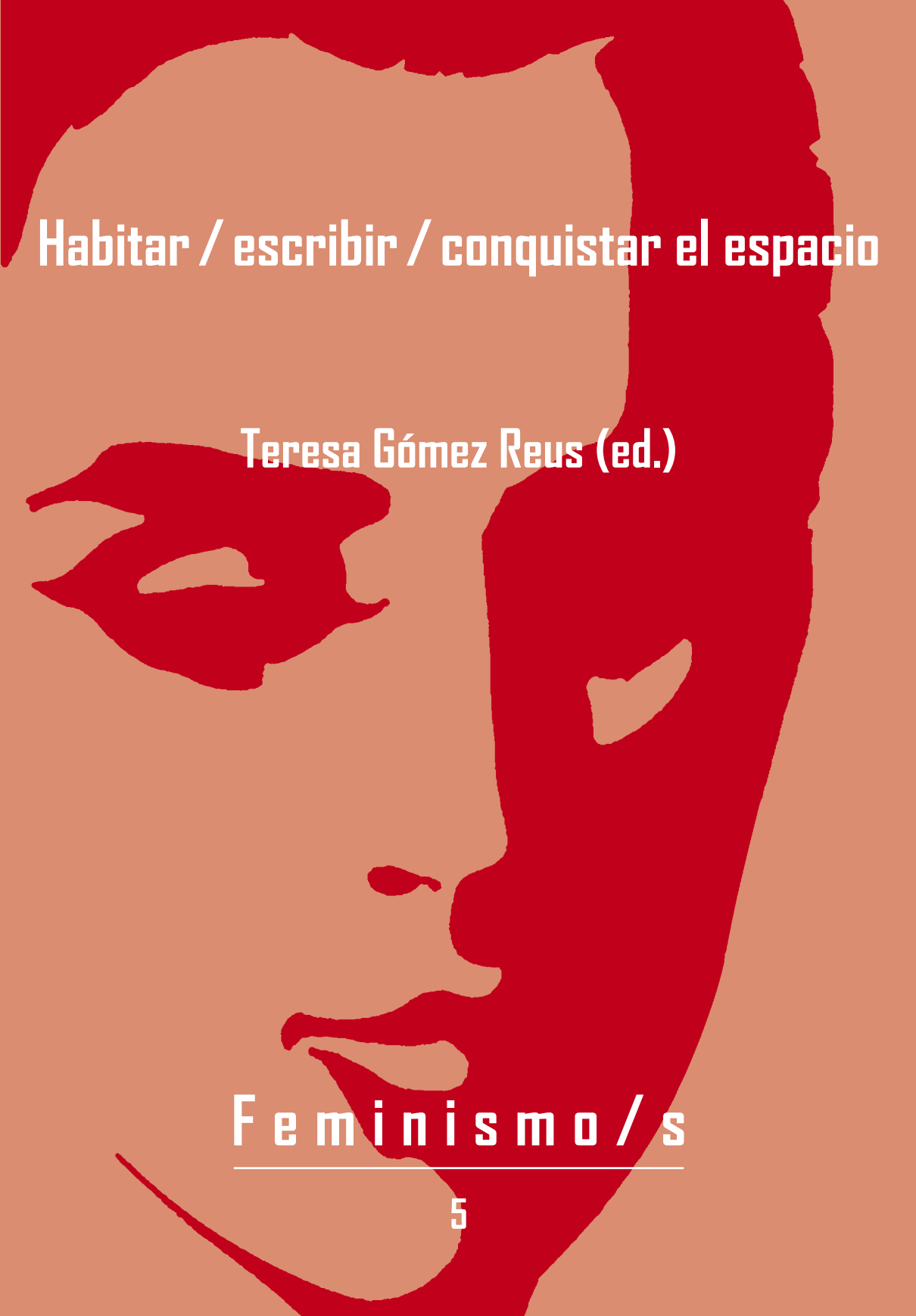

Habitar / escribir / conquistar el espacio

Teresa Gómez Reus (ed.)

Feminismo/s

5

FEMINISMO/S
Revista del Centro de Estudios sobre la Mujer
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INTRODUCCIÓN

TERESA GÓMEZ REUS
Universidad de Alicante

Vivimos, crecemos, soñamos y pensamos en espacios; pero el espacio, como el tiempo, no es un elemento objetivo y semánticamente inocente, y su representación artística nunca resulta arbitraria. Como afirma Aranzazu Usandizaga, la antigua convención que presentaba el espacio como un telón de fondo pasivo en el que situar la acción narrativa ya no se sostiene.[1] Hoy sabemos que los espacios esconden propósitos tan complejos como los que se encuentran en cualquier otro elemento compositivo: interactúan sobre nuestra subjetividad, crean y moldean formas de identidad a la vez que las reflejan. En su *Poética del espacio* (1964) el escritor y filósofo francés Gastor Bachelar afirma que los espacios que habitamos trascienden el mero contorno geométrico y se convierten en compartimentos repletos de sentido, «auténticos diagramas de psicología secreta.»[2] El diseño de las ciudades o la arquitectura y decoración de las casas, por ejemplo, nunca son neutros e indiferentes a la experiencia humana: proporcionan información sobre las formas de vida de sus habitantes; expresan sus necesidades, sus prácticas sociales, su escala de valores y sus hábitos intelectuales o morales. Fredric Jameson, en su ensayo «La arquitectura y la crítica de la ideología», sostiene que el espacio socialmente construido conlleva invariablemente una carga ideológica[3], y otros historiadores de la cultura han enfatizado la dimensión ontológica del espacio habitable: repercute en la forma en que vivimos y nos presentamos ante al mundo.

En las obras pictóricas y literarias la representación del espacio ofrece pistas fundamentales sobre la organización de una cultura. El uso jerárquicamente asimétrico del espacio según adscripciones de género, raza, etnia o clase social desvela aspectos centrales del orden social, y los efectos que para las mujeres

1. USANDIZAGA, Aranzazu: «Anita Brookner and the Politics of Space», ponencia presentada en el 7º Congreso Internacional de ESSE (English Society for the Study of English), Zaragoza 2004.
2. BACHELARD, Gaston: *La poética del espacio*, Madrid, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1886, p. 25.
3. JAMESON, Fredric: «Architecture and the Critique of Ideology», en J. Ockman (comp.): *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology,* Princeton, Princeton Architectural Press, 1985, pp. 51-87.

ha tenido su histórica reclusión en lo doméstico han sido en general demoledores. La tradicional separación de las esferas públicas y privadas, que durante siglos asignó lugares diferentes a hombres y mujeres, ha hecho casi inviable para las mujeres el cultivo de los patrones clásicos de géneros directamente relacionados con el mundo de la exploración y la aventura, o la elección de determinados temas, ángulos de enfoque o escenarios. El *Bildungsroman* o novela de formación, por ejemplo, ha inscrito de forma muy patente esas diferencias: mientras que en novelas como *El aprendizaje de Wilhelm Meister* o *Huckleberry Finn* el proceso de crecimiento personal y el acceso al conocimiento empírico están ligados al desplazamiento literal y geográfico del héroe, en la novela de formación femenina el viaje suele ser simbólico o metafísico. Este viaje interior raramente concluye de manera satisfactoria en la historia de la literatura escrita por mujeres, especialmente en las obras anteriores a la segunda mitad del siglo veinte. La exclusión de la protagonista de la esfera pública de la educación y del trabajo significativo suele desembocar en imágenes de parálisis, alterando así radicalmente los patrones del *Bindungroman*,[4] y es raro el *künstlerroman*, o novela de formación del artista, que teniendo como protagonista una mujer no registre un movimiento descendente o regresivo. En los anales de la literaria anglosajona encontramos muchos ejemplos en este sentido. Así, obras como *El despertar* (1899), de Kate Chopin; *The Story of Avis* (1877), de Elisabeth Stuart Phelps; «La habitación del papel amarillo» (1899), de Charlotte Perkins Gilman, o incluso *Sula* (1973), de Toni Morrison, presentan mujeres creadoras o estetas cuya dificultad para salir del estrecho lugar marcado por la cultura se suele saldar con la muerte o la locura.

En la historia de la pintura, el desigual uso y disfrute del espacio público en virtud del género ha tenido repercusiones devastadoras para las mujeres artistas. No es casual que hasta el siglo veinte éstas hayan retratado sobre todo interiores domésticos[5] y que apenas haya habido pintoras célebres hasta la llegada del impresionismo, un movimiento que desplazó los grandes temas históricos y legitimó los asuntos de la vida privada. De hecho, el limitado acceso de las mujeres al mundo socialmente heterogéneo de la calle se ha puesto de manifiesto en los testimonios y estrategias vitales de numerosas artistas y escritoras del pasado. Un ejemplo revelador lo encontramos en el diario de la pintora naturalista Marie Bashkirtseff, quien en 1879 expresaba su frustración por no poder pintar, sin suscitar comentarios burlones, en escenarios como calles, puentes o campos:

> «Añoro la libertad de deambular por la calle sola, de entrar y salir a mi aire, de poderme sentar en Las Tullerías y en los jardines de Luxemburgo, de pararme ante

4. Annis Pratt ha acuñado el término «the Growing-up Grotesque Archetype» para referirse al proceso de crecimiento frustrado por la norma social, tan evidente en obras literarias que versan sobre el desarrollo personal de una joven. Véase su estudio *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 1981.
5. Véase: Cherry, Deborah: *Painting Women. Victorian Women Artists*, Londres y Nueva York, Routledge, 1993.

> los escaparates de las tiendas artísticas, de entrar en iglesias y museos, de callejear por la noche por la parte antigua; eso es que añoro, y sin esa libertad es imposible convertirse en una auténtica artista.»[6]

Mucho más conocido es el caso de la escritora francesa George Sand, quien al principio de su carrera se travestía de hombre para poder recorrer de forma libre y anónima las nuevas palestras de Paris y saborear sus espectáculos. Como la pintora naturalista del siglo diecinueve Rosa Bonheur, que se hacía pasar por hombre para poder visitar mataderos e hipódromos con el fin de estudiar a los animales que dibujaba, George Sand se camuflaba para acceder a lugares que a una dama le estaban tácitamente vedados.

> «Me confeccioné un *redingote-guérite* de un sufrido paño gris, con pantalón y chaleco a juego. Complementado con un sombrero gris y una larga bufanda de lana, me transformé en un perfecto estudiante de primer curso. No se puede expresar con palabras el placer que me daban mis botas: de buena gana hubiera dormido con ellas, como solía hacer mi hermano cuando obtuvo su primer par. Con sus suelas bien claveteadas me sentía segura sobre el asfalto. Volaba de un extremo a otro de Paris. Me sentía capaz de dar la vuelta al mundo. Y con mi vestimenta nada podía temer. Salía a la calle hiciera el tiempo que hiciera, volvía a cualquier hora, me sentaba en el gallinero de los teatros. Nadie reparó jamás en mí y nadie se dio cuenta de mi disfraz... Nadie me reconoció, nadie me miró ni puso objeciones a mi proceder; yo era como una molécula perdida en la inmensa multitud.»[7]

La experiencia del anonimato en sitios públicos, los efímeros e impersonales contactos callejeros o la posibilidad del paseo tranquilo y de la observación fueron descritos como estilos arquetípicos de la experiencia moderna por Baudelaire, y más tarde analizados largamente por Walter Benjamín y George Simmel. Pero no es hasta la década de los años ochenta cuando la sociología, la crítica del arte y la teoría literaria reparan en que estos modelos y versiones de la modernidad, propuestos hasta ese momento como «universales», derivan en realidad de experiencias masculinas. A finales del siglo diecinueve, las mujeres de la clase media estaban confinadas en la esfera privada (si no siempre en la realidad, sí en la ideología), y el mundo público del trabajo, de la vida urbana, bares y cafés le estaba vedado a la mujer respetable. Algunos trabajos han señalado que la aparición de los grandes almacenes hacia 1870 contribuyó a legitimar la presencia de la mujer respetable en lugares públicos[8]. Sin embargo, estas vivencias, al igual que las de las mujeres trabajadoras que atravesaban la ciudad camino al trabajo, no han formado parte del inventario de la modernidad ofi-

6. Citado en Adler, Kathleen y Garb, Tamar: *Berthe Morisot*, Londres, Phaidon, 1987, p. 16. Mi traducción.
7. Citado en Wolff, Janet: *Feminine Sentences. Essays on Women and Culture*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 41. Mi traducción.
8. Sobre el desarrollo de este fenómeno en Londres véase: Walker, Lynn: «Vistas of pleasure: women consumers of urban space in the west end of London, 1850-1900», en *Cracks in the Pavement: Gender, Fashion, Architecture*, Londres, Sorella, 1993. Sobre el tratamiento literario de este tema, véase: Bowlby, Rachel: *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola*, Nueva York, Methuen, 1985.

cial, que ha establecido una definición de sus prácticas y sus temas derivada de experiencias históricamente masculinas, y por tanto de índole sesgada.

Uno de los estudios pioneros que se ha ocupado de las repercusiones que la «separación de las esferas» tuvo en las artes ha sido «Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity», donde Griselda Pollock articula las diferencias sociales, económicas y psicológicas entre ser artista mujer u hombre en el París de finales del siglo diecinueve[9]. En concreto, su estudio analiza cómo la relación desigual en el acceso y disfrute del espacio público afectó la trayectoria profesional de pintoras impresionistas como Berthe Morrisot y Mary Cassat, y explica que sus cuadros despliegan una experiencia del espacio que difiere notablemente de la de sus colegas varones. Frente al extenso género de bares, cabarets, cafés y burdeles de Manet, Degas o Picasso, donde las mujeres de las clases más desposeídas (camareras, artistas de music hall, prostitutas...) adquieren visibilidad como objetos del deseo masculino, las mujeres artistas captaron sobre todo interiores domésticos, ámbitos no urbanos y espacios fronterizos como ventanas, balcones y verandas, generalmente captados en ángulos dislocados que sugieren constricción. Pollock demuestra, además, que esta vivencia del espacio diferenciada en virtud del género y la clase social contribuyó enormemente a la exclusión de las pintoras de los cánones del nuevo arte, que institucionalizó contenidos relativos a la sexualidad masculina y su intercambio comercial (*Olimpia*, *Desayuno sobre la hierba*, *Una barra en el Folies-Bergère, Las señoritas de Aviñón*...) y dejó fuera otros temas y lenguajes artísticos más afines a las posibilidades visuales de las mujeres artistas.

También Janet Wolff ha observado que el menor acceso de las mujeres creadoras a los espacios públicos de la ciudad ha tenido como resultado su invisibilidad en los anales de la modernidad, al tiempo que ha puesto de manifiesto las contradicciones entre la configuración social de la feminidad y la noción del artista moderno que estableció Baudelaire en su conocido manifiesto. En «El pintor de la vida moderna» (1863), uno de los textos fundadores de la modernidad pictórica y literaria, Baudelaire hacía un llamamiento en pro de un arte que sacara a relucir la fugacidad del momento; una forma nueva de expresión que cobraba imagen en la figura del *flâneur* (el paseante y observador urbano), el arquetipo del nuevo artista que deambula de forma libre y anónima por la ciudad, registrando el animado espectáculo de sus calles. En el influyente trabajo «The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity» Janet Wolff ahonda en los modos en que esta actividad era incompatible para las mujeres pintoras o escritoras. Su tesis, compartida por otras investigadoras anglosajonas y alemanas,[10] es que el *flâneur* ha sido una figura arquetípicamente masculina,

9. Pollock, Griselda: «Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity», en *Vision and Difference. Femininity, Feminism and the History of Art*, Londres y Nueva York, Routledge, 1988, pp. 50-90.

10. Wilson, Elizabeth: «The Invisible *Flâneur*», *New Left Review,* 191 (1992), pp. 90-110. Ferguson, Priscilla: «The *Flâneur* on and off the Streets of Paris», en K. Tester (comp.): *The Flâneur*, Londres, Routledge, 1994, pp. 22-42. Von Ankum, Katherina (ed.): *Women in the Metropolis*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997.

que encarna las posibilidades de una observación del espacio exterior, libre, autónoma y sin cortapisas, a la que las mujeres no tuvieron acceso.[11] Aunque estas tesis han sido matizadas por la profesora Deborah Parsons en su estudio *Streetwalking the Metrópolis. Women and the Literature of Modernity* (2000), lo cierto es que desde el punto de vista histórico y literario todavía prevalece la visión de la ciudad como un territorio casi exclusivamente representado, disfrutado, diseñado o teorizado por varones. Tanto los documentos sociológicos a los que tenemos acceso como los testimonios de muchas autoras y pintoras del pasado indican que, al menos en el contexto europeo, las posibilidades de una interacción amplia y fructífera entre la mujer y la ciudad han sido extraordinariamente limitadas. Por ello, en un trabajo reciente Janet Wolff recomienda prescindir de la figura del *flâneur*, cuestionar su carácter de icono de la modernidad, y repensar la simplista división entre espacio público y privado para describir una modernidad en la que la mujer no figure como el sujeto creador ausente[12].

Pero si el espacio público, especialmente el espacio urbano, ha estado (al menos en la ideología) parcialmente vedado a las mujeres hasta casi la Primera Guerra Mundial, el espacio privado tampoco ha implicado para éstas, necesariamente, mayores cotas de intimidad y de dominio. Hasta buena parte del siglo veinte, las viviendas del proletariado, apiñadas unas junto a otras en espacios mal diseñados, apenas dejaban resquicio a la intimidad. Como ha escrito la socióloga S.J. Kleinberg (refiriéndose a los Estados Unidos y buena parte de Europa), «las casas de las clases proletarias carecían de las separaciones necesarias para crear mundos privados. [En verano] las puertas y las ventanas permanecían abiertas a la calle, de tal forma que cualquiera que pasara por allí podía ver, oír y oler lo que ocurría dentro de las casas.»[13] En el polo opuesto del orden social, Junger Habermas ha analizado el proceso histórico según el cual la sala de estar de las clases adineradas fue perdiendo desde el siglo diecisiete su carácter exclusivamente familiar e íntimo a favor de una función ornamental y pública. Como analiza en *La transformación estructural de la esfera pública* (1979), el acento decorativo del espacio doméstico restringió aún más el rol de la mujer burguesa en la casa, cada vez más aislada en estructuras arquitectónicas compartimentadas en zonas masculinas o femeninas, principales o secundarias: los hombres habitando los lugares de mayor influencia, como el despacho y la biblioteca, las mujeres de la familia el cuarto de estar, y las sirvientas el área de la cocina[14].

La ecuación domesticidad-privacidad desde luego no siempre se ha cumplido de forma satisfactoria, como han hecho patente escritores como Henry James (pensemos en *Retrato de una dama*) y Edith Wharton (*la casa de la alegría* sería

11. Ver el capítulo «The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity,» en Wolff, Janet: *Feminine Sentences. Essays on Women and Culture…*, op.cit.
12. Wolff, Janet: *AngloModern. Painting and Modernity in Britain and the United States*, Ithaca y Londres, Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 68.
13. S.J. Kleinberg: «Gendered space: housing, privacy and domesticity in the nineteenth-century United States», en I. Bryden & J. Floyd (comp.): *Domestic Space. Reading the nineteenth-century interior*, Manchester y Nueva York, Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 154. Mi traducción.
14. Ibíd., p. 148.

otro ejemplo elocuente). El sociólogo norteamericano Thorstein Veblen conoció bien la vertiente publicitaria, ferozmente abierta y ajena a cualquier reticencia, que puede adquirir el espacio doméstico cuando sus atributos más esenciales quedan trastocados por un orden social injusto. En su interesantísimo y vigente ensayo *Teoría de la clase ociosa* (1899), Veblen analiza los modos en que las casas de los grandes magnates de la industria y los nuevos millonarios de finales de siglo se convirtieron, en su mismo diseño y estructura, en un mero símbolo social: cuanto más adinerado y poderoso era su dueño, más desocupada debía mostrarse su mujer, y más grandiosas y brutalmente abiertas, y en consecuencia menos narratológicas (menos aptas para la lectura y la conversación reflexiva) sus estancias. De esta forma, la esposa e hijas de la alta burguesía y de la aristocracia financiera se veían confinadas en un espacio «privado» cuyos recintos –ideados, diseñados y financiados por varones– tenían una función pública, lo que las hacía mucho más vulnerables al control del aparato social.

Esta falta de soberanía y control sobre el espacio habitable explica la importancia que adquiere «la habitación propia» que reclama Virginia Woolf. En este texto la escritora británica reivindica la posesión del espacio privado como un paso necesario para la conquista del espacio público. No es de extrañar que tantas escritoras de la tradición occidental, desde santa Teresa de Ávila e Inés de la Cruz a George Sand, Emily Dickinson, Ellen Glasgow, Edith Wharton, Daphne du Maurier, Doris Lessing, Carmen Martí Gaite, Elizabeth Bishop o Anita Brookner, hayan establecido una relación tan intensa con el espacio vivido. Emily Dickinson, por ejemplo, se convirtió en una reclusa voluntaria en su dormitorio de Nueva Inglaterra y desde allí escribió cientos de poemas de una audacia estilística que a su muerte asombraron al mundo literario. Edith Wharton y Daphne du Maurier no sólo diseñaron o remodelaron sus propias casas y jardines; también escribieron ensayos sobre diseño de interiores, elaboraron complicadas metáforas arquitectónicas en sus obras y otorgaron una gran carga semiótica a sus casas narrativas. En la mayoría de los casos, además, el espacio arquitectónico no sólo ha sido un«texto» significativo dentro de los textos, sino también el recurso o el medio que ha hecho posible la escritura. En este sentido es significativo que muchas escritoras se hayan referido a sus casas en términos casi idénticos de posesión y violento deseo. Al ver la vetusta «Menabilly» (la mansión que inspiró «Manderly» en *Rebeca*) en medio del paisaje salvaje de Cornualles, Daphne du Maurier decidió que la inmensa y descuidada casona –inadecuada a todas luces para una mujer con hijos pequeños– «sería suya», y a punto estuvo de arruinarse en el intento. Lo que la atrajo de aquel espacio sin acondicionar y en medio de la espesura fue su romántico aislamiento, que le permitió escribir y dar la espalda a una vida social por la que sentía un gran rechazo. Anteriormente a ella, Edith Wharton había iniciado su carrera con un libro sobre diseño de interiores, *The Decoration of Houses* (1897), escrito en colaboración con el arquitecto Ogden Codman. Este primer libro, en el que aboga por un estilo sobrio y armonioso, radicalmente opuesto a los interiores ostentosos de la alta burguesía estadounidense, anticipa la que será una de sus preocupaciones más persistentes: la creación de espacios habitables, un aspecto éste que surge en su

vida y en su obra con tanta intensidad que se convierte en obsesivo. No parece casual que *The Decoration of Houses*, el diseño de su primera casa propia, y la primera publicación de sus cuentos se acometieran conjuntamente, y que utilizara una metáfora espacial, «el jardín secreto», para referirse a su escritura.

La necesidad de poseer un espacio propio parece ser un a priori en la historia de la literatura por mujeres en distintos contextos históricos, políticos y socioculturales. La escritora afro-americana Harriet Jacobs –una antigua esclava huida del Sur–concluye su autobiografía *Linda. Incidentes in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) confesándole al lector que su relato «termina con la libertad; y no con el final tradicional del matrimonio.» Aunque ha obtenido una sufridísima y bien ganada victoria, fruto de la cual sus hijos también son libres, el sueño de su vida no se ha cumplido del todo: «No tengo una casa propia donde sentarme con mis hijos. Todavía siento unos enormes deseos de tener un espacio que pueda llamar mío, por muy humilde que sea»[15].

El presente número monográfico tiene como propósito contribuir al ambicioso objetivo de explorar cómo las mujeres escritoras han imaginado, configurado, vivido y narrado el espacio, tanto doméstico como público, urbano o silvestre, desde finales del siglo diecinueve hasta la actualidad. Organizado de manera cronológica, el volumen parte de los contextos socio-culturales de la segunda parte del siglo diecinueve hasta llegar a la actualidad, y abarca diversos géneros y manifestaciones literarias, como la novela, la autobiografía y la poesía por autoras procedentes tanto del canon y su reciente apertura (Mina Loi, Carmen Martín Gaite, Janet Frame) como de las literaturas periféricas (Montserrat Roig, Maya Angelou, Eavan Boland, Lupe Gómez...) y la cultura popular (L. M. Montgomery). Conceptualmente, el monográfico cubre una cartografía modesta pero significativa de autoras de diversas geografías, entre ellas Canadá, Nueva Zelanda, Reino Unido, los Estados Unidos, Irlanda y España; con espacios que van de la casa a la tienda, el patio y la calle; desde el ámbito del teatro y el periodismo victorianos a la literatura del *flâneur*, la crítica poscolonial y la ecocrítica.

En el primer ensayo, «Imagined Space: Interiors in the Works of L. M. Montgomery», **Marilyn Casto** pone de manifiesto el carácter simbólico, extraordinariamente cargado de significado, del espacio doméstico en la obra de la escritora canadiense L.M. Montgomery. Su estudio evidencia la forma reiterada en que esta autora se sirve de imágenes arquitectónicas y espaciales para articular opiniones y actitudes veladamente subversivas, que Montgomery tuvo que expresar de manera oblicua en la puritana Canadá de finales del siglo diecinueve. En sintonía con estudios como el ya citado de Gaston Bachelard o el más reciente *Dwelling in the Text*[16], el trabajo de Casto destaca la íntima conexión existente entre casa y psique, entre casa y escritura, entre casa y texto. También entronca con las tesis presentadas por Gilbert y Gubar en su conocido estudio

15. Jacobs, Harriet: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 210. Mi traducción.
16. Chandler, Marilyn: *Dwelling in the Text. Houses in American Fiction*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991.

La loca del desván. La escritora y la imaginación literaria del siglo diecinueve, donde sus autoras argumentan que las mujeres escritoras del pasado se han valido de lenguajes oblicuos y en doble dirección para comunicar mensajes que, por diversas razones, no podían ser verbalmente expresados.[17] Como la histeria, que según Elaine Showalter constituye un «protolenguaje» según el cual el cuerpo expresa lo lingüísticamente inexpresable[18], también las estructuras espaciales y la decoración constituyen una «sintaxis de signos» que lanza mensajes codificados a una audiencia atenta.

En el siguiente trabajo «Public Women, Private Stage?: The Debate on 'Separate Spheres' in Victorian Women's 'Actress Novels'», **Corinne Francois Deneuve** aborda el campo nada explorado de las «novelas de actriz». El ensayo analiza cómo estas novelas, invariablemente centradas en una actriz de teatro, se valen del tropo de la mujer con éxito en la esfera pública para socavar la ideología de la «separación de las esferas» y su imagen de feminidad icónica, el «ángel del hogar». Pero el ensayo también argumenta que la irrupción femenina en el espacio público del teatro no se hace sin coste para estas heroínas, que se ven incapaces de reconciliar sus deseos de vida privada con su rutilante identidad pública. De esta forma, las «novelas de actriz» suponen un curioso testimonio del tipo de conflictos que atravesaron las obras de numerosas escritoras y pintoras del pasado, especialmente en momentos históricos (como fue la segunda mitad del siglo diecinueve) donde se entremezclan y compiten diferentes versiones de feminidad aceptable; entre ellas, el «ángel del hogar» y la «nueva mujer».

En la época victoriana, los límites de la respetabilidad de las mujeres que salían a la esfera pública con propósitos profesionales fue una de las cuestiones más controvertidas, pues si bien eran conocidas las penurias de las mujeres de las clases medias que se quedaban sin recursos, se suponía que las jóvenes que trabajaban fuera de casa perdían sus referencias de clase, sacrificaban su pedigrí social y ponían en peligro su pureza. En diálogo con el ensayo de Corinne Francois Deneve, el trabajo de **Loretta Stec**, «The Invasion of Fleet Street: Women and Journalism in Englad 1880-1950», aborda el tratamiento literario de mujeres que iniciaron una redefinición de la feminidad no sólo en su dimensión privada, sino también en términos de trabajo remunerado y profesionalización artística. En este estudio Loretta Stec se centra en la evolución de la imagen literaria de la mujer periodista entre 1880 y 1950, desde la perspectiva más conservadora y cargada de prejuicios del escritor Robert Barr a la exploración más ambiciosa y psicológicamente matizada de Rose Macaulay y Rebecca West. Entreverado con el estudio literario, el ensayo aporta datos de gran interés sobre la apro-

17. Véase capítulo segundo de *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literay Imagination*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1979. Traducción al castellano como *La loca del desván. La escritora y la imaginación literaria del siglo diecinueve*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1989.
18. Showalter, Elaine: «Hysteria, Feminism, and Women's Language», conferencia presentada en el Congreso Internacional «La Ciudad que Habitan las Mujeres». V Centenario de la Ciudad de Alicante, CAM, Alicante, 1990. Agradezco a Elaine Showalter la posibilidad de citar su texto manuscrito.

piación femenina del espacio del periodismo en los años cruciales en que se luchaba por el sufragio femenino en Inglaterra; esto es, entre 1903 y 1928. Estas heroínas a la conquista de Fleet Street (albergue histórico de los principales diarios británicos) cuestionan las ideas más hegemónicas sobre la «auténtica feminidad», pero la calidad y el alcance de su contribución a los debates de la esfera pública está en directa proporción con el lugar, generalmente muy estrecho, que les confiere la cultura.

En el ensayo siguiente, «Negotiating Boundaries: The Economics of Space and Gender in Mina Loy's Early Poems», **Laura Scuriatti** aborda la interrelación entre espacio y género, y entre arquitectura y cuerpo, en la obra poética temprana de Mina Loy, una de las autoras hoy más reconocidas de las vanguardias anglosajonas de principios del siglo veinte. El trabajo estudia la función retórica de espacios domésticos y fronterizos, como puertas y ventanas, en poemas como «»Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots» y «The Effectual Marriage», en los cuales el tratamiento paródico de la disposición y división del espacio refleja, al tiempo que subvierte, la construcción social de la feminidad y la masculinidad, y su segregación en esferas y lugares jerárquicamente concebidos. Como señala el artículo, estos poemas tempranos de Loy constituyen un ejemplo emblemático de cómo muchas mujeres de las vanguardias del primer tercio del siglo veinte confirieron a sus experimentaciones formales de una fuerte intencionalidad política. Pues ambos poemas cuestionan los modos en que los mecanismos sociales, ideológicos y espaciales han establecido como «natural» la diferenciación jerárquica entre los dos sexos, al tiempo que se han ocultado las raíces e implicaciones económicas que tan segregación comporta.

Como he comentado anteriormente, uno de los aspectos más novedosos de los estudios literarios –impulsado por el ya citado ensayo de Janet Wolff «The Invisible *Flâneuse*»– es la apropiación y percepción de las mujeres escritoras o pintoras del espacio urbano. En «Streetwalking the Metropolis: Janet Frame's *The Envoy from Mirror City*» **Lourdes López Ropero** explora un aspecto hasta ahora inadvertido en la obra autobiográfica de la escritora neocelandesa Janet Frame: su relación con las calles y lugares públicos en el Londres de los años cincuenta. El trabajo relaciona su auto-presentación en *The Envoy from Mirror City* con la literatura y la figura del *flâneur*, y argumenta que la condicional marginal de Frame como mujer extranjera y súbdita de las colonias le otorgó una libertad de movimientos, una agudeza de percepción y una sensibilidad hacia lo diferente que enriquecieron sobremanera sus experiencias y escritos. El ensayo traza la gradual apropiación de Janet Frame de los espacios públicos de la metrópolis, desde sus primeros paseos por las calles y autobuses de los distritos marginales hasta la llegada al corazón intelectual de la ciudad, el Strand, que supone la culminación de su experiencia londinense y su visibilidad en la esfera de la escritura. De esta forma, el ensayo de Lourdes López amplía la línea de investigación inicia por Griselda Pollock, Janet Wolff y Deborah Parsons, aportando nuevos datos sobre la presencia histórica de las mujeres que, salvando numerosos prejuicios, han traspasado barreras para irrumpir con éxito en los espacios públicos de la gran urbe.

La interrelación entre mujeres y espacio urbano también es objeto de análisis en el trabajo de **M. Àngels Francés Díez**, «Finestra endins i enfora: Sobre algunes protagonistes de Montserrat Roig». En él M. Àngels Francés analiza las distintas formas de vivir el espacio de las tres protagonistas de la trilogía *Ramona, adéu*, situada en la república, la Guerra Civil, el franquismo y los primeros años de la transición. Contrastando con el caso anterior, en esta obra, como argumenta la autora, no se puede hablar de una relación vital o artísticamente fructífera entre el personaje femenino y la ciudad, algo comprensible si pensamos en las enormes limitaciones que han marcado a las mujeres durante buena parte de nuestra historia. Según Àngels Francés, las incursiones de estas protagonistas por la ciudad de Barcelona –sobre todo las de la más joven– son epidérmicas, vitalmente limitadas e insuficientes, pero constituyen un paso imprescindible en la apropiación del espacio público y profesional que acometerán las heroínas más maduras de Roig en sus dos novelas posteriores, *Els temps de les cireles* y *L'hora violeta*.

Un contexto histórico muy similar es el abordado por **Carmiña Palerm** en «Re-inhabiting Private Space: Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás*». Aquí, sin embargo, la perspectiva cambia para centrarse en los usos y funciones retóricas del espacio doméstico en esta obra de Martín Gaite. En sintonía con parte de las investigaciones más recientes, que debaten la dicotomía simplista entre espacio doméstico y público, Palerm argumenta que en *El cuarto de atrás* Carmen Martín Gaite cuestiona la supuesta falta de trascendencia del espacio doméstico, un espacio que ha sido tratado de forma peyorativa incluso por algunos sectores de la crítica feminista. En este sentido, argumenta el artículo, *El cuarto de atrás* continúa la línea de Virginia Woolf en *La señora Dalloway* al iluminar las actividades y lugares menos reconocidos de las vidas de las mujeres. Pero además, sostiene Palerm, este texto de Carmen Martín Gaite no sólo invierte el valor jerárquico que normalmente asignamos al espacio (según el cual lo doméstico es trivial y lo público, significativo); también sugiere que la relación entre ambos espacios es en realidad mucho más compleja y dialéctica de lo que normalmente se ha admitido. En este caso, el espacio funciona como refugio de un régimen político brutal, pero también como imaginación, sueño, deseo, y sobre todo posibilidad de reconstrucción y recuperación de una memoria traumática colectiva.

Una tesis similar, acometida desde una perspectiva histórico-cultural muy diferente, es la que sostiene **Amaya Fernández Menicucci** en «Homeward Bound: Domestic Space, Identity and Political Agency in Maya Angelou's Autobiography». Este trabajo analiza la representación del espacio doméstico en los seis volúmenes que componen la autobiografía de esta autora afro-americana, desde la casa-tienda de su infancia (donde se gesta su sentido de pertenencia a la comunidad afro-americana) a los espacios domésticos de su vida adulta que posibilitan su salida a la esfera pública del activismo político y la escritura. En cualquiera de los casos, el espacio doméstico está configurado de manera abierta, porosa, no excluyente, inacabada y provisional, en sintonía con la identidad nómada y culturalmente híbrida de la autora, y su sentido de pertenencia a una comunidad en continua evolución. Un aspecto sumamente atractivo de este

ensayo es que complica la división binaria entre espacio público y privado, una división hasta hace poco perpetuada por los estudios históricos, sociológicos y literarios, incluidos los de orientación feminista.

Finalmente, los dos últimos trabajos se sitúan en una rama muy prometedora en los estudios literarios, la ecocrítica. Se trata de un campo de investigación que trabaja en diálogo con disciplinas como la geografía humana y la ecología, y que plantea, entre otras muchas cuestiones, el paralelismo existente entre la marginación o la invisibilidad histórica de la mujer, y la sufrida por la crítica y la literatura que denuncia la explotación del medio ambiente. En este sentido camina el ensayo de **Manuela Palacios González** «How Green was my Valley: The Critique of the Picturesque by Irish and Galician Women Poets», donde su autora revela los modos en que un abanico de mujeres poetas de Irlanda y Galicia están subvirtiendo los códigos de la tradición pastoril, que recrean la naturaleza bien como el lugar de lo sublime, bien como un ámbito idílico de ocio. Frente a los lenguajes estilizados, a menudo nostálgicos, de esta tradición, el trabajo analiza algunas de las estrategias retóricas mediante las cuales estas poetas de Irlanda y Galicia están re-escribiendo la tradición pastoril, haciendo visibles las diferencias de clase y género que se ocultan en la representación bucólica del paisaje.

Por último, el ensayo de **Eva Darias-Beautell** «`The Inner Geography of Home': The Ecofeminsit Ethics of Daphne Marlatt's *Taken*» toma en consideración las aportaciones de geógrafas y antropólogas feministas, como Rose, McDowell, y Spain, y de teóricas como Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler y Trinh Minh-ha con el fin de analizar la novela *Taken*, de la autora canadiense Daphne Marlatt. El trabajo argumenta que dicha novela encierra una propuesta ética frente a algunos de los escenarios en que transcurre la acción: la Guerra del Golfo de 1991 y la invasión japonesa de Malaya durante la II Guerra Mundial. Frente a las retóricas oficiales que en ambos casos produjeron y justificaron la violencia y la emigración de poblaciones enteras, Eva Radias-Beautell analiza los modos en que Daphne Marlatt utiliza el cuerpo femenino, y su armónica fusión con la tierra, como *topos* y tropo alternativo a una cartografía bélica.

Todos estos ensayos están centrados en representaciones metafóricas y la mayoría giran en torno a escritoras en lengua inglesa, pero el debate sobre la organización, implicación y significado del espacio construido, sea éste doméstico o público, rural o urbano, tiene un amplio carácter interdisciplinar, que incluye campos como la historia social, el diseño de interiores, la sociología urbana, la crítica literaria y los estudios culturales. Se trata de un tema de gran actualidad en los foros universitarios[19], al que este número monográfico ha querido contribuir difundiendo desde la literatura formas más conscientes de pensar y leer el espacio habitable.

19. A modo de ejemplo, se acaba de celebrar en el King's College de Londres un congreso titulado «American Women and Public Spaces», organizado por la profesora Janet Floyd, que ha reunido un nutrido grupo de historiadores y críticos literarios en torno al tema.

IMAGINED SPACE: INTERIORS IN THE WORK OF L. M. MONTGOMERY

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Lucy Maud Montgomery, born in 1874 on Prince Edward Island, Canada, and arguably Canada's best known author, published twenty-two books, hundreds of short stories, and assorted poems. The author of at least one children's classic, *Anne of Green Gables*, she has been derided by some critics as the creator of mediocre and sentimental literature.[1] Regardless of the quality of the writing, she was so widely read that the contents of the books are culturally significant. *Anne of Green Gables* has made its way around the world, having been translated into sixteen languages, including Slovak and Portuguese.[2] Interest in her work has long survived her 1942 death, with many of her short stories published in book form during the late twentieth century. Her home province has become a magnet to her fans. Prince Edward Island runs a drama based on *Anne of Green Gables* each summer and stage versions have been produced in several countries.[3] In the 1980s television dramas *Anne of Green Gables, Anne of Avonlea, Jane of Lantern Hill* and a series, *Avonlea*, were all based on Montgomery's books. Prince Edward Island even has a house museum which is furnished according to the fictional Green Gables, thus giving tangible form to Montgomery's literary descriptions.

Like a movie or a stage set, a literary setting establishes nuances and connotations about the characters. An increasing body of research points to the role of houses in the social and psychological lives of inhabitants and to how «household objects involve their owners in a complicated task of creating identity…while also linking themselves with a communal context.»[4] As

1. PHELPS, Arthur L.: *Canadian Writers,* Freeport, New York, Books for Libraries, 1972, p. 85.
2. RUSSELL, Ruth Weber; RUSSELL, D.W. and WILMSHURST, Rea: *Lucy Maud Montgomery: A Preliminary Bibliography*, Waterloo, Ontario, University of Waterloo, 1986, p. xvi.
3. RUSSELL, et. al.: Op. cit., p. xiii.
4. BRYDEN, Inga and FLOYD, Janet (eds.): *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior,* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 7.

design historian Penny Sparke has elucidated, the connection between people and the spaces they occupy is a two way street «whereby individuals have created spaces through which to express themselves and/or others, while those individuals have, in turn, formed their own identities in response to the spaces in which they have found themselves.»[5] Montgomery made full use of these social and psychological dimensions of interiors in work characterized by repetition of ideas and settings and by extensive architectural imagery. Her fascination with houses suggests something beyond mere interest in physical structure—a psychic involvement. So pervasive and detailed are Montgomery's architectural descriptions that the houses virtually emerge as characters, some even with names, such as the Disappointed House of the *Emily of New Moon* series. Her work bears out Gaston Bachelard's contention that «A sort of attraction for images concentrates them about the house,» «one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind.»[6] Montgomery's created world emphasized possessions as keys to personality and emblems of social position. For her, physical possessions denoted habits and attitudes and the books abound in lengthy descriptions of room contents meant to establish various characters' values and beliefs. The very names of many books associate female characters with houses. *Anne of Green Gables, Anne's House of Dreams, Anne of Windy Poplars, Anne of Ingleside, Emily of New Moon,* and *Pat of Silver Bush* all pair the protagonist with her house, giving equal billing to both. Protagonists spend much time day dreaming about future houses (in other words, a future persona) or speculating on the homes of others. Persistent themes include regeneration of abandoned dwellings, the permanent impression of past events and personalities on houses, comparison of plain to fancy houses (to the derogation of the latter), and extensive anthropomorphizing of houses. With few exceptions, Montgomery endowed old houses, laden with accumulated import, with virtues unobtainable from new structures that had not yet borne witness to the lives of inhabitants.

As Alison Lurie pointed out in *Don't Tell the Grown-ups*, many adults overlook subversive images in children's literature.[7] Montgomery's books can be read as undemanding nostalgic paeans to traditional lifestyles, but especially where women and houses are concerned, they embody some of her anger at society's expectations and strictures, as well as frustration at limitations of her own life. Comments on houses provided an opportunity to incorporate feminist ideals and plant subversive messages about women's domestic roles, but working her opinions into architectural analysis softened the impact of attitudes that might otherwise have offended some readers.

5. Mckellar, Susie and Sparke, Penny (eds.): *Interior Design and Identity*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004, p. 2.
6. Bachelard, Gaston: *The Poetics of Space*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1994, pp. 3, 6.
7. Lurie, Alison: *Don't Tell the Grown-ups,* Boston, Little Brown, 1990, p. 4.

The tendency to make human characteristics incarnate in architecture was doubtless stimulated by her reading.[8] Character analysis through interior setting was a common nineteenth-century literary device. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* is recorded in Montgomery's diary as a favorite book.[9] She grew up in the era of domestic advice manuals when many of the magazines of her youth ran articles on architecture and home decoration with emphasis on the nonverbal messages conveyed by housing. As an analysis of parlors has noted, «Architecture was not morally neutral, it actively created either a productive or a destructive society.»[10] Most writers of that era contented themselves with trite references to homes as reflections of domestic harmony and traditional women's roles. In some respects, particularly in the importance placed on the meaning of housing as a social symbol, the ability of house design to influence behavior, and the link of women and houses, she repeated common beliefs of the late Victorian era. Because people who grew up at that time would have been hard pressed to avoid the insistence of domestic advice manuals that interiors reflect character (however trite the usual application) her audience was accustomed to the concept of architectural imagery. Montgomery's use of architectural imagery parallels the work of Sarah Orne Jewett, who held similar beliefs about houses and personality.[11] Despite pervasive cultural pressures, Montgomery, rather than simply repeating Victorian platitudes, incorporated sharp stabs at the smug, the insensitive, and the ostentatious.

Always sensitive to her surroundings and what twenty-first-century culture would call visually literate, Montgomery wrote that her early memories seemed like a series of pictures in what Bachelard might have called «a community of meaning and image.»[12] Her fascination with the visual was reinforced by an interest in photography, including numerous views of houses that held significance for her.[13] The letters and diaries contain detailed descriptions of houses from Prince Edward Island and later of her home in Ontario.[14] On a honeymoon trip to Great Britain, Montgomery made a point of an emotional visit

8. Epperly, Elizabeth Rollins: *The Fragrance of Sweet Grass,* Toronto, University of Toronto, 1992, p. 211. Epperly includes a chapter in which she discusses the role of the home in *Pat of Sliver Bush*, *Mistress Pat*, and *Jane of Lantern Hill.*
9. Rubio, Mary and Waterston, Elizabeth (eds.): *The Selected Journals of L. M. Montgomery, Vol. I 1889-1910,* Toronto, Oxford University, 1985, p. 286.
10. Mcdannell, Colleen: «Parlor Piety: The Home as Sacred Space in Protestant America» in Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (eds.): *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1992, p. 164.
11. Blanchard, Paula: *Sarah Orne Jewett*, New York, Addison-Wesley, 1994, p. 279.
12. Rubio, Mary and Waterson, Elizabeth (eds.): *The Selected Journals*…, op. cit., *Vol. I 1889-1910*, p. 5.
13. Bolger, Francis and Epperly, Elizabeth R.: *My dear Mr. M: Letters to G. B. Macmillan*, Toronto, McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1980, p. 4. Epperly, Elizabeth: «The Visual Imagination of L. M. Montgomery», in Irene Gammel (ed.): *Making Avonlea*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2002, p. 84.
14. Rubio, Mary and Waterston, Elizabeth (eds.): *The Selected Journals*…, op. cit., RUBIO, Mary and Elizabeth Waterston (eds.) *The Selected Journals of L. M. Montgomery Vol. II 1910-1921,* Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1987.

to the house where her grandmother was born.[15] While visiting her American publisher she went to Concord, Massachusetts, to see the houses of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Louisa May Alcott, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.[16] Clearly, physical details of a setting mattered to Montgomery as much as the words that might be spoken in those surroundings. Several fictional houses were based on real structures to which Montgomery felt a particular attachment.[17]

Montgomery buried a considerable amount of social commentary in architectural and home décor descriptions. An unpleasant character, improvident individual, or unhappy life might be suggested by chaotic rooms in dilapidated houses. These tend to appear in direct contrast to better maintained houses. «To Di, accustomed to the beauty and dignity of Ingleside, the room looked like something you had seen in a bad dream.»[18] A number of repellant spaces appear in both books and short stories. Writing of literature and architecture, Marilyn Chandler has referred to dwellings as «embodiments—incarnations that threaten to become incarcerations, doubling the stakes of the precarious human condition that entraps the spirit in the corruption of the flesh and bone or wood and stone.»[19] Those unpleasant interiors placed by Montgomery as indicators of individuals trapped in desperate circumstances tend to have consistent characteristics. These include being small, badly maintained, and shabby. Descriptions included vases with faded paper flowers, crooked pictures, blinds crooked and torn, lack of sunshine, glaring gas jets, and cracked ceilings. What all these houses have in common is the implication that no one cared enough to invest time and energy in producing an attractive space. This sometimes resulted from a character's despond or inability to get along with others. Montgomery described a house full of motherless neglected children as having rugs awry, crooked pictures, and cracked blinds.[20] Another character with an unfulfilled life lives in a home with dusty furniture, faded curtains, and uncleaned lamps.[21] Disjointed lives were lived in disjointed surroundings. The key element for many of the fictional characters living in unpleasant surroundings was deep unhappiness. Mental depression resulting in abandonment of home care is not something one would expect in children's literature. In a time period when proper decoration suggested social position and implied an understanding of what society expected, for a character to neglect to even straighten a picture also implied disregard for the opinions of others.

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15. Bolger, Francis and Epperly, Elizabeth R.: Op. cit., p. 61.
16. Rubio, Mary and Waterston, Elizabeth: *The Selected Journals…*, op. cit., *Vol. II 1910-1921*, p. 32.
17. Ibid., p. 38. Montgomery's journal entry of 27 January 1911 details the sources for *Anne of Green Gables*.
18. Montgomery, L.M.: *Anne of Ingleside*, New York, Bantam, 1981, p. 170. Original publication 1939.
19. Chandler, Marilyn: *Dwelling in the Text*, Berkely, University of California Press, 1991, p. 6.
20. Montgomery, L. M.: *Rainbow Valley*, New York, Bantam, 1985, p. 94. Original publication 1919.
21. Montgomery, L. M.: *Magic for Marigold*, Toronto, Seal, 1988, p. 212. Original publication 1929.

Montgomery was equally capable of pointing a finger at the opposite extreme. In many cases she made fun of stereotypical luxury, providing her readers with a social message about conspicuous consumption. The multitude of objects that filled Victorian parlors brimmed with messages to be decoded by viewers. As Katherine Grier has asserted, «Certainly the Victorian construction of meaning in the parlor, when most fully developed, was a highly artificial and convention-laden exercise—as full of artifice as the memory palace of Renaissance mnemonic theory.»[22] Other research has also cited the «multiple layers of meaning» embodied in furnishings.[23] This plethora of symbolic possessions provided Montgomery with plenty of targets for satire. In one house «departed [ancestors] in atrocious gilt frames wider than the pictures glowered down from walls.»[24] Another contained a «Hideous red-plush sofa covered with wolf skins and cushions.»[25] A parlor was «a rather severe and gloomy apartment, with rigid horsehair furniture, stiff lace curtains, and white antimacassars that were always laid at a perfectly correct angle, except at such times as they clung to unfortunate people's buttons.»[26] Of another parlor a character remarked: «I don't think there has been any sunshine in that drawing-room since the house was built. There was a piano, but I'm sure it could never have been played on. Stiff chairs, covered with silk brocade, stood against the wall…*all* the furniture stood against the wall, except a central marble-topped table, and none of it seemed to be acquainted with the rest.»[27] These descriptions are in keeping with the wide-spread rejection of parlors as wasted overly expensive spaces that permeated late nineteenth-century domestic social commentary.

Condemnation of status seeking people paired with praise for the simple life can be discerned in much literature of the Victorian era. Houses emerge as indicators of emotional and intellectual barrenness existing in dwellings whose inhabitants focused on display, rather than cultivating mental pursuits. Comical Anne, the heroine of *Anne of Green Gables*, has a wild imagination that incorporated visions of interior splendor. As she rhapsodizes about an imaginary room:

> «The floor is covered with a white velvet carpet with pink roses all over it and there are pink silk curtains at the windows. The walls are hung with gold and silver brocade tapestry. The furniture is mahogany. I never saw any mahogany, but it does sound so luxurious. There is a couch all heaped with gorgeous silken cushions, pink

22. Grier, Katherine C.: «The Decline of the Memory Palace: The Parlor After 1890», in Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (eds.): Op. cit., p. 58.
23. Gordon, Jean and Mcarthur, Jan: «American Women and Domestic Consumption, 1800-1920: Four Interpretive Themes», in Nancy F. Cott: *History of Women in the United States: Domestic Ideology and Domestic Work,* New York, K. G. Saur, 1992, p. 220.
24. Montgomery, L. M.: *The Blue Castle*, Toronto, Seal, 1988, p. 14. Original publication 1926.
25. Ibid., p.148.
26. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of Avonlea*, Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1985, p. 183. Original publication 1909.
27. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of Windy Poplars*, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1989, p. 173. Original publication 1936.

and blue and crimson and gold, and I am reclining gracefully on it. I can see my reflection in that splendid big mirror hanging on the wall.»[28]

Anne envisions her parents' house with muslin curtains in all the windows because «Muslin curtains give a house such an air.»[29] As a young girl she was portrayed as not yet having developed the type of self-confidence that could reject commonly held beliefs about desirable home décor. When Anne finally visits a grand house with velvet carpet and silk cushions she reflects that «I've dreamed of such things…But…I don't believe I feel very comfortable with them after all. There are so many things in this room and all so splendid that there is no scope for imagination.»[30] At that point, the character is able to perceive superficiality in acceptance of socially designated desirable housing.

Anne's own transformed room, meant to be read as sensible and tasteful, is described with a floor «covered with a pretty matting, and the curtains…were of a pale green art muslin. The walls, hung not with gold and silver brocade tapestry, but with a dainty apple blossom paper and were adorned with a few good pictures…There was no mahogany furniture but there was a white-painted bookcase filled with books, a cushioned wicker rocker, a toilet table befrilled with white muslin, a quaint, gilt-framed mirror…»[31] Anne had matured into a girl able to appreciate good design and simple homes full of moral and intellectual tokens without excess frills.

Montgomery condemned Victorian clutter, but the symbolism of various items was clearly important to her. Good people were described as caring about their houses, emotionally attached to keepsakes, but not given to display. The suggestion that people were inappropriately expected by society to model their behavior to the room appears in descriptions of spaces that make people nervous about damaging the contents. Most Victorian parlors stressed conventional décor accompanied by equally conventional behavior. «The style and arrangement of parlor furniture suggest that Victorians valued individuals but wished to contain any expressions of individualization within the family group.»[32] Montgomery had little use for mindless conformity, endowing many of her characters with strong-minded determination to march to their own drummers. While staid and proper drawing rooms might be described as full of things to knock over, her analysis of spaces intended to be charming or intriguing tended to include odd objects, such as a vase shaped like a fish.[33] The unexpected odd piece of furniture or the inexpensive, such as shells, were generally a component of quaint or cozy interiors or those associated with unconventional people

28. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of Green Gables,* New York, Signet, 1987, p. 67. Original publication 1908.
29. Ibid., p. 46.
30. Ibid., p. 232.
31. Ibid., p. 264.
32. Stevenson, Louise L.: *The Victorian Homefront,* New York, Twayne, 1991, p. 2.
33. Montgomery, L. M.: *Emily of New Moon,* p. 249. Among the books that make reference to knocking things over are *Jane of Lantern Hill*, p. 18 and *Akin to Anne,* p. 29.

who plowed their own path through life. A typical description was a space «filled with the flotsam and jetsam of his roving life—things beautiful and odd and strange beyond all telling.»[34] Tellingly, these types of spaces and their contents were almost invariably admired by girls, but owned by men—a hint of yearning toward a less conventional life than that to which Montgomery, or most women of that era, could aspire.

Morality was associated with plain vernacular styles. Frivolous women lived in fancy houses. This may, in part, represent a reaction against Victorian architectural excesses, but appears to be more allied with the idea of virtue clad in plain apparel vs. the «painted lady» of dubious virtue. These passages are typical.

> «Judith…had always loved the quaint, picturesque old place…Judith thought contrastingly Of Eben King's staring, primrose-colored house in all its bare, intrusive grandeur.»[35]
>
> «Emily thought it a very ugly house, covered as it was with gingerbread-work of various kinds But a house with white wooden lace on its roof and its bay windows was the last word of Elegance in Shrewsbury.»[36]
>
> «…Uncle Herbert's house, a large, pretentious structure peppered with meaningless bay windows and excrescent porches. A house that always looked like a stupid, prosperous, self-satisfied man with warts on his face.»[37]

Most of her praised houses are not only plain, but also old. Age, to Montgomery, conveys a sense of stability and worth. In *Anne's House of Dreams* her home is furnished with old-fashioned braided rugs, cotton warp spreads, and the simple furniture of a previous owner described as so old no one would want it. This is contrasted to other people's preferences for plush brocade and decorated sideboards.[38] Another house is approvingly described as furnished with out-of-date round braided rugs and a grandfather clock.[39] These furnishings were accompanied by quaint china and old prints and silhouettes. In descriptions of houses one can read the human qualities Montgomery valued—kindness, friendliness, the ability to love, beauty in simplicity, neatness, and respect for tradition. The community in which Montgomery grew up stressed frugality and simplicity with the aid of a strong tradition of Scottish Calvinism.[40] However much she mentally rebelled against restraint and reserve, these traits left a powerful impression.

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34. Montgomery, L. M.: *Further Chronicles of Avonlea*, New York, Bantam, 1987, p 36. Original publication 1920.
35. Montgomery, L. M.: *The Doctor's Sweetheart*, Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1979, p. 51.
36. Montgomery, L.M.: *Emily Climbs*, New York, Bantam, 1983, p. 94. Original publication 1925.
37. Montgomery, L.M.: *The Blue…*, op. cit., p. 50.
38. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne's House of Dreams*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1989, p. 20. Original publication 1922.
39. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of the Island*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1977, p. 94. Original publication 1915.
40. Weale, David: «No Scope for Imagination: Another Side of Anne of Green Gables», *The Island* (2) (1986), in Sir Andrew Macphail: *The Master's Wife*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1939, pp. 3-8. Montgomery, L. M.: *The Alpine Path*, Canada, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1917.

Montgomery's fiction portrayed possession of a house as an element of security. In *Anne of Windy Poplars* the distrustful Katherine, product of a childhood full of rejection, lived in a repellant boarding house, the very image of insecurity. In contrast, Anne Shirley achieved a stable environment when she became Anne of Green Gables. Even Anne received a reminder of life without a house when she went away to college to live in a boarding house described as a narrow little room with dull papered pictureless walls and an empty bookcase.[41] Without the familiar environment of her own house, life threatened to be narrow and empty. Montgomery recalled her grandparents (with whom she lived) as strict and restrictive, but she enjoyed a safe, financially secure existence in the same house throughout her childhood. The idea that a house represented security took root early and was reinforced by later events. After her uncle inherited the house following her grandfather's death, Montgomery could consider the structure as home only as long as her grandmother lived to enjoy the life estate. Hence loss of a house meant an uncertain future.

Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*, his eloquent exploration of houses as exuding emotive context, suggests that «The old house, for those who know how to listen, is a sort of geometry of echoes,» that forever contains and expresses its past.[42] Many houses in the Montgomery stories retain indelible marks of past lives. If not exactly haunted, they certainly have suggestive atmospheres. Most readers associate Montgomery with happy endings and gentle pastoral scenes, but a careful analysis of her work produces several rather gloomy house descriptions. Her marked tendency to romanticize abandoned houses owes something to popular literature of her youth, by writers such as Sir Walter Scott and John Ruskin, who extolled the virtues of older structures, and to the Victorian tendency to muse upon ruins. Christopher Woodward has observed that «When we contemplate ruins, we contemplate our own future…To philosophers the futility of mortal man's aspiration …To a poet the decay of a monument represents the dissolution of the individual ego in the flow of Time.»[43] Ruins signified the dominance of nature, an obsessive theme in her work.[44] Vines overgrow most of the structures in her writing or they are represented as integral parts of the landscape. In *A Tangled Web* an admired house «seemed to grow out of the garden» held and caressed by shrubs and vines.[45]

An autobiographical element runs through these architectural descriptions, as it does through other components of her work. The letters and diaries speak of visits to her old Prince Edward Island home in terms reminiscent of her fictional abandoned houses. Montgomery made old buildings pathetic, lacking the spark of human life and emotionally haunted.

41. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of Green…*, op. cit., p. 278.
42. Bachelard, Gaston: Op. cit., pp. 60.
43. Woodward, Christopher: *In Ruins*, New York, Pantheon, 2001, p. 2.
44. Lowenthal, David: *The Past is a Foreign Country,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985.
45. Montgomery, L. M.: *A Tangled Web*, New York, Bantam, p. 72. Original publication 1931.

In earlier books deserted houses take on a romantic air. A character remarks that if a door was opened quickly enough it might be possible to see former residents.[46] However, by the time *Anne of Windy Poplars* was published in 1936 Montgomery was beginning to occasionally praise new houses over old, and Anne says she would hate a house 120 years old because it would have too many ghosts of the past.[47] Three years later, an old house is described as «worn out with living.»[48] Montgomery, distressed by war and personal tragedy had begun to see part of the past as more dreadful than romantic.

She had reasons for unhappiness. Raised by stern and unbending grandparents, she postponed the possibility of an independent life to stay with her rigid-minded and unsympathetic widowed grandmother. After the death of her grandmother, she married a minister who could not share her intense reactions to nature and the sea and who was, moreover, subject to periods of intense depression. She met social expectations for women to be self-sacrificing, but the effort made her miserable. It is little wonder that some of the houses in her books reflect knowledge of life's less joyous aspects. Extreme unhappiness would not have been acceptable in children's fiction of that era. Only obliquely and often through architectural descriptions does misery creep into the books. Her statements of distress in association with houses could be emphatic and eerie.

> «Suddenly there seemed something strange and alien in the room…something a little hostile. But is there not something strange about any room that has been occupied through generations? Death has lurked in it… births have been here…all the passions…all the hopes. It is full of wraths. But this was really a rather terrible old house, full of the ghosts of dead hatreds and heart-breaks, crowded with dark deeds that had never been dragged into the light and were still festering in its corners and hidy-holes. Too many women must have wept here.»[49]
>
> «…an old house knows too much – was haunted by too many feet that had walked over its threshold – too many anguished or impassioned eyes that had looked out of its windows.»[50]
>
> «In the gathering shadows the old house had the look of fate which even a commonplace building assumes beneath the falling night…as if it brooded over dark secrets.»[51]

In descriptions such as these the Victorian vision of the «angel in the house» placidly overseeing the sheltering interior seems out of place. These interiors are less shelters than repositories of despair.

A constant theme is the ruined house deriving meaning from association with a female presence. In other words, the woman is a life-giving force, a

46. Montgomery, L. M.: *Among the Shadows,* Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1990, p. 19.
47. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of Wind…*, op. cit., p. 242.
48. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of Ingleside*, New York, Bantam, 1984, p. 238. Original publication 1939.
49. Montgomery, L.M.: *Anne of Windy Poplars,* New York, Bantam, 1988, p. 240. Original publication 1936.
50. Montgomery, L. M.: *Emily's Quest,* New York, Bantam, 1983, p. 73. Original publication 1927.
51. Montgomery, L. M.: *Pat of Silver Bush*, Toronto, Seal, 1988, p. 151. Original publication 1933.

notion related to the Victorian belief that home life centered on the wife and mother. The nineteenth-century concept of women as the heart of the home found expression in several Montgomery books, as in *Mistress Pat*, in which Pat's architect beau notes of the house: «I've provided the body but you must provide the soul…you will light the fire and make the room live.»[52] Abandoned houses with echoing empty interiors were often regenerated by a woman. Numerous characters reflect that if permitted to do so, they could transform spaces. For example, the protagonist of *Jane of Lantern Hill* reflects on a room that she does not like, but feels that she might like if she were able to do things for it.[53] Specifically, the phrasing posits the house as a living thing.

Throughout the books, lonely houses are described as lacking a home light, just as Montgomery lamented her dark deserted home after her grandmother's burial.[54] Many of the houses are described as retaining only memories of a life once lived. Lonely deserted houses share traits with the orphans who recur throughout her books and in that sense represent another autobiographical element.

The idea that rooms might assimilate and retain impressions of past lives and events is mentioned in her diaries.[55] For Montgomery, places remained forever haunted by former occupants, a concept she repeatedly explored in her fiction. In one of the 1898 short stories a wing is demolished because of tragic events which took place in that part of the house.[56] As she grew older, Montgomery developed an interest in the supernatural. The death of a beloved cousin, demolition of her Prince Edward Island home, and loosening bonds to Island relatives left her feeling lost and bereft. Places associated with her cousin, Frede, affected her strongly. Intrigued by dreams as portents and the possibility of visitations by the dead, she wrote into stories her wishful thinking about communications with the past and regret. «The ghosts of things that never happened are worse than the ghosts of things that did.» [57]

Houses appear often in Montgomery's books as objects much desired by rootless children or unmarried women. On the surface, Montgomery adheres to the Victorian idea that unmarried women have no place in society. Young or old, most of her females eventually marry. Whereupon Montgomery seems to lose interest and they largely vanish from the narrative. Anne is among the more notable of these people. By the end of the series she diminishes to a rather boring house-bound woman who never achieved her dreams of writing.

On the other hand, the books are peppered with self-reliant old maids who frequently are among her more interesting characters and far from useless. Fur-

52. Montgomery, L M.: *Mistress Pat,* Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1989, p. 352.
53. Montgomery, L. M.: *Jane of Lantern Hill...*, op. cit. p. 42.
54. Rubio, Mary and Waterston, Elizabeth: *The Selected Journals*…, op. cit., *Vol. II 1910-1921*, p. 32.
55. Rubio, Mary and Waterston, Elizabeth (eds.): *The Selected Journals…,* op. cit., *Vol. I 1889-1910,* p. 286.
56. Montgomery L. M.: *Among the…,* op. cit., p. 198.
57. Montgomery, L. M: *Emily's…*, op. cit. p. 74.

thermore, these ladies tend to be mistresses of their own homes. The Victorian image of an unmarried woman suggests an incomplete person, not quite adult, as those with houses of their own were grown-ups with assigned roles in society. Montgomery's feminist leanings led her as a college student to write of the unfortunate position facing unmarried women and the necessity for education and independence.[58] In many books of her era, spinsters lived self-sacrificing lives as virtual servants.[59] Montgomery provided her spinsters with houses as badges of personhood, planting a subversive message that women can survive independently. In giving them homes, in which they function successfully, she gives them adulthood. Montgomery stopped short of a flat statement that women could survive without male support. However, a number of characters did just that.

Marilla, in *Anne of Green Gables*, who never marries, retains a self-possessed strong personality. While she is not totally independent, having lived with her brother, the house, Green Gables, is clearly more associated with her and it is her characteristics with which Montgomery endows the structure. In Montgomery's world, excessive housekeeping correlated with lack of emotion: «It was a very well-run house…So well-run that it was depressing. A book out of place, a rug crooked, a sweater left lying around, were unforgivable crimes…»[60] Rigid repressed Marilla has a kitchen that «would have been cheerful if it had not been so painfully clean as to give it something of the appearance of an unused parlor.»[61] The newly arrived and unwanted girl orphan Anne's room «was of a rigidity not to be described in words.» The hall was «fearsomely clean; the little gable chamber…still cleaner.» «The whitewashed walls were so painfully bare and staring that she thought they must ache over their own bareness.» On the table was «a fat, red velvet pincushion hard enough to turn the point of the most adventurous pin.»[62] Later in the series of Anne books, Green Gables became a «brooding, motherly old house» more in keeping with Marilla's mellower personality.[63]

In other books, middle-aged women maintained households described as quite comfortable. In *The Doctor's Sweetheart* Josephine Elliott resists marriage in favor of her own house.[64] None of these women worked for a living and the source of money to furnish a house is generally obscure, probably in deference to the market. To make characters too obviously self-reliant might have alien-

58. Montgomery, L. M.: «A Girl's Place at Dalhousie College» in *Halifax Herald*, April 1896. Reprinted in Francis W. P. Bolger: *The Years Before «Anne»*, Charlottetown, The Prince Edward Island Heritage Foundation, 1974.
59. Koppelman, Susan (ed.): *Old Maids*, New York, Pandora Press, 1984. FOSTER, Shirley: *Victorian Women's Fiction: Marriage, Freedom, and the Individual*, New Jersey, Barnes and Noble, 1985.
60. Montogmery, L. M.: *The Road to Yesterday*, Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974, p. 126.
61. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of Green Gables*, New York, Bantam, 1986, p. 4. Original publication 1908.
62. Ibid., p. 27.
63. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of Windy…*, op. cit., p. 149.
64. Montgomery, L. M.: *The Doctor's…*, op. cit., pp. 90-104.

ated readers. Her letters and diaries suggest that she felt pressure to conform to society's expectations in order to sell her writing.[65] There was an ambivalence concerning «proper behavior» and female ties to the house and Montgomery's apparent admiration for women with spunk who departed from prescribed roles. Writing a bit earlier than Montgomery, Louisa May Alcott succumbed to readers' requests that independent Jo in *Little Women* be given a husband (a decision she regretted).[66] To modern-day feminists Montgomery's failure to totally break with the status quo may seem cowardly, but as Carolyn Heilbrun indicated, «What happens with all these women is that we desire of them greater courage and imaginative originality than was possible…»[67] Still, Montgomery's old maids do have homes with interior spaces under their control and contrary to many contemporary portrayals are surrounded by no aura of pity.

The younger women tend to be individuals who lack a happy or adequate home life. Montgomery suggests that what they want most is a house of their own. This is generally achieved through marriage, but the husband seems entirely peripheral to the goal of obtaining and furnishing a home. Margaret in *A Tangled Web* is first encountered as a snubbed old maid who wants nothing more than a room of her own and dreams longingly of marriage. Having finally achieved possession of her own home, she ceases to want a husband.[68]

Throughout the books, Montgomery refers to the unhappy lack of status that afflicted unmarried women and to their lack of personal space. Autonomy through «a room of one's own» was a common theme. Uncharacteristically, Montgomery clearly stated the need for autonomy in *A Tangled Web.* The character of Aunt Becky, writing her own obituary with the intent of irritating her relatives, recorded that «She longed for freedom, as all women do, but had sense enough to understand that real freedom is impossible in this kind of world.»[69] In acquiring a mate, women also leave the homes of relatives and acquire autonomy over their environment. Furnishing a home is one form of self-expression, an outlet denied to those who live in spaces owned and controlled by others. The house, then, has less to do with the conventional pattern of marriage than with an individual woman's ability to exert some control over her life. In this connection, it should be noted that Montgomery lived the first thirty-six years of her life in other people's homes. After her marriage she pounced with delight on the opportunity to furnish her first house.[70] In use of architecture as in her use of orphan characters, Montgomery produced over and over her own experiences.

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65. Wiggins, Genevieve: *L. M. Montgomery*, New York, Twayne, 1992, p. 171. Wiggins noted Montgomery's tendency to worry about pleasing others.
66. Myerson, Joel and Sheely, Daniel (eds.): *The Selected Letters of Louisa May Alcott*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1987, p. 125.
67. Heilbrun, Carolyn G.: *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1990, p. 25. See also Heilburn, Carolyn G.: *Writing a Woman's Life*, New York, Ballantine, 1988.
68. Montgomery, L. M.: *A Tangled...,* op. cit. p. 17.
69. Ibid., p. 48.
70. Rubio, Mary and Waterston, Elizabeth: *The Selected Journals…*, op. cit., *Vol. II 1910-1921*, p. 83.

The ability of the characters to do as they pleased within their homes likely reflects other aspects of Montgomery's frustration. She came of a generation raised on such admonitions to women as «…any attempt to free yourselves from your duty is in direct opposition to the will of God.»[71] All her life she felt surrounded by less sensitive people and constrained to behave in ways that betrayed her true personality. Giving characters in books control over a physical setting says much about Montgomery's own frustrated desire for control. What she could not have, her characters could obtain.

In one of the short stories a character described her room as «the only spot on earth she had ever been able to call her own. And, as always when she went into it, the peace and dignity and beauty of it seemed to envelop her like a charm. She was in a different world—a world where George and Myra could not quarrel or the hired girl be impertinent to her; and the everlasting noise and racket of the household died away at its threshold like the spent wave of a troubled sea. For years all that had supported her through the drudgery of days spent waiting on a querulous invalid was the certainty of finding herself alone in her… room… where dreams gave some mysterious strength for another day.»[72]

Montgomery often invoked the idealized spare room as an icon of the power of space to convey status or the lack of it. As opposed to badly furnished spaces such as «the bare, dingy room, that had always been thought good enough for old Aunt Ursula…», spare rooms were special places preserved for those thought worth cherishing or impressing.[73] Anne longs to sleep in a spare room, a space that she recalls years later as she and her adoptive mother cleaned it: «it did seem as if we were committing sacrilege. That old spare room has always seemed like a shrine to me.» «I never *walked* through that room when Marilla sent me in on an errand—no, indeed, I tiptoed through it and held my breath, as if I were in church, and felt relieved when I got out of it. The pictures of George Whitefield and the Duke of Wellington hung there,…and frowned so sternly at me…I always wondered how Marilla dared houseclean that room.»[74]

Montgomery houses have both character and personality, serving as symbols of their occupants. Good people live in tidy residences. Those whose personal lives have ragged edges live in ragged houses. Unpleasant people have unpleasant houses described in very human terms. Roaring Abel, a drunk, lived in a deteriorating structure with a patched roof, loose shutters, and «a listless air, as if tired of life.»[75] Another house was vixinish with little eyes and sharp elbows.[76] Yet another was hostile, wakeful, and vindictive.[77] In contrast,

71. *Golden Thoughts on Mother, Home, and Heaven*, St. Louis, N. D.Thompson, 1882, p. 54.
72. Montgomery, L. M.: «A Dinner of Herbs», in *At the Altar,* Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1994, p. 21. Original publication 1928.
73. Montgomery, L. M.: *The Road to…*, op. cit. p. 240.
74. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of the…,* op. cit., pp. 2-3.
75. Montgomery, L. M.: *The Blue…*, op. cit., p. 84.
76. Montgomery, L. M.: *Emily's…*, op. cit., p. 17.
77. Montgomery,L. M.: *Jane of Lantern…*, op. cit., p. 42.

Maplehurst, home of the town's elite family in *Anne of Windy Poplars,* was «a proud exclusive house which draws its trees around it and won't associate with common houses.»[78]

Emily of New Moon muses on the Disappointed House, an incomplete structure representative of the broken engagement which halted construction. As the Emily series progresses and Emily grows up she fantasizes furnishing the house, remarking that «the little house has kept its dream and that sometime it will come true.» Breaking her own engagement (to a man who had purchased the house for her) Emily comments that «The house was ignorant and innocent like herself. It was still to be haunted by the ghosts of things that never happened.» In the end, when Emily marries the man she loves she obtains the no longer disappointed house.[79]

Anthropomorphized houses reach an extreme in the *Pat of Silver Bush* books. As Elizabeth Epperly has pointed out, Pat's obsessive identification with Silver Bush results in a rather sad character with none of the spunk characteristic of other Montgomery heroines. In *Mistress Pat* so bound up is Pat with Silver Bush that the normal progression of life, and certainly any change which affects life in the house, becomes threatening. Only demolition of the house, together with Pat's past life, frees her to marry and begin an identification with another house.

Transferring human traits to an inanimate object allowed Montgomery to make pointed remarks on human character. In *Jane of Lantern Hill* Montgomery stops short of a clear statement that Jane's grandmother lives an empty life devoid of sympathy or caring, but she has a character remark that the house looks dead, and it is described as having «struck a chill» to Jane's spirit.[80] To describe a human in such terms might have been too blunt to suit her readers, especially in children's books. Buried in architectural descriptions, the attributes lost some sting.

If part of the sharper characterizations and social ramifications are overlooked by children intent on the story line, these partially disguised observations are not lost on adults. In the wake of deconstruction and studies on feminism and Victorians today's reader is even more likely to look for a subtext. The wit with which Montgomery comments on human character, even in the guise of architecture, and her awareness of social restraints as they affect individuals have drawn substantial numbers of adult readers to the books written as girl's stories.

Montgomery used architecture and home decoration extensively to soften harsh characterizations and to make points about the position of women that, if stated plainly, might have alarmed her readers. In the extensive descriptions of abandoned (orphan) houses, she gave to inanimate objects her own emotions, building substantial autobiographical material into her fictional houses.

78. Montgomery, L. M.: *Anne of Windy…*, op. cit., p. 33.
79. Montgomery, L. M.: *Emily…*, op. cit. p. 163; Montgomery, L. M. *Emily's…*, op. cit., p. 98.
80. Montgomery, L. M. *Jane of Lantern…*, op. cit., p. 2, 144.

She would likely have agreed with Bachelard that «a dreamer of houses sees them everywhere, and anything can act as a germ to set him dreaming about them.»[81] Many of her attitudes and beliefs concerning people and social conditions in which they lived can be read in the wistful, disappointed, happy, or aggressive structures which populate the landscape of her writing.

81. Bachelard, Gaston: Op. cit., p. 55.

«PUBLIC WOMEN, PRIVATE STAGE?» THE DEBATE ON «SEPARATE SPHERES» IN VICTORIAN WOMEN'S «ACTRESS NOVELS»

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In *Private Women, Public Stage*, Mary Kelley evokes the lives and works of these pioneering American women novelists whom she calls «literary domestics» for «in both their published prose and their previously neglected letters, diaries, and journals these women reported on their own phenomenon and became unwitting witnesses to both the public event and their own private experiences»[1]. Kelley begins her book by quoting a letter to her sister by Caroline Howard (soon to be known as «Caroline Howard Gilman»), which focuses on the figure of a lady singer, Mrs French:

> «Her public concerts are marked by this peculiarity that she enters the room with a private party, for she is greatly noticed, and seats herself with the other ladies. When the company has assembled, she is led to the piano by private gentlemen of the first respectability, and after every song, again takes her place among the ladies, one of whom keeps a shawl ready to throw over her »[2].

Kelley sees this report as «striking» and argues that Gilman «had unknowingly foretold her own future as much as she had told about the lady singer, and had foreshadowed a peculiar phenomenon in nineteenth-century American society»[3]. Later in her introduction, she analyzes the excerpt at length and adds this telling commentary:

> «Without realizing it, Caroline Howard had implied as much in her description of the lady singer, who remained in her eyes a private domestic woman. The witness, soon to be a writer, set the scene in the presentist language of a novelist, set the scene and made it appear timeless and unchanging. The lady singer enters

1. Kelley, Mary: *Private Women, Public Stage, Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*, O.U.P., 1984, p. viii.
2. Ibid., p. vii.
3. Ibid., p. viii.

> the public room accompanied by a «private party» and sits with «other ladies», is led to the piano by «private gentlemen», and after each performance again «takes her place among the ladies», where she is covered by a «shawl». It is as if, symbolically, the lady singer has never appeared in public and has never been paid for a song that was never sung. But private domestic woman or not, the lady singer did sing her songs in public. And so did the literary domestics, private domestic women themselves»[4].

Even though she deals with American novelists, Kelley raises interesting remarks: first, she underlines the innate relationship which links female writers and female performers; secondly, she shows that «writing» was for a woman a very daring excursion into male territories and that the topic of space is seminal when speaking of women's writing; but she also points out that this metaphorical mapping between private and public is extremely complex. In this article, I want to follow the path opened by Kelley, and explore a little-known sub-gender of women's writing in Victorian England, that of the «actress novel». As «public women» writing about other «public women», how did female novelists cope with the topic of space, especially at a time when the issue of «separate spheres» was debated? At the end of an article dealing with the same body of literature, Sarah Bilston hints that: «theatrical women's novelists symbolically question efforts to limit women's access to the public sphere»[5]. I will try to show here that the topic of space in these novels is marked by an interesting paradox: though they challenge male dominancy in the world of literature, women's writers of actress novels never cease to think that a woman's place should be at home.

* * *

In the late nineteenth century, all across Europe, a brand new genre of fiction began to flourish —the «actress novel». What we call «actress novel» is a novel in which an actress is the main character (and not a simple silhouette in the *dramatis personae*), and where the very profession of the protagonist is essential to the narration. Many «actress novels» thus deal with the making of an actress, or with the turmoil female players experience in their private lives once success has come[6]. The popularity of the actress novel was such that it was dealt with by prestigious writers (for instance, Henry James with *The Tragic Muse*, or George Moore with *A Mummer's Wife*), but also by «minor» novelists such as Francis Gribble, Richard Marsh or Henry Herman[7]. «Actress novels»

4. Ibid., p. xi.
5. Bilston, Sarah: «Authentic Performance in Theatrical Women's Fiction «, *Women's Writing,* 11-1 (2004), pp. 39-53, p. 51.
6. Francois-Deneve: Corinne, «Le 'roman de l'actrice' 1880-1916 (domaines anglo-saxon, germanique et français)», PhD, Université de Paris IV Sorbonne, 2004.
7. Gribble, Francis: *Sunlight and Limelight, a Story of the Stage Life and the Real Life,* London, A.D. Innes, 1898; Herman, Henry: *A Leading Lady*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1891; James, Henry (1890): *The Tragic Muse*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1995; Marsh, Richard: *Ada Vernham, Actress,* London, John Long, 1900; Moore, George (1885): *A Mummer's Wife*, New York, Washington Square Press, 1967.

can assume many forms: ghost stories, romances or conduct books are to be found among the huge corpus held by the British Library or the Bodleian. The literary value may vary, to say the least, but the trend lasted well into the Great War. The enthusiasm generated by the «actress novel» can be explained by the extreme popularity of the actress. «Stars» of their times, actresses were indeed spoken of, written of, and it is no wonder that the novel itself bears testimony of this extraordinary craze. The actresses of the period invaded many male territories: Sarah Bernhardt or Ellen Terry earned more money than their male counterparts; they were able to attract crowds, and travelled the world with a liberty that few women could enjoy.

In Britain, many «actress novels» were written by women, who, strangely enough, often wrote not one, but several «actress novels», like Florence Marryat[8] or Gertrude Warden[9]. Sometimes, the urge to write actress novels seems to run in the blood, as the urge to become an actress, perhaps, for Eva Ross Church, Marryat's daughter, wrote her own actress novel with *An Actress's Love Story*[10]. An archaeologist would even say that the genre originated from women, with Geraldine Jewsbury and her *Half Sisters* in 1848, Frances Eleanor Trollope with *Mabel's Progress* in 1867, or Mary Elizabeth Braddon with *A Strange World* in 1875[11]. To speak only of the Victorian period, the *terminus a quo* of the «actress novel» can be said to be *Miss Bretherton* by Mary Ward[12] (known as «Mrs Humphry Ward» until feminist criticism reallocated to her first name), published in 1884.

That «actress novels» were women's business became a cliché: the fact is acknowledged in an essay written by Horace Wyndham, another serial (male) actress novelist[13], who, in *The Magnificent Mummer,* spoke of these «theatrical novelists», that is to say «painstaking ladies who have made the stage their particular study»[14]. The sentence is significant: actress novels written by women were considered to be low literature, and spoken of with disdain. As Margaret Higonnet would say, summing up Nina Baym's theories: «indirectly,

8. Marryat, Florence: *My Sister the Actress. A Novel*, London, F. V. White, 1881; *Facing the Footlights*, London, F. V. White, 1883; *Peeress and Player*, London, F. V. White, 1883.
9. Warden, Gertrude: *Stage Love and True Love, a Story of the Theatre*, London, W.Stevens, 1900; «The Family Story-teller », *Beauty in Distress, A Story of the Stage*, London, Digby, Long, 1903; *The Moth and the Footlights*, London, Digby, Long, 1906; *An Actress's Husband*, London, C.H. White, 1909; *The Path of Virtue, a Romance of the Musical Comedy Stage, a Novel*, London, F.V.White, 1912.
10. Ross Church, Eva: *An Actress's Love Story,* London, F.V. White, 1888.
11. Jewsbury, Geraldine Endsor (1848): *The Half Sisters, A Tale*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994 «World's classics ed. »; Trollope, Frances Eleanor (Fanny Ternan) (1867): *Mabel's Progress*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1884; Braddon, Mary Elizabeth: *A Strange World*, London, John Maxwell, 1875.
12. Ward, Mary: *Miss Bretherton*, Leipzig, Tauschnitz, 1892 (1884).
13. Wyndham, Horace: *Audrey the Actress,* London, E. Grant Richards, 1906; *The Flare of the Footlights*, London, E. Grant Richards, 1907; *Irene of the Ringlets*, London, John Milne, 1908; *Stage-Struck,* London, John Richmond Ltd., 1914; *Limelight,* London, John Richmond Ltd., 1914.
14. Wyndham, Horace: *The Magnificent Mummer. Some Reflections on the XX^e Century Stage*, London, 1909, p. 113.

then, the class line between «high» and «low» literature came to overlap with a gender line.»[15] Actress novels written by women were often considered as popular literature, only written for stage-struck girls. Highly «public», because they were present in periodicals, or in cheap editions, actress novels were thus confined in the sphere of private reading, and, later on, in a closet seldom opened by «serious» academic criticism. According to the same theory, the very number of actress novels» written by Warden, or Braddon, or Marryat, speak against their authors: women's writers of actress novels were «scribbling» or «sentimentalist» women, naturally producing novels as they were «producing» children. Yet, women who tried their hands at actress fictions were most of the time former actresses, eager to testify in favour of the world they saw by their own eyes, and perhaps to defeat anti-theatrical prejudice – such was at least the case for Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Harriet Jay or Florence Warden who began their careers as female players, and for whom writing books became another means to earn a living. At any rate, a less biased view would be to consider the actress as a symbolical figure for the female writer.

Indeed, one can obviously wonder whether the actress novel is not the perfect space for women novelists to speak their minds, or pass their ideas on women and art. By writing «actress novels», women writers forced the door to a public space, often considered as masculine, that of literature. They also chose to devote a whole book to a female protagonist who, in the past, had to win her place on the stage and defeat male dominancy, but, who, at the end of the day, became one of the most brilliant examples of female achievement in the realm of art. Speaking of German «actress novels» by women, Renate Möhrmann states:

> «female writers and stage artists are frequently protagonists in women's novels. The fact that it is the actress who attracted the mounting interest in the first generation of female writers can be accounted for by the exceptional position occupied by women in the theatre».[16]

Critics often tend to emphasize the link between the «performing woman» (the actress as the main protagonist in fiction) and another «performing woman», the woman writer, whose performance is precisely her novel. Kerry Powell chose to exemplify the fact with the topic of the voice: «a life in the theatre offered woman a voice – the ability to speak compellingly while others, including men, sat in enforced silence, waiting in suspense for the next word.»[17] To put it bluntly, the actress was one of the few women to be allowed to speak

15. Higonnet, Margaret: «Mapping the text. Critical Metaphors», *in* Margaret Higonnet and Jean Templeton (eds.): *Reconfigured Spheres. Feminist Exploration of Literary Space*, Amherst University of Massachussets Press, 1994, pp. 194-212, p. 200.
16. Möhrmann, Renate: «Women's work as portrayed in Women's literature», in Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres et Mary Jo Maynes (eds.): *German Women in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, a Social and Literary History,* Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, pp. 61-77, p. 70.
17. Powell, Kerry: *Women and Victorian Theatre*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 3.

in Victorian society, and it is no wonder that women writers chose her to speak their minds. Yet, as Kerry Powell has contended, women writers experienced the same limitations as the actress herself, who could only speak the words of another person, a man, the writer. He speaks indeed of «*masculinistic rhetoric*» when writing about the actress:

> «This male-configured language reconstructed the performing woman as more than an actress – as a renegade female, one fundamentally different from normative wives and mothers, marginally 'feminine' if feminine at all, quite possibly inhuman. In thus rhetorically dividing her from other women, their own wives and daughters, Victorian men could permit the actress a limited freedom and a certain power»[18].

One can understand why Kerry Powell emphasised the question of the voice when speaking of actresses; yet in the case of the actress the question of space and the notions of private and public are also seminal.

Indeed, the concept of space is paramount within the world of the theatre itself. First of all, theatre production is nothing but a way to deal with space. A theatre itself is a building which clearly delineates spaces according to notions of public and private: stage, wings, pit, gallery, dressing rooms… were alternatively thought of as private, or public, in the course of history —which changed the «spatialization» of the actress herself (Gilbert, the «dramatic daddy» of the English Victorian stage, decided that there should be separate dressing rooms for women and men, and that male visitors should no longer to be admitted in the wings). What's more, the English stage is often seen as a world of its own, with boundaries between, for instance, legitimate and illegitimate drama, metropolitan or eccentric scenes, prestigious companies or travelling players.

As far as actresses were concerned, the question is space was vital as women had to battle to conquer the very space of the theatre. Initially banned from the audience, they won the right to go on stage rather late in history. The reason of this delay was precisely the social conception of private versus public space: women were assumed to belong to the private realm, and could not have access to the public sphere. Surprisingly enough, the question of whether it was proper for a man to play a female part was seen as secondary. Anyhow, by treading the boards, actresses challenged this allocation of social roles and gendered spaces. Language helped to set a cliché: an actress exercising her art in public was a «public woman», so, literally, a prostitute. The confusion lasted well into Victorian times, as Tracy Davis showed, all the more so that «Theatreland», the Strand, was also a place known for its erotic possibilities.[19] At any rate, every male spectator became the paying voyeur of the actress's exhibition of herself. And the actress performed in public acts that should have remained in the private sphere (courtship, love, grief…). In other words,

18. Ibid., p. 3.
19. See Davis, Tracy C.: *Actresses as Working Women: their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991.

she exhibited what was inner and hidden; and she was paid for it, and lived by it.[20] What is more, the actress seemed to live perpetually in the public eye, and, with the coming of the industrial age, her private life was public, and publicized.

Actress novels indeed raised interesting questions on the meaning of gender while challenging the neat division between private and public spaces and spheres. To start with, an actress is someone who transgresses spaces, be it on the sexual, economical, physical or psychological level. She also bridges gaps[21] – between genders when she cross-dresses or earns money like a man, and between social worlds – when she reconciles the gutter she comes from with the royalty she elbows in her salon or dressing room. By publishing «actress novels», which were often hugely popular, women writers thus added their voices to the debate on boundaries and «separate spheres» – a debate that was certainly close to their hearts. Through the trope of the actress –a «public woman»—, women writers challenged the Victorian ideal of the «cult of domesticity» and of the «angel of the house»[22]. They portray heroines who fight in order to have a space of their own or who try to fit in an alien space. At the same time, their «feminist» discourse is mitigated by the heroine's torn desire between a wish to establish themselves somewhere (in society, in the theatre) and the need to move all the time (to new roles, new social spheres). Finally, the very ending of most «actress novels» speaks volumes: they end with a marriage, with actresses returning home.

1. STROLLING/DWELLING

Actress novels can first be seen as a variation on other contemporary texts about actresses (articles in periodicals, excerpts from memoirs). Adopting the guise of fiction, they narrate well-known anecdotes from the (real) life of famous female players. Because they walk in the tracks of their real counterparts, who travelled the world endlessly, our fictional heroines are presented as free beings, endowed with the wonderful gift of mobility. Be she real or fictional, the actress is one of the few women to be allowed to walk freely in public space. The «mobility» of the actress has two «modes»: the most glamorous one, that of the star, who crosses the Atlantic in some gorgeous ship, or travels across the U.S.A., in a cosy Pullman carriage. But there are also a less showy side of travelling for actresses, the drudgery of touring the provinces, for the little-known strolling actress. «Actress novels» speak of these two realities and, strangely enough, the emphasis is rather made on lack of settlement, thus

20. See Blair, Juliet: «Private Parts in Public Spaces: the Case of Actresses», in Shirley Ardener (ed.): *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Women*, volume 5, Oxford and Providence, Berg Publications, 1992, pp. 200-221.

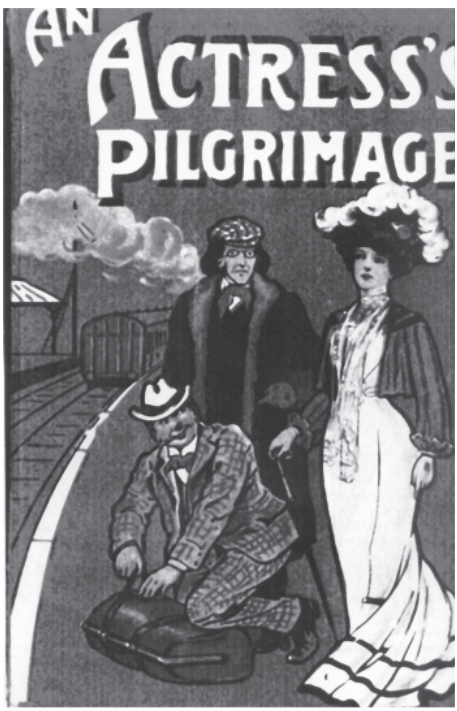
21. Gardner, Viv: «The Invisible Spectatrice: Gender, Geography and Theatrical Space», in Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner (eds.): *Women, Theatre and Performance. New Histories, New Historiographies,* Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2000, pp. 25-45.

22. See Domosh, Mona, and Joni Seager: *Putting Women in Place. Feminist Geographers Make Sense of the World,* New York, The Guilford Press, 2001.

of balance, than on freedom. Actresses are shown as mobile women who desperately yearn for an anchor.

The question of private space is thus particularly important in the case of novels dealing with a strolling actress – a significant part of actress novels of the period. A member of a touring company, indeed, such a character reactivates the true vein of the «thespian novel» and allows lots of picturesque depictions and colourful anecdotes. Now, most of the actress novels dealing with strolling actresses are first-person narratives, putting the stress on the initiation the «novice» has to endure to understand the basics of the thespian profession. Most of the time also, the tale is told from a retrospective point of view: the narrator somewhat regrets the times of her youth, but never her wandering life, which she sees as a burden, and which she left, we are made to infer, for something better, or at least something «settled».

In *An Actress's Pilgrimage*, by Ina Rozant[23], for example, the narrative begins symbolically at Euston station. The reader knows of the peregrine quality of the book from the cover, which evokes the actress in her travel attire, waiting for her train to come. In the course of the book, the protagonist is always *en route*, and keeps changing trains and lodgings. Her major problem is precisely to find a place to live in, once in a town, and the task is so difficult that actresses are to collaborate and give each other addresses, as if «public places» (rooms for rent) were not for them. Indeed, the novel shows how actresses are often the butt of prejudice, like in this «cathedral town of the North», in which the lodger does not want to rent to actresses[24]. On the other hand, a strolling player's life is also a struggle to make oneself at home in alien and hostile surroundings. Often deprived of «private space» to change dress, strolling actresses are to improvise a dressing room near the stage, or underneath – a symbolical vision of the actress as the «scum of the earth», perhaps, or of the strolling player as the lowest member of the acting profession. In any case, the strolling actress's life



23. Rozant, Ina: *An Actress's Pilgrimage*, London, T. Sealey Clark, 1906.
24. Ibid., p. 23.

is sheer un-quietness and publicity: she is not allowed privacy or settlement. Actually, the strolling female player suffers form a major defect, she cannot be assigned to a place. At the bottom of the theatrical ladder, would-be actresses also make extensive use of modern ways of transportation: fictional chorus girls or understudies take the omnibus to commute between their home, most of the time located in the suburbs, and their «workplace», the theatre, often in the centre. In this case, the very mobility of the actress is negatively connoted: extensive travel and wandering through (public) space indicate failure as an actress.

At the top of the ladder, on the contrary, constant touring is a hint of success as an actress, but certainly of failure as a woman. In actress novels, even stars, inveterate travellers by profession, want to settle. *Facing the Footlights*, a novel by Florence Marryat, thus presents the charismatic character of Mrs Gerome, a mature female player who advocates freedom and mobility for women: «and the women who neglect so grand an opportunity of taking their place in the world as free agents – almost as the arbiters of their own destinies – are thrusting to one side of the greatest blessing their humanity affords them»[25]. Yet, in spite of being «such a wanderer on the face of the earth (having fulfilled engagements in America and Australia during the last few years)…» Mrs Gerome longs for «a place of her own, a hearth for her Lares and Penates, and to which she could return when she felt inclined for it»[26]. At the end of the novel, her dream comes true for we learn that Mrs Gerome is the fortunate owner of Mulberry Cottage in Henley[27].

That our fictional actresses are so desperately eager to own their houses can be explained by two reasons. In Victorian London as well as in our novels, in fact, success for an actress was symbolized by the «house», and its place within London. The actress was defined by her surroundings, and her success was reflected by the location she lived in. In *An Actress's Husband,* Michal ends near Oxford Circus[28]; in *Through the Stage Door* Lottie finally lives on Elm Tree Road, near Saint John's Wood[29], and in *Facing the Footlights,* Eudora is established between Portman Square and Marble Arch[30]. The phenomenon is even theorized in one of these novels. In *The Actress*, the author Louise Closser Hale writes that the actress should live in Bloomsbury the first year, in the Strand on the second, and at a prestigious address on the third, for example near Buckingham Palace[31]. The social climbing of the actress can thus be horizontally symbolized on a map. Far from being an outcast who lives in the margins of society, the actress perfectly understands the codes of social mapping. Sylvia, the ambitious

25. Marryat, Florence: *Facing the…*, op. cit., II, p. 87.
26. Ibid., I. p. 85.
27. Ibid., II, p. 213.
28. Warden, Gertrude: *An Actress's…,* op. cit., p. 298.
29. Jay, Harriet: *Through the Stage Door: a Novel*, London, F.V.White, 1883, III, p. 151.
30. Marryat, Florence: *Facing the…,* op. cit., II, p. 85.
31. Hale, Louise Closser: *The Actress,* London, Constable, 1909*,* p. 133.

heroine of *From Stage to Peerage*, for instance, does not want to marry an actor because such a wedding would mean «cheap lodgings»[32]. She works her way from a cheese and bacon shop in Islington[33] to a boarding house in Marylebone Road[34] before crossing the Atlantic to spend two years in America. Sylvia is an interesting case in that she is obsessed by «places» (within the theatre, London, or society): indeed, she claims that she wants «a position»[35]. For Sylvia indeed, going on stage is only a means to climb the social ladder by marrying a rich man. In other words, she becomes an actress to become «visible» and public, only to improve her private condition.

But Sylvia is an exception within our corpus. Rather than ambitious career women, fictional actresses are rather presented as public women in search of a house, of something they could finally own, after years of deprivation (in collective imagery or in their own life). Symbolically enough, in English novels, actresses buy their houses with their own money, and do not rely on wealthy benefactors, as their French counterparts often do… But actresses, always in the public eye, are also in search for a space of privacy. The explanation is this time psychological: English fictional actresses rather look for a «home» than for a «house», that is to say a place endowed with affective rather than economical connotations. Here again, the phenomenon is completely different when we consider French novels. In English Victorian novels by women, the «house of the actress» is seldom a space of representation: strangely enough, it is rather a space meant for the actress, rather than for social meetings. The furniture is often scarce, or odd. Symbolically enough, in *Facing the Footlights* again, Mrs Gerome, the domesticated lady of the stage is no traditional «lady of the house» and has no time to read Victorian periodicals about interior decoration. Indeed, even her «private space» bears traces of her travelling and is crowded with «curious and pretty things»[36] she brought back as souvenirs. Through the topic of private space, the image of the actress as shown in our novels thus challenges common prejudice about female players: rather than being a mere «public» sham, the actress is concerned with her privacy, is turned inwards. That says a lot about her quality as an actress: she is endowed with the gift of introspection, given to authentic artists. She is able to draw from her private emotions to convey feelings in public, to the audience – thus, she «can act».

2. TRESPASSING?

Eager to defeat the anti-theatrical prejudice on its own grounds, Victorian women's actress novels also seem to be a step behind when acknowledging the place of the actress within the society. In the second half of the century indeed, female players were no longer considered as pariahs, but were marrying *publicly*

32. Warden, Florence: *From Stage to Peerage, An Autobiography,* London, Digby, Long, 1906, p. 28.
33. Ibid., p. 12.
34. Ibid., p. 41.
35. Ibid., p. 143.
36. Marryat, Florence: *Facing the…,* op. cit., II, p. 94.

members of the aristocracy, and elbowing well-born socialites in «salons». As Gail Marshall puts it, one could witness a «social redemption of the actress»[37]. Now, «actress novels» do not seem to consider that new position of the female player as granted. They rather dwell on problematic transitions between worlds.

The symbol for this problematic integration of the actress in society, as seen in our novels, could be the evocation of the Strand, depicted as a land within London, as a utopia in which the actress can live and thrive. In most of Victorian women's «actress novels» the world, the public space seems to be a «no woman's land». The Strand, on the contrary, is an extraterritorial land obeying its own rules, and having its own language. On her first visit to this strange place, Dorothy Phyllis, in *Beauty in Distress,* is lost: the women seem to wear a different make-up – as savages – and the indigenes speak a curious cant[38]. Within the Strand, the actress is recognizable and thus accepted. It is as though she was never to leave this enclave: when looking for an actress, one has to go in the Strand[39]. Indeed, the English say «go on stage», as if it were some journey to some foreign land. In a broader perspective, the «stage» could be this wonderful country were women would be allowed to work and fulfil their artistic expectations, or, less romantically, where the «female surplus», when it was no longer absorbed by positions of governess outside Britain, could emigrate: as the pragmatic director would say in *Beauty in Distress*: «but woman's place will have to be wherever she can make a living, while England remains overstocked with women, and while English parents are so selfish to borrow a hint from France and save up dots for their daughters»[40].

The theatre, a highly public space, thus appears to be, to some actresses, born in theatrical families, the reassuring equivalent of home. Isn't the audience is called a «house»? Spectators are for actresses members of the family. In Gertrude Warden's *An Actress's Husband*, Michal, a Jewess, wants to become an actress to fulfil a longing, and, in her words, the notions of private and public spaces are strangely blurred: she wants indeed to «earn a name that would make the world forget her parentage, and love and welcome her as the whole house has welcomed that actress tonight»[41]. Similarly, in Edith S. Drewry's *Only an Actress,* the main protagonist is a woman of the streets, a «*little Arab*» [42], a «citizen of the world»[43] who finds love and identity on the stage. *Only an Actress* and *An Actress's Husband* deal with the «exit» of these actresses from the world of the theatre, and with their integration into society –through marriage.

37. Marshall, Gail: *Actresses on the Victorian Stage. Feminine Performance and the Galatea Myth,* C. U. P., 1998.
38. Warden, Gertrude: *Beauty in Distress, A Story of the Stage*, London, Digby, Long, 1903 p. 74.
39. Ibid., p. 215.
40. Ibid., p. 136.
41. Warden, Gertrude: *An Actress's…,* op. cit., p. 34.
42. Drewry, Edith Stewart: *Only an Actress: a Novel*, London, J. & R. Maxwell, 1883, I, 16.
43. Ibid., I, p. 96.

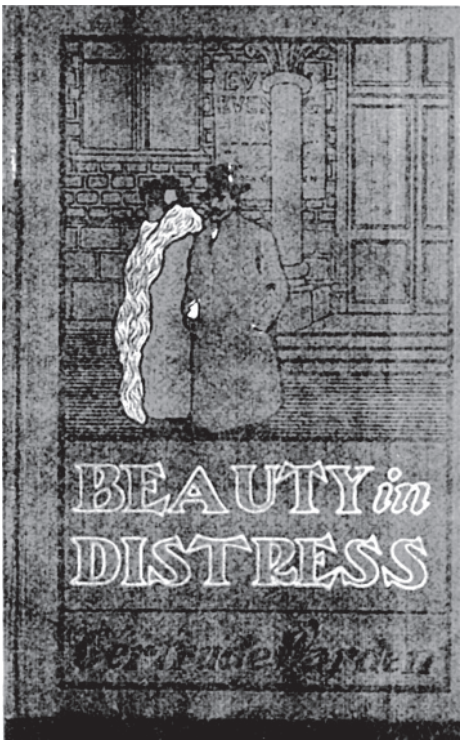
In actress novels, the meeting places are confusing as far as the separation of public and private spaces is concerned. Indeed, actresses are often to be introduced to the reader in public spaces, such as exhibitions in museums. The first «actress novel» of our period, *Miss Bretherton* by Mary Ward, thus begins at the Royal Academy. Isabel, the heroin of the novel, is first seen as an equivalent to the works of art shown in the exhibition, an idea which Henry James will bear in mind when writing *The Tragic Muse,* of whom *Miss Bretherton* is the direct inspiration. In the same vein, in *Beauty in Distress,* Phyllis is first seen in the British Museum, but not during an exhibition: she is sitting among the art students drawing from the masters works[44]. In *Miss Bretherton,* the actress is thus objectified, and she is also reduced to a valuable to be seen and priced[45]. In Ward's book, Isabel is then accompanied by her *duenna;* later in the book, we will see her in a *salon,* and on stage –all public places. But in *Miss Bretherton*, Isabel also meets her lover, Eustace, during this exhibition, which is by the way the «private view». The actress in Ward's fiction is thus domesticated: she is to be seen publicly, but in private only by the happy few. Eustace has to convince himself that the very woman he met in public places can also live in private, for him. Ward's novel is very much concerned by the topic of space and can be said to be a peripatetic book. Isabel's and Eustace's love affair is marked by *parties de campagne* and numerous promenades: the countryside becomes their mutual ground, the one in which, paradoxically, they can have some intimacy.

As far as meeting places are concerned, the restaurant also plays a symbolical role. A public place, the restaurant can be threatening for an actress. She wants to talk business, as men do in their business lunches, but for a manager it as a place when one invites women to court them. The actress tries to keep the restaurant its publicity, while the man could like it to be an intimate place. This is the case for Sylvia, in *From Stage to Peerage,* who wants to convince Mr Effingham to hire Philip, a friend of hers, at the Gaiety Restaurant, and who finds it difficult to focus on the matter[46]. Besides, Philip cannot understand the ploy and accuses Sylvia of flirting with her manager. For him, a public place like the restaurant is another space for the actress to display her charms.

The theatre itself divides itself between private and public spaces, qualities that are not permanent but shifting. The limelight separates the stage from the audience, making of it some kind of an invisible frontier, or a battle line that isolates, and protects the actress; the curtain isolates from some time the public and the private spheres of the theatre. The dressing room can be considered as private, for it is the place where the actress changes clothes, a very intimate act; but most of the time it is an open place, not totally closed to admirers or friends. Whereas the stage is the place on which the actress performs her most public act, she is paradoxically certain not to be bothered on it. In the wings, on the contrary, which we could consider as a retreat from the public eye, the actress

44. Warden, Gertrude: *Beauty in Distress…,* op. cit., p. 3.
45. Ward, Mrs Humphry: Op. cit., p. 15.
46. Warden, Florence: *From Stage…,* op. cit., p. 80.

keeps being seen. The greenroom is also a meeting place rather than a private place: trying to draw dresses from the show, Phyllis sits in the greenroom of the theatre, where she is harassed by male spectators which forces her to leave the place[47].



In «actress novels», some places are particularly symbolical in that they seem to be thresholds significant for the question of private and public spaces. The theatre, as we already said, is based on boundaries, bound to be trespassed, or not. Accordingly, the «stage door» is of the utmost importance. It is a frontier to be negotiated, which sometimes connotes danger. In *Beauty in Distress,* Ella, an actress, is afraid of a stubborn suitor who keeps waiting for her at the stage door. Once the stage door is passed, the actress is thrown into the unknown. The outside world seems to be a dangerous world for the actress. The street is not a safe place to be, though the actresses have to walk a lot. In Harriet Jay's *Through the Stage Door,* Lottie and her sister Carrie walk home to save a few pennies. They are followed by a man who tries to molest them in a narrow street. A born singer, Lottie screams at the top of her lungs and the man flees[48].

The title of the Jay's novel is significant as it indicates erasure of spatial divisions and the notion of «trespassing». The novel indeed raises interesting questions on the meaning of public and private spaces: a child born on the boards, for Lottie the theatre stands for privacy, whereas the outside world is symbolical for dangerous publicity and promiscuity. At first, a man of the old school, who came into the theatre to hide from the rain[49], the colonel does not want to go past the stage door. He waits for the actress at this place, and escorts the young woman to her omnibus[50]. The difficult relationship between the actress and the colonel is marked by continuous negotiations on private and public spheres. The colonel and the actress are engaged, and the colonel

47. Warden, Gertrude: *Beauty in Distress…,* op. cit., p. 15.
48. Jay, Harriet: Op. cit., I, pp. 44-49.
49. Ibid., I, p. 108.
50. Ibid., I, p. 114.

introduces her to his mansion, where she has to play the lady of the house to dinner and tea parties[51], but he does not reciprocate her efforts by entering her world, the theatre. After some misunderstandings, in two volumes, the colonel regains his position as warden of the stage door. He has to enter the theatre to (re)conquer Lottie, as a suitor who enters the father's house to win the daughter: he asks her to marry him between two waits[52]. Will Lottie leave the stage? One can doubt it, for, as her manager said: she is «not the sort of young lady to retire into private life»[53]. But, Lottie knows what «home» is; it is a place when one feels precisely *at home,* and which has nothing to do with social divisions of space.

3. LEAVING THE STAGE/COMING HOME

The entry of actress in society is indeed enacted in significant spatial metaphors in these actress novels, usually eager to draw the line between a real professional actress and those «social beauties» who whimsically decide to go on the stage. In real life, the confusion between private and public space was also fostered by the fashion of «private theatricals» on the one hand and, and on the other hand, by the soirées given by ladies of the high society with recitations by actresses. Actresses and women of the world kept changing roles. In *An Actress's Husband,* Michal's rival is one Mrs Lenore, a woman from the best society who is also a murderess (she thus perfectly casts herself into the mould of the fictional actress of yore, that of the sensation novels). In Marryat's *Facing the Footlights,* Eudora Thane has to battle against the Honourable Sybil Craven, or Lady Mirabel Sefton, who want to go on the stage. A «private actress»[54], Lady Mirabel tries to become a «regular actress»: it is interesting to notice that the contrary to «private» is here «regular», that is to say the norm, as opposed to the notion of infamy contained in the word «public». The point that many of these actress novels seem to make is that the real angel of the house is the actress, as she is the only one to act the perfect lady. In so doing, writers also acknowledge the fact that society lives on roles.

In Florence Marryat's *My Sister the Actress,* a similar reversal is at stake. Elizabeth Selwyn comes from a wealthy family, but she is expelled from the private circle when her mother decides to leave the house of her unfaithful husband. Mrs Selwyn becomes an outcast as she is deprived of the very attribute of womanhood, a house. She dies in some alien place, by a single aunt. Out of womanly sisterhood, or filial loyalty, Elizabeth takes sides with her mother and is banned from the man's house too. The very first chapters of the novel seem to exemplify the question of private and public space with titles as «where is my mother?», «I will go after her», «you never re enter my house». Marooned in the public sphere, devoid of any privacy (she comes to

51. Ibid., I, pp. 207, 216.
52. Ibid., III, p. 228.
53. Ibid., II, p. 98.
54. Marryat, Florence: *Facing the…,* op. cit., II, p. 61.

live with her aunt, but soon realizes she is a burden) Elizabeth has to make the most of her «public» talents: she is introduced to the reader while receiving a price for a recitation, at school. After some hesitations (private theatricals, then the need to «sell her talents»[55], Elizabeth conquers the public world before being reinserted in her family, and be reconciled with «privacy». Symbolically enough, the last sentence of the novel fixes her as an «angel of peace».

At any rate, actresses, with their habit of the stage, are perfectly able to «act well their part» in their husbands' mansions: the «*theatrum mundi*» of Shakespearean times is reconciled with the new theories of sociology according to Erving Gofman. Because of her training, the lady of the house knows how to sit and stand on this very public act of private Victorian life – dinner. Most of these novels end with marriage and retirement from the stage, that is to say in the private sphere. Our novels are indeed a running joke on the lady «of the stage» trying to become a lady «off the stage». In Gertrude Warden's *Stage Love and True Love,* the Manichaeism works from the title on. After some wanderings on the boards, Angela is allowed to end with her childhood friend, a responsible doctor, and with *two* houses, one in France and one on the Upper Thames[56]. Angela chooses domesticity without a pang of regret, accepting gratefully her husband's offer of a new stage for her gifts, his drawing room.

A quick glance at the endings of many Victorian women's actress novels would confirm this intuition: the part our fictional actresses yearn for is not Juliet, not Hermione, not Rosalind, but that of the wife, of the angel of the house. One can thus wonder whether these women's actress novels are «feminist». Britain was the land of the suffragettes, of the actress-manageress, of the Actresses Franchise League (an association which campaigned for the woman's suffrage and staged many «New Women' plays); it was also in London that Elizabeth Robins or Janet Achurch staged Ibsen. Yet in the Victorian and turn of the century actress novels Nora never leaves her «doll's house». What is made public in these novels is rather the reassertion of the place of women within the private sphere. Of course, women writing is not synonymous with feminist writing. Elizabeth Lynn Lynton wrote «the Stage as a Profession for Women», but she was also the author of an anti-feminist actress novel, *Realities, A Tale* (1851) –a book that relates the misfortunes of a would-be actress seduced by her stage manager, and that is supposed to warn women against «masculine» ambitions and longings. Women's theatrical fiction does not differ much from an actress novel written by a man.

In *Back to Lilac Land*, for example, the flavor is deliciously reactionary[57]. Gertrude, the actress, married a playwright. She decided not to leave the stage, an unbearable situation for her poor husband, who is condemned to starve: «Oh, I'm so very sorry, darling. I ought to have been getting dinner ready. I

55. Marryat, Florence: *My Sister the...,* op. cit., , I, p. 170.
56. Warden, Gertrude: *Stage Love and...,* op. cit., p. 203.
57. Gull, C. Ranger (1901): *Back to Lilac Land, A Theatrical Novel,* Greening's Sixpenny Novels, 1909.

must simply rush..»[58]. Later in the book, the narrator states bluntly: «she was dimly aware how she generally put her work before her duties as a wife in her scheme of life»[59]. The actress is so focused on her public self that she prefers to be on stage to being with her husband for Christmas. All alone in the wide world, the poor husband experiences a terrifying vision in a restaurant, that of a «third sex»: «He could not bear these poor little rats of women, with their narrow vibrating brains, their earnestness about Swedish novelists, and their opaque skin»[60]. Fortunately enough, Gertrude is to remain a «real» woman. Her manager suddenly dies and she leaves the stage, to return to Lilac Land, near her husband. The novel ends with Gertrude waiting for him at home, reading by a window, again a real «Angel of the House».

Instead of promoting the expansion of women's territories, British women's actress novels of the 1880s and 1890s thus choose to reassert that the place of women is inside the house. Yet the topic of space as linked to gender, to the notions of private and public, and to the actress, will have an enduring significance.

In a contemporary novel, set in Victorian England, *Tipping the Velvet,* Sarah Waters articulates many of the crucial issues that affected women in search of a space in the public sphere[61]. In *Tipping the Velvet*, the heroine, Nan, walks the streets, becomes a «public woman» by being an actress, then a prostitute, then a *femme entretenue,* before making her nest in other people's places, finding a home, and becoming a platform woman. The wanderings of the heroine are not only metaphorical, as she ends in the streets, almost homeless. «I walked for something like an hour before I rested again; but the course I took was a random one that sometimes doubled back upon itself: my aim was less to run from Kitty than to hide from her, to lose myself in the grey anonymous spaces of the city»[62], but at the end of the novel, Nan has to work hard to deserve Florence's love, ironically enough by becoming an «angel of the house», a somewhat ironical wink to Victorian fiction: «I felt inspired, now, to tidy this house'. I swept the floor, and then I scrubbed them; then I washed the kitchen tiles, and then the range, and then the kitchen window»[63]. While taking up the props and incidents of the Victorian actress novel, Waters also reverses them to serve her purpose: instead of retiring into classical matrimony and maternity, Nancy retires from stage to achieve a political success and live happily forever after with a woman, and a child. In her novel, thus, Waters goes further than Marryat, Warden and the others, who stopped the narrative when the actress got married, unable to deal with the question of «separate spheres» in the case of the actress, a public married woman. But with Waters's lesbian solution,

58. Ibid., p. 16.
59. Ibid., p. 19.
60. Ibid., p. 236.
61. Waters, Sarah: *Tipping the Velvet,* London, Virago Press, 1998.
62. Ibid., p. 181.
63. Ibid., p. 363.

the dilemma our women's writers stumbled over is solved. The separation between private and public spaces, and, correlatively, between man's and woman's places, vanishes thanks to a twist our women writers would have never dreamt of: the obstacle «man» is simply abolished, and the reconciliation between the two spheres can take place in an authentic «no man's land».

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THE INVASION OF FLEET STREET: WOMEN AND JOURNALISM IN ENGLAND 1880-1950

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Toward the end of the nineteenth century, women entered the public sphere of journalism in England in droves. Complaints surfaced like that in an 1889 trade paper in London which lamented the «invasion of Fleet Street's sanctity . . .[by] . . . journalistic damsels everywhere taking their place at the reporters' table, or hurrying up to the offices about midnight with their 'copy'–chiefly Society news»[1]. This figure of the female journalist invading the «sanctity» of Fleet Street signaled a shift in the participation of women in 1) the public space of modernity–reporters needed to move through any number of spaces, urban and otherwise, to obtain their 'copy'–and 2) the public sphere of debate in the sense that Habermas developed that term, the «rational-critical debate» that underpins modern democratic societies[2]. This crucial entry of women's voices into the public sphere of debate provides us with a generalized image of women as near-full participants in the functioning of modern society. Specific representations of women journalists that appear throughout literature of the late nineteenth century through the World War II period function as an index of the importance of these figures in modernity and also as tropes of the «New Woman» entering formerly off-limits territories, spaces, and public realms. Women's access to «public spaces»–streets, cafes, courthouses, offices, parliament, etc.–was uneven across time as well as across boundaries of class, race, geography, and «propriety». Changing representations of female journalists in literature were in dialectical relation with women's real professional possibilities. In examining a number of such representations, this essay demonstrates the interrelation between women's spatial access and their ability to make

1. HUNTER, Fred: «Women in British Journalism», in Dennis Griffiths (ed.): *The Encyclopedia of the British Press 1422-1992*, London, Macmillan, 1992, p. 688.
2. HABERMAS, Jurgen: T. Burger and F. Lawrence (trans.): *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1989.

meaningful contributions to the political debates of the day, about gender roles and also about war, sexuality, good and evil and many other topics. As Doreen Massey argues, «The spatial is both open to, and a necessary element in, politics in the broadest sense of the word».[3] All spaces are saturated with politics of a kind; women journalists entering spaces coded as «public» allowed them to participate in a sphere of debate formerly seen as beyond their ken or capabilities.

Popular journalism for the «common reader» sprang up in the late nineteenth century as a consequence of «the expansion of the electorate, the 'crystalisation' of political party organization and pressure groups» who used the press for their own ends, the Education Act of 1870 which greatly increased literacy, and «massive technological changes in the printing and distribution of newspapers».[4] In 1884, Florence Fenwick Miller summarized some of the technologies necessary for a flourishing national and international press:

> «The printing press which multiplies the words of the thinker; the steam-engine, which both feeds the press and rushes off its product, and the electric telegraph, which carries thought around the globe make this an age in which mental force assumes an importance which it never had before in the history of mankind»[5] .

She goes on to suggest that women will benefit from this emphasis on «mental force» as they are able to participate in this new, modern world of shared ideas, presumably on an equal footing with men. Toward the end of the century, machines developed that could reproduce copy at an exceedingly rapid rate and with greater clarity of image[6]. These developments contributed to the proliferation of periodicals and other venues for «ephemeral» or «topical» writing, from «domestic magazines» reporting on fashion and recipes, to serious political weeklies. Generally,

> «[e]ditors and publishers regarded women as consumers rather than producers of news. [But] when advertising became necessary to newspapers' survival in the last decades of the nineteenth century women [were] actively sought as journalists to produce articles that would directly appeal to women readers and around which lucrative advertisements targeting women consumers could be placed.»[7] .

Women, then, helped to produce the enormous amounts of copy needed by this explosion of periodicals.

It is difficult to gauge exactly how many women participated in producing journalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in England (or

3. Massey, Doreen: *Space, Place, and Gender*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1994, p. 4.
4. Baylen, J.O.: «The British Press, 1861-1918», in Dennis Griffiths (ed.): *The Encyclopedia of the British Press, 1422-1992,* London, Macmillan, 1992, p. 33.
5. Quoted in Onslow, Barbara: *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, London, Macmillan, 2000, p. 12.
6. See Onslow, Barbara: Op. cit., pp. 9-12.
7. Chambers, Deborah; Steiner, Linda and Fleming, Carole: *Women and Journalism*, London, Routledge, 2004, p. 15.

the United States). The histories of women journalists that exist tend to be biographical[8], or focus on the post-World War II period[9], and the term «journalism» is elastic enough to refer to everything from front-line war dispatches to short articles sharing sewing tips. Women did not necessarily join professional societies or claim their status as «journalist» in a countable way; many did not receive bylines to indicate their gender. They often published as «outside contributors» rather than staff members of periodicals. But a sense of the expansion of the profession for women is indicated by the following statistics: «In 1894 the Society of Women Journalists was established; it had 69 members in 1900 and 236 by 1905»[10]; that is a jump of 340% in five years. In addition, «By 1927, the International Labour Organisation reported that there were 400 women journalists out of a total of 7000 in Britain»[11]. This indicates that 17.5% of journalists in the late 1920s were women, although the percentage may well have been higher than that.

Yet women journalists knew they had to overcome significant disadvantages when entering this male-dominated profession. In 1893 Charlotte O'Conor Eccles explained that «One is horribly handicapped in being a woman. A man meets other men at his club; he can be out and about at all hours; he can insist without being thought bold and forward; he is not presumed to be capable of undertaking only a limited class of subjects, but is set to anything.»[12] The first two items in Eccles' list refer to physical spaces women were restricted from entering, as well as times they were restricted from being abroad. The Victorian strictures of femininity for «respectable» women were antithetical to the demands of journalism as a profession. Massey has shown in her study *Space, Place, and Gender* that patterns of work that took women out of the domestic realm were much more threatening to men and patriarchy than types of work women did at home such as the needle trades, laundry, or writing the occasional article for publication. As Massey explains about the Lancashire factory system:

> «It wasn't so much 'work' as 'going out to' work which was the threat to the patriarchal order. And this in two ways: it threatened the ability of women adequately to perform their domestic role as homemaker for men and children, and it gave them an entry into public life, mixed company, a life not defined by family and husband

8. See for example Ishbel Ross's classic *Ladies of the Press* (1936), Schilpp and Murphy's *Great Women of the Press* (1983), and Barbara Belford's *Brilliant Bylines: A Biographical Anthology of Notable Newspaperwomen in America* (1986). The broader work by Maurine Beasley and Sheila Gibbons, *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism* (second edition 2003) is more of an anthology than a statistical history. All of these works focus on journalists from the United States. Anne Sebba's *Battling for News: The Rise of the Woman Reporter* (1994) chronicles the British journalists.
9. *Women and Journalism* by Chambers, Steiner, and Fleming begins with «Early Women Journalists», but focuses primarily on the post-World War II period.
10. Hunter, Fred: Op. cit., p. 689.
11. Ibid.
12. Quoted in Onslow, Barbara: Op. cit., p. 37.

. . . It was, then, a change in the social *and the spatial* organization of work which was crucial»[13].

Similarly, middle-class women who chose to enter journalism as a profession rather than as a way to make sporadic income from home were required to «go out to work» and enter numerous public spaces, threatening the gendered divisions of the era.

Popular novelist Robert Barr's serial, *Jennie Baxter, Journalist*, published in book form in 1898, tells the tale of a young American woman making her way as a journalist in London. A review of the spaces the character Jennie enters and those she is prohibited from entering gives a sense of the restrictions on women in the late Victorian era, even women determined to enter the working world of journalism. Jennie is marked from the second page of the novel as an «American girl»[14] making her forthright and courageous personality that of an outsider, a New Woman from across the ocean. Through subterfuge and the use of her feminine charms–along with help from the Irish doorman–Jennie lands herself a place on the staff of the London *Daily Bugle* despite the reservations of the editor and his attempt to direct her to the «woman's column». He says to her: «I may tell you frankly that I don't believe in women journalists. The articles we publish by women are sent to this office from their own homes... There are many things that women can't do at all which men must do»[15]. The editor clearly objects to women gathering news and assumes women can write «from their own homes» about the domestic topics covered by the «woman's page.» Jennie, not to be dismissed, overhears this editor discussing a «scoop» with another journalist, and follows the lead to publish the news in another newspaper the following day. This impresses the *Daily Bugle* editor enough that he gives her a regular position on his paper.

This clever gaining of a job on a «well-edited paper»[16] promises much for the adventures of this character in the novel. The assignments she receives, however, are confined for the most part to «appropriate» spaces in this era for a journalist of Miss Baxter's gender, class, and beauty. Her first assignment takes her to a castle in Austria where she impersonates a secretary in order to unravel the mystery of a princess's stolen diamonds. Sequestered within the walls of the castle, Miss Baxter learns, using her feminine powers of perception, that the problem is a lack of communication between the prince and princess–as well as an incompetent staff–and so she solves the marital problems of this royal couple in addition to solving the mystery of the diamonds. Her second assignment is similarly situated in the spaces inhabited by the upper class and poses no threat to the respectability or welfare of Miss Baxter. Jennie impersonates the Austrian princess in order to attend a major Society ball in London given by

13. Massey, Doreen: Op. cit., p. 198.
14. Barr, Robert: *Jennie Baxter, Journalist,* New York, Frederick A. Stokes, 1899. Original publication 1898.
15. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
16. Ibid., p. 44.

the Duchess of Chiselhurst. The narrative therefore treats Jennie as a personage who belongs at such functions, and confines her to such respectable spaces, with a few exceptions.

Perhaps the most extreme example of Miss Baxter violating the laws of respectability in the novel is in her trip to the newspaper offices after the Society ball. She leaves her hotel at midnight in a hansom which was «rather beyond [the] experience» of the night porter, travels «through the nearly deserted streets» and then «dismisse[s] her vehicle at Charing Cross, walk[s] down the Strand until she g[ets] another, then proceed[s] direct to the office of the *Daily Bugle*»[17]. An unaccompanied woman walking down the Strand past midnight would have been beyond the bounds of respectability, but in this case, Jennie Baxter needed to deliver her «copy» for the Society News, just what the trade paper in 1889 quoted above complains about. The narrative conspicuously refuses to dwell on this event in the life of the reporter, getting her to her destination within a paragraph. She then spends the night in the offices of the *Daily Bugle* without needing to venture into the unsafe streets once again.

Miss Baxter is then posted back in Austria to solve the political mystery of an explosion in the Treasury Department. This seems to suggest that the journalist will need to enter the masculine realm of political machinations to discover the drama behind the explosion and the harsh speech made by an Austrian minister against England. Jennie and her friend the Princess decide, however, that they will gain all the political information they need by hosting a tea party for the wives of the ministers, and so they do. Jennie follows the track that the wife of the Master of the Treasury points out until it leads her to the apartment of an old scientist, an expert on explosives. While it might not have been usual for a «respectable» woman to visit the apartment of a man unchaperoned, it is notable that the scientist works from his apartment building rather than in the much more public space of a laboratory, thus Jennie does not need to enter a laboratory space. Miss Baxter is in some physical danger with this scientist as he understands her to be a spy, but given that he is figured as a feeble old man, the female journalist never seems in grave danger. By the end of the interview he is dead of a heart attack, and Miss Baxter has solved yet another mystery without venturing into many public spaces at all, and none unaccompanied.

The final episode in the novel is that of Miss Baxter being sent to Russia to steal a letter from an English diplomatic representative in a train compartment. This is Jennie's riskiest assignment, as she travels alone and has encounters with the dangerous and unscrupulous Russian police. The diplomatic representative, however, turns out to be the love of her life, whom she met at the Duchess of Chiselhurst's ball. They meet again, she returns the letter she has stolen from him, and agrees to his proposal of marriage. The plot ends with Miss Jennie Baxter resigning from her post on the *Daily Bugle* to be the wife of

17. Ibid., p. 126.

a diplomat, a man who protests at «having to allow her to go off unprotected» when she engages a hansom by herself to complete her assignment and turn in her resignation[18].

One can easily see from this plot summary that the novel confines «Jennie Baxter, Journalist» to physical spaces in which women were considered respectable, and in which they would not directly encounter «hard news.» What is more striking about this novel than the physical confinement of the journalist is the lack of impact her work makes on the *Daily Bugle* as a newspaper, and therefore on the public sphere of debate during the era. The mystery of the princess's diamonds turns out to be a private affair, and so there is no «news» to report. The long description Jennie gives to the newspaper about the Duchess of Chiselhurst's ball falls squarely under the typical heading for women's journalism, «Society News». The articles published about the old scientist's experiments that Jennie discovers were the cause of the explosion in the Treasury in Vienna bring discredit rather than glory to the *Daily Bugle*. The science-fiction nature of the plot does not square well with the truth-telling functions of the press, and so the *Bugle* is seen as a dubious purveyor of truth. Why the Austrian minister made a speech against England is never explained. And finally, the personal nature of the plot resolution in the Russian adventure undermines any potential for public news the stealing of the letter might have had (although it promises to help the editor in the future). Therefore, in a 337-page novel, Jennie Baxter is shown to have contributed few articles to the newspaper, and those of little public import. The character is confined not only to safe and respectable physical spaces, but to safe and non-threatening rhetorical spaces–Society News and what appears to be science fiction. It apparently was not possible for this male novelist in 1898 to imagine in fictional terms a woman journalist contributing meaningfully to the public sphere of debate in the press.

Yet in the same year, the prolific author Arnold Bennett wrote a short work on the profession titled *Journalism for Women*. He provides both admonishment and encouragement to women aspiring to be journalists, and his list of periodicals alone, in the chapter «Notes on the Leading Types of Papers» gives a sense of the wide range of possibilities for women in journalism at this time. While Robert Barr's imaginative work quite severely limits the spaces in which female journalists can travel and the debates to which they can contribute, women were in fact expanding the field every day. Two early and remarkable correspondents were Florence Dixie, who was commissioned in 1881 to report from the South African Transvaal for the *Morning Post*[19], and Flora Shaw, «the first woman on the permanent staff of *The Times*» who sent dispatches from Gibraltar, Egypt, South Africa, and the wilds of the Yukon among other places[20]. Both of these women not only traveled across numerous national borders but

18. Ibid., p. 330.
19. Sebba, Anne: *Battling for News: The Rise of the Woman Reporter*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1994, pp. 23-28.
20. Ibid., p. 38.

located themselves in spaces generally reserved for men–interviewing on the front lines of war, sleeping outdoors (sometimes with a saddle as a pillow), riding into rural South Africa to meet the Zulu inhabitants, descending into diamond and gold mines[21]. Both women also made significant contributions to the public debate in England on colonialism. Dixie vigorously supported the Zulu king Cetshwayo[22]; Shaw «produced more than five hundred articles on economic and political issues in the colonies»[23]. These women among others tested the limits of gendered spaces and transgressed to return to the metropole with information that directly entered public deliberations of the day.

In addition to writing for mainstream publications, women journalists contributed to the public sphere of debate in England by creating an «alternative» press. For example, during the most intense period of the campaign to obtain equal suffrage, between 1903 and 1928, a large number of suffrage periodicals were launched[24]. While women marched in the streets, blocked the steps to parliament, smashed plate glass windows, and went to prison for these activities, they also wrote reasoned and polemical pieces of journalism for the purposes of «publicising their cause to the popular press and overcoming bad publicity»[25]. One of those involved in the struggle for suffrage, Margaret Haig, Lady Rhondda began a feminist political weekly on the model of the *New Statesman and Nation* in 1920. She and her colleagues began *Time and Tide* to provide analysis of the somewhat strange, new post-World War I world. They claimed that the weekly would offer an independent point of view, «not dictated by any party or personal bias», but rather considering «not one but a thousand replies» on the issues of the day. They explain in the editorial for the first issue: «That the group behind this paper is composed entirely of women has already been frequently commented upon. It would be possible to lay too much stress upon the fact... On the other hand, this fact is not without its significance,» for this new postwar political world includes women and they deserve attention they have not received before[26]. The many women who wrote for *Time and Tide* tackled domestic and international politics, and debated issues of particular interest to women such as «the population question» and birth control, suffrage, and equal pay for equal work. The weekly often ran self-reflexive pieces on journalism–biographical portraits of female journalists; articles debating the functions of the press in a democratic society, and so on. Many, many women wrote for *Time and Tide*[27] and also probed the image of female journalists in their fiction

21. Ibid., pp. 27-37.
22. Ibid., p. 27.
23. Ibid., p. 42.
24. See Chambers Deborah; Steiner, Linda and Fleming, Carole: Op. cit., p. 152; See also Doughan, David and Sanchez, Denise: *Feminist Periodicals 1855-1984*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1987.
25. Chambers et al.: Op. cit., p. 153.
26. Women comprised almost 40 percent of the electorate after 1918. See Davis, John: *A History of Britain*, 1885-1939, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999, p. 199.
27. Some of the more famous writers for this weekly were Elizabeth Robins, Vera Brittain, E.M. Delafield, Crystal Eastman, Storm Jameson, Ellen Wilkinson, and Cicely Hamilton.

as well. Winifred Holtby, for example, who served as a director of *Time and Tide* from 1926 until illness cut short her life in the mid-1930s, included a journalist/editor figure in her novel about North Africa, *Mandoa, Mandoa* (1933).

Time and Tide and the myriad other publications that comprised the alternative women's press can be understood as creating what Rita Felski calls, in her volume *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, a «feminist counter-public sphere»[28]. Nancy Fraser explains that the «indispensible» concept of the public sphere

> «designates a theatre in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs... This arena is conceptually distinct from the state... [and] from the official economy; it is not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations, a theatre for debating and deliberating rather than for buying or selling»[29].

The conception of the public sphere as defined by Habermas refers to the public spaces of debate that arose in the eighteenth century–an earlier era during which newspaper and periodical publication burgeoned at an enormous rate–for bourgeois, propertied males. Habermas admits that in the early twentieth century, even in the midst of «rational-critical debate... be[ing] replaced by consumption, and the web of public communication unravel[ing] into acts of individuated reception», some «residual functions» of the «liberal public sphere» remained within democracies[30]. In other words, some types of journalism retained their ability to comment critically on modernity without being wholly coopted by commercial interests or editorial demands. I argue, parallel with Felski, that these residual functions of the liberal public sphere are discernible in the alternative press that women created. Lady Rhondda, and many other female editors, publishers, and journalists, created spaces within modern society in which crucial debates of the day could take place. Since the women's press remained in a generally oppositional stance to the mainstream press, and «offer[ed] a critique of cultural values from the standpoint of women as a marginalized group within society», Felski's phrase «feminist counter-public sphere» is helpful in understanding that there is not just one unified public sphere, but multiple public spheres; debates are continually staged both within and among these spheres[31].

Even as these female editors, publishers, and journalists were creating and participating in spaces in society in which serious political and ideological matters were discussed, which necessitated their not only entering but producing formerly off-limits territories–political meetings, editorial offices, printing workshops, etc.–numerous women journalists were still confined to the

28. Felski, Rita: *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 164.
29. Fraser, Nancy: «Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy», in *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* Cambridge, MIT Press, 1992, pp. 2-3.
30. Habermas, Jurgen: Op. cit., p. 161.
31. Felski, Rita: Op. cit., p. 167.

«woman's page» and the spaces coded «feminine» in the society. One of the contributors to *Time and Tide*, Rose Macaulay, interrogates some of the conflicts of female journalists in her novel *Keeping Up Appearances*, published in the year women in England gained equal suffrage, 1928[32]. In it Macaulay creates a character with an identity split in very modernist, alienated fashion; Daisy Simpson writes a column on women's issues for a London newspaper; Daphne Simpson, her alter ego, is a well-mannered participant in the London social world. Daisy/Daphne publishes popular novels under the name Marjorie Wynne. The novel investigates these multiple facets of a single character and the spaces in which each travels and is comfortable or uncomfortable.

Daphne is in some sense the socially idealized Daisy; the latter hails from a working-class family and has learned to write journalism to propel herself into the modern urban world. Daphne is comfortable with clubs, societies, men, and upper-class characters. Daisy is both more involved and more removed from modernity through her journalism. Early in the novel Daisy is on vacation with the educated Folyot family on an island in the Mediterranean where another English tourist has been murdered. Daisy writes a brief report for her newspaper beginning, «The mystery surrounding the shingled girl-typist, Vera Wilson, who was found dead in a wood here five days ago, is still unsolved, though the police are said to be at work on clues in their possession»[33]. Daisy has conducted interviews and teased out what few facts she could glean about this case, the novel implying that women journalists are at large trying to understand grave issues of life and death and report on them for a public readership.

Most of Daisy's journalism, however, is not direct reporting, but rather weekly columns focusing on the broad subject of «Women». Sample subjects include: «Should Clever Women Marry Stupid Men? Should Clever Men Marry Stupid Women? Should Women and Men Marry At All? What is the Religion of Women? The Post-War Girl: is she selfish, rude, clever, stupid, drunk, thin, tall, dark, fair?»[34]. When writing these columns Daisy is shown to be isolated from «facts», and sits in her London flat creating ideological fictions of gender that pass as «journalism» at this time. When Daisy leaves her flat, she confronts a world of much greater complexity than appears in the women's columns she writes and reads:

> «Daisy often wandered alone about London, seeing and hearing what was to be seen and heard, prowling and questing like a small beast of curiosity but mediocre intelligence in a jungle, her mind bewildered and dazed by uproar, clatter, and the peculiar behavior and surprising utterances of others, yet frequently pleased by what she encountered. She would sometimes join the female herd that wound slowly past the shops which sold female clothes... And her eyes would stare and her mouth prim

32. Macaulay, Rose: *Keeping Up Appearances,* New York, Carroll and Graf, 1986. Original publication 1928.
33. Ibid., p. 17.
34. Ibid., p. 20.

like the others. Then she would think, how odd. All this to-do about what we put on. What does it all mean?... That might be a subject for an article. But she would not be allowed to write it along the lines it took in her mind, but quite the contrary»[35].

Daisy encounters the complexities of modernity in her meanderings about the public spaces of London, but the novel satirizes the type of «women's journalism» that reduces these complexities to formulaic pronouncements about gender, and articles on the latest fashion, etc., that uphold the commercial interests of the newspaper proprietors and advertisers. No questioning of the status quo is shown to be possible. Macaulay's portrait of the female journalist shows her entering the public space of facts and the tumult of urban life, but illustrates how she is then coopted in a series of genres that limit the critical debate of modernity.

The novel develops the contrast between news reporting and writing women's columns by juxtaposing Daisy's work for the *Sunday Wire* and her half-brother Edward's journalism for the *Evening Wire*. Edward's duties are to wander about London in search of the latest «amazing story». The satirical narrator explains that:

«Before Edward's feet amazing scenes blossomed as flowers do before the feet of princesses... [E]vents the most ordinary–as that this or that royal personage had left the appropriate station for some destination elsewhere... that there had been quite a crowd going off to seaside resorts before a holiday... that someone had, in an access of covetousness, of rage, or of those other human passions that stir murderers to their crimes, taken the life of another, that thieves had plundered a shop-window of its contents... all these quite usual happenings assumed, under Edward's amazed manipulations, the character of Incidents»[36].

Edward is not paid to contribute to the weighty debates of the day, but he is required to traverse the length and breadth of London to gather his material. He complains to his sister: «It's all very well for you; you can just pour out the goods sitting in your room, and needn't go hopping around asking people fool questions»[37]. But Daisy laments: «And I could be writing something decent–I know I could. That's the damned part about it»[38]. Earlier in the novel she thinks to herself, considering the stereotyped figures such as the Modern Business Woman and the Smart Woman about which she is commissioned to write:

«Why was she thus doomed, she impatiently sighed, merely through an accident of sex, to write of these grotesque waxworks, of which intelligent persons had never heard? Why would they not let her write about inhuman things, about books, about religions, about places, about the world at large, about things of which intelligent persons *had* heard? »[39].

35. Ibid., p. 62.
36. Ibid., p. 66.
37. Ibid., p. 67.
38. Ibid., p. 68.
39. Ibid., p. 22.

Despite Daisy Simpson's greater mobility and independence in the 1920s than Jennie Baxter's in the 1890s, Macaulay's representation of a female journalist continues to betray the limits on intellectual spaces she can inhabit, which are even stricter than the limits on the physical spaces she can enter beyond her flat in Great Russell Street.

Women did report on the «big» events of the 1930s, such as the depression and the Spanish Civil War, although most histories suggest that more American than British women entered the debates about these contentious topics[40]. For one reason, Eleanor Roosevelt famously provided American women journalists opportunities by holding women-only press conferences, reversing gendered access to public space. These women reporters were represented in a series of films as well as fiction; as one critic states: «Women journalists were common on the screen in the 1930s, but rare in newsrooms»[41]. The political columnist in the film «Woman of the Year» starring Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy (1942) was based on Dorothy Thompson, the journalist kicked out of Germany in 1934 for her reports on Hitler. When World War II broke out, many women in Britain and the United States took over positions that men left vacant to go to the front, although many were pushed out in the «immediate post-war period when men returned and reclaimed their newsroom jobs»[42]. During the war, British women confronted the «inflexible rule» that «women correspondents were not allowed at the front» and had to use ingenuity and courage to enter the prohibited spaces of war. Anne Sebba chronicles the adventures and heroic feats of women journalists such as Clare Hollingworth who endured hazardous journeys through the Balkans, Turkey, Egypt and elsewhere to file stories about the war for British newspapers. Sebba concludes that at the end of the war «the British still considered [women reporters] not only unnecessary but a nuisance». although «American authorities proved more amenable», allowing women to join the press corps in the North African desert and elsewhere[43]. Nancy Caldwell Sorel's marvelous history *The Women Who Wrote the War* details the experiences of many American women correspondents, and argues for their crucial role in representing the war experience to the culture at large[44]. We see, therefore, that the uneven restrictions against women entering spaces coded «masculine» increasingly allowed individual women to transgress in order to write about and discuss topics of the utmost gravity for civilization. This was a far cry from Society News.

One of the journalists who wrote for *Time and Tide* during the 1920s and 30s, as well as many other periodicals, Rebecca West, came to claim the space of journalism as a crucial ethical space for women in modernity throughout her

40. See Sebba, Anne: Op. cit., pp. 86-104.
41. Good, Howard: *Girl Reporter: Gender, Journalism and the Movies*, Lanham, MD and London, 1998, p. 1.
42. Chambers et al.: Op. cit., p. 35.
43. Ibid., pp. 157-158.
44. Sorel, Nancy Caldwell: *The Women Who Wrote the War*, New York, Perennial, 1999.

long career. West burst onto the British literary scene at eighteen years old in 1911 with caustic reviews of major male novelists; she became an outspoken feminist and a respected journalist and woman of letters, and her image entered the public imagination as such. Much later, West and Marguerite Higgins were two of the «many women reporters sent to cover the Nuremberg trials of the Nazi war criminals, which dragged on for ten months of 1946»[45]. In her reports, which were first published in *The New Yorker* and later in a volume titled *A Train of Powder*, West incorporates portraits of her fellow female journalists. While these reports are coded «non-fiction,» West uses some of her skills as a novelist to describe her colleagues. Her images of her peers provide a stark contrast to Barr's Jennie Baxter taking notes on the fashions at the Duchess of Chiselhurst's ball, or Macaulay's representation of Daisy Simpson as unable to break out of the ideological paradigms of the time in her journalism. West describes the «nine women journalists» with whom she shared a villa in Nuremberg: «a lovely North African girl, with crenellated hair and skin the color of cambric tea; ... a French girl, manifestly so ill she ought to have been in hospital but quite unconcerned about herself», and so on[46]. West remarks: «Nothing can have been so offensive to the spirit of the Schloss as these women correspondents. Its halls had been designed for women who lived inside their corsets as inside towers», and here were women bringing the concerns of the public world into the Schloss, women who would never have consented to be corseted. West concludes that «these ink-stained gypsies had earned the right to camp in their stronghold because they had been on the side of order against disorder, stability against incoherence»[47] throughout World War II. West provides us with a portrait of women journalists in the public spaces of post-war Germany–courtrooms, streets, marketplaces, Schlosses–whose role is to turn their moral force into articles that would influence public opinion, articles that would uphold moral order and stability rather than commercial interests or strict gender roles as in Macaulay's novel. They use the press as a space for «rational-critical debate».

In discussing the position of the didactic woman writer in the eighteenth century, the era of Habermas's bourgeois public sphere, Janet Todd comments as follows: «it is woman's axiomatic separation from the public sphere which actually allows comment on it, comment that enhances her moral status while it accepts her absolute exclusion from day-to-day politics»[48]. By the post-World War II period, women journalists were no longer required to maintain strict physical or intellectual separation from public spaces in society in order to make their voices heard in the public sphere of rational-critical debate. That is

45. Sebba, Anne: Op. cit., p. 182.
46. West, Rebecca: «Greenhouse with Cyclamens I», New York, Viking Press, 1955, pp. 3-72. Original publication 1946.
47. Ibid., p. 26.
48. Todd, Janet: *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1989, p. 227.

not to say that they did not or do not face restrictions about the spaces they can enter or the information to which they have access. In a chapter on the «under-representation of women in political news», Chambers et. al. explain that «a field relying on intimate conversations with senior politicians, political writing relies on an 'old boy' style of networking and often on the covert 'leaking' of information by political figures for personal gain rather than public good»[49]. As women have staked claims to the public spaces of society, some news has gone underground to the «intimate» spaces of politicians' chambers or «private» meetings among men. Simultaneously women have continued to struggle to enter certain spaces, such as sporting events and locker rooms; the number of women sports reporters today indicates that some of the barriers to that field are falling, if slowly.[50] As I write, a debate ensues in the United States about the number of women writers who have columns on the «op-ed» pages of newspapers and in magazines. As the press has become increasingly beholden to commercial interests, the «op-ed» page and its attendant «letters to the editor» section still arguably retain vestiges of rational-critical debate. Katha Pollitt, columnist for *The Nation* complains that in *The Washington Post*–a relatively progressive daily–only one in ten «op-ed» pieces have been written by women so far in 2005. Out of eight regular columnists for *The New York Times*, only one is a woman, and «all five of *USA Today*'s political columnists are male.»[51] The «op-ed» page remains a rhetorical space that continues to restrict women. An equally important potential space for the rational-critical debate necessary to democracy is clearly the internet. As Chambers et. al. point out, it might be too early to determine women journalists' access to and participation in online news sites. However, they cite a 2002 study by researchers in the Netherlands which found that «74% of 137 on-line journalists who participated in their web-based survey were male», and conclude that the job of on-line journalist «has begun to emerge as a masculine domain» and «needs to be monitored for potential gender segregation»[52]. Therefore, as notions of «space» change in the contemporary world into concepts such as «cyberspace», we may witness another struggle by women journalists to enter those public spaces and spheres relevant to the news of the twenty-first century.

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49. CHAMBERS et al.: Op. cit., p. 116.
50. Ibid., pp. 111-116 and 130-132.
51. POLLITT, Katha: «Invisible Women», *The Nation,* 4 April 2005, p. 10.
52. CHAMBERS et al.: p. 235.

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NEGOTIATING BOUNDARIES: THE ECONOMICS OF SPACE AND GENDER IN MINA LOY'S EARLY POEMS

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Since the beginning of her career in the early teens of the twentieth century, the British born poet Mina Loy was concerned with rethinking, redefining, and often rejecting, traditional ideas about gender identity. The poet's concern developed out of her personal and aesthetic dialogue with contemporary artistic and cultural phenomena, such as Italian Futurism, Gertrude Stein's experimental prose, Pound's modernism and Surrealist poetics, with which she came into contact during the years spent in Paris (1900-1907), in Florence (1907-1916), and after she moved to New York in 1916. In Loy's early poetry the reflection on gender is inextricably linked with the exploration of the aesthetic and epistemological possibilities of language as well as with the creation of new poetic forms, which were to influence and inspire numerous American early modernist poets.

Loy's interest for questions of gender identity did not stem just from her involvement with first wave American feminism, as Linda A. Kinnahan suggests[1], but was also the result of her observation and refusal of the restriction of gender roles both in the middle class conservative social environment in which she grew up, as well as in the bohemian and wealthy expatriate circles that she frequented across Europe. Moreover, it was related to her contact with the Futurists and the debate internal to the movement on the role of women in the group and in society. Marriage, sexual freedom, sexuality, gender identity, prostitution and procreation were some of the themes that the swashbuckling Futurist manifestoes and works openly confronted as part of their project of

1. KINNAHAN, Linda A.: *Poetics of the Feminine. Authority and Literary Tradition in Williams Carlos Williams, Mina Loy, Denise Levertov and Kathleen Fraser*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 6. The author points out that Loy came to know of the American debates on feminism before her arrival in the US through her friend, the American expatriate Mabel Dodge, who was living in Florence during Loy's stay in the Tuscan city.

renewal of art and society, from Marinetti's infamous call for «the scorn for woman» and to «fight feminism» in «The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism» of 1909, to his fantasy of male parthenogenesis in the novel *Mafarka le Futuriste* (1909), via Valentine de Saint Point's pledge for masculine women in her *Manifesto of the Futurist Woman* (1912).

Literature was not Loy's first aesthetic vocation. She had trained as a painter in Paris, was a member of the Paris Salon d'Automne for the drawing section, exhibited at numerous art galleries and salons across Europe, including the New English Art Club, the Carfax Gallery and Vanessa Bell's Friday Club in London, the *First Free Futurist International Exhibition* at the Sprovieri Gallery in Rome. However, if her paintings and drawings were mildly successful and were judged to be proper examples of feminine aesthetics[2], it is through her poetry, which she started writing around 1913, that Loy became famous. As with numerous other female avant-garde poets at the beginning of the twentieth century, Loy's fame was initially due to the discrepancies between her life-style and the accepted codes of conduct for women.

Once Loy's poems begun to be published regularly in the US literary magazines *Camera Work*, *The Trend*, *Rogue, Others* in the mid-teens, the combination of experimental metre, free verse and the unconventionally explicit –and therefore considered «not feminine»– subject matter, provoked a wave of interest in the media, which constructed the character «Mina Loy», defined by her eccentric dress-code, her contact with the exotically daring Futurists and her unconventional marital and love relationships. Like Djuna Barnes, Loy first became (in)famous as a «modern woman» rather than as a poet and an artist[3].

The publication of the first four «Love Songs»[4] fuelled the harshest criticism, even amongst the patrons of the avant-garde, such as Amy Lowell, who threatened to withdraw her financial support to the magazine. It was the gender identity of the poet and of the speaking voice, often coalesced by the critics into a single entity, to inform the critical judgment of Loy's texts. On the one hand, Ezra Pound framed his appraisal of Loy's work in terms that specifically refer to stereotypical constructions of femininity: Pound admired Loy's poetry, but also thought it was «whimsical», and that it was emotionless[5]. On the other hand,

2. Burke, Carolyn: *Becoming Modern. The Life of Mina Loy*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996. On this topic, see especially chapters 5 and 6.
3. For further details on the press articles portraying Loy as a quintessentially «modern woman», see Burke, Carolyn: Op. cit., esp. «Prologue»; Conover, Roger: «Introduction», in Mina Loy: *The Lost Lunar Baedecker*, Manchester, Carcanet, 1997, pp. xi-xx; and Galvin, Mary: «The Rhythms of Experience: Mina Loy and the Poetics of 'Love'», in Mary Galvin: *Queer Poetics. Five Modernist Women Writers*, Westport and London, Praeger, 1999, pp. 52-79. For further reflections on the critical appraisal of female avant-garde poets in relation to gender, I refer the reader to the following texts on Djuna Barnes: Broe, Mary Lynn (ed.): *Silence and Power. A Revaluation of Djuna Barnes*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1991 and Caselli, Daniela: «'Elementary, my dear Djuna': Unreadable Simplicity in Djuna Barnes's *Creatures in an Alphabet*», *Critical Survey*, 13:3 (2001), pp. 89-112.
4. In *Others*, 1:1 (1915).
5. Nicholls, Peter: «'Arid Clarity': Ezra Pound, Mina Loy, and Jules Laforgue», *Yearbook of English Studies*, 32 (2002), pp. 52-64.

both «Love Songs» and «Parturition»[6] were judged outrageous and obscene not only because of their explicit sexual content, the unembellished descriptions of the corporeal and fleshly aspects of sexual encounters and of parturition, but also because these were told from the point of view of a female speaking voice.

Indeed, in these and in numerous other poems from the Florentine years, Loy not only explored the possibilities of a poetics of the female self, but also gradually investigated and criticised, through her experiments with language, form and subject matter, the very system on which these possibilities relied. As Linda A. Kinnahan observes, «Loy's strategies of language rupture, montage, and self-reflexiveness work to defamiliarize and question gender ideologies prevalent in her time and retrieving her work serves to repoliticise modernism's potential»[7].

In particular, a group of poems written in Florence between 1913 and 1915 specifically reflect on the construction of gender identity in relation to the socio-economic organization of space. In «Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots»[8] and «The Effectual Marriage»[9] the literary tropes of domesticity, faithful love, and docile femininity are exposed as the product of a ruthless economic system of exchange, which also informs the architectural spaces of daily life. In these poems society as a whole is seen to contribute not only to uphold a restrictive regime of sexual difference on which this system is based, but also to perpetuate the conditions through which gender identity is essentialised and conceived as «natural», while its economic roots may remain unspoken.

1. GENDERED SPACES

«Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots» and «The Effectual Marriage» communicate a sense of claustrophobia. The domestic spaces of these poems are constraining, the characters are literally and metaphorically imprisoned and confined in the spaces of daily life, whose structure and function are experienced as informed by an oppressive project. Boundary areas such as windows and doors are endowed with the possibility of change and transformation, but they also simultaneously function as loci in which the ideological force of spatial structures is at its strongest. The constraining aspect of the domestic spaces in the poems is directly linked with the reflection on the oppressive consequences of the enforcement of sexual segregation. However, Loy's poems are less focused on the representation of separated social spheres on the basis of gender, than on the exploration of the mechanisms which inform the formation and construction of gender identity through the experience of architectural, bodily and social space. And, conversely, Loy's texts also reflect on how the reliance on a dual gender model in turn shapes the experience and

6. First published in *The Trend*, 8:1, (1914).
7. Kinnahan, Linda: Op. cit., p. 10.
8. 1914; first published in *Rogue*, 2:1, (1915).
9. Ca. 1915; first published in *Others*, 1917.

perception of social, bodily and architectural spaces. Indeed, the spaces of these texts are remarkably bare of details; it is as if Loy was interested merely in the quintessential constituents of architectural space, as the determinants of the functioning of human relations in space.

In «The Effectual Marriage or the Insipid Narrative of Gina and Miovanni» the two characters live in different rooms, Gina in the kitchen, Miovanni in the library, each looking out of the house through a different window, their communication taking place through the passing of a door between the two rooms. In the very first stanzas of the poem, the relationship between the characters with one another, as well as their perception of themselves and of their identity, are expressed in spatial terms:

> «The door was an absurd thing
> Yet it was passable
> They quotidienly passed through it
> It was this shape
>
> Gina and Miovanni who they were God knows
> They knew it was important to them
> This being who they were
> They were themselves
> Corporeally transcendentally consecutively
> conjuntively and they were quite complete
>
> In the evening they looked out of their two windows
> Miovanni out of his library window
> Gina from the kitchen window
> From among the pots and pans
> Where he so kindly kept her
> Where she so wisely busied herself
> Pots and Pans she cooked in them
> All sorts of sialagogues
> Some say that happy women are immaterial»[10]

The division of the domestic spaces is presented as a parody of the traditional division of roles in the household, but also of the stereotypical perception of the intellectual abilities and skills of male and female individuals. Clearly, spatial division in this poem is related to the question of identity, which is posited initially by the characters' names, obvious distortion of the first names Mina and Giovanni[11]. Elizabeth Arnold reads this distortion as a dramatization of the entrapment of the characters in their constraining and symbiotic relationship[12]. However, since taken as a pair, the names may be read as an anagram, Loy's

10. Loy, Mina: «The Effectual Marriage», in Op. cit., p. 36, lines 1-19.
11. With all probability Giovanni Papini, editor of the Futurist literary magazine *Lacerba*, and one of the most important members of the Futurists in Florence, and with whom Loy had a love affair.
12. Arnold, Elizabeth: «Mina Loy and the Futurists», *Sagetrieb,* 8:1 (1989), p. 113.

pun may be read as a reflection on the relational mechanisms informing the characters' understanding of themselves.

Loy also recurred to anagrams of first and second names in the 1919 poem «Lion's Jaws», a satire of Futurism, but whereas in the latter poem each name is an anagram of itself, in «The Effectual Marriage» the names are interlocked, as if to suggest that both Gina's and Miovanni's identities can be conceived only in relation to one another's. This idea is reiterated in the second stanza, in which the speaking voice, an external observer, both negates and affirms the importance of Gina and Miovanni's stable identities. Identity is indeed crucial in this text, and more important are the mechanisms through which it is perceived and constituted:

Corporeally transcendentally consecutively
conjuntively and they were quite complete

These lines suggest that Gina and Miovanni's identities are defined through their bodies as transcendent and essential, but, most importantly, in term of relation, towards the goal of completeness. As much as constituting a satirical comment on the myth of completeness and self-sufficiency of the loving couple, the ambiguous meaning of the adverb «quite» also suggests that, no matter how strong the pressure for stabilisation of identity, a full stability may never be quite achieved; perhaps because this stability is based on a supposedly transcendental meaning of sexual difference, and its constraining binarism. The poles «female» and «male» define each other, with the male constituting a normative category, to which the female is a complement, a «reaction»:

«Gina being a female
But she was more than that
Being an incipience a correlative
an instigation of the reaction of man
From the palpable to the transcendent
Mollescent irritant of his fantasy[13]
[…]
Gina was a woman
Who wanted everything
To be everything in woman
Everything everyway at once
Diurnally variegate
Miovanni always knew her
She was Gina
Gina who lent monogamy
With her fluctuant aspirations
A changeant consistency
Unexpected intangibilities
Miovanni remained
Monumentally the same

13. Loy, Mina: Op. cit., pp. 36-37, lines 21-26.

The same Miovanni
If he had become anything else
Gina's world would have been at an end
Gina with no axis to revolve on
Must have dwindled to a full stop»[14]

The masculine element is here seen as a normative force, which functions as a means of stabilization and as a source of meaning. Miovanni occupies the position of the phallus, as the guarantor of the symbolic order that holds everything in place against the threats of Gina's lack of stability, expressed by images of fluidity and change. Gina, however, is no passive recipient:

«While Miovanni thought alone in the dark
Gina supposed that peeping she might see
A round light shining where his mind was
She never opened the door
Fearing that this might blind her
Or even
That she should see Nothing at all»[15]

Like the ideal home described by the humanist and architect Leon Battista Alberti in the third book of *Della Famiglia* (1432-1434)[16], the house of «The Effectual Marriage» thrives on the separation of tasks and activities on the basis of gender, and it is the woman's task to understand and enforce the rules that define that separation. The structure of the domestic spaces in this sense mirrors the mechanisms of the gendering of identity: much like the two figures, the rooms they respectively occupy are seen as deriving meaning in relation to one another, and as being both the products and producers of the forms of self-representations which the characters adopt[17]. In this sense, «the house appears to make a space for the institution» of marriage, but «marriage is already spatial. It cannot be thought outside the house that is its condition of possibility before its space»[18].

Loy's text prompts us to go beyond the symbolic identification of interior spaces with either gender, and to relinquish the possibility of identifying a definite agency through which one of the two may generate the other. The question Loy poses is not whether certain spaces produce certain types of

14. Ibid., p. 38, lines 83-100.
15. Ibid., lines 66-74.
16. Alberti, Leon Battista: *Della Famiglia. Libro Terzo: Economicus*, Turin, Einaudi, 1969, pp. 185-318, p. 266.
17. Jane Rendell argues that «space is socially produced but also a condition of social production». Rendell, Jane: «Introduction: 'Gender, Space' », in Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner, Iain Borden (eds.): *Gender Space Architecture. An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, London, Routledge, 2000, p. 101. Rendell's argument echoes, amongst others, Henri Lefebvre: *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith (trans.), Oxford, Blackwell, 1991 (1974), still one of the most extensive and influential texts on the topic.
18. Wigley, Mark: «Untitled: The Housing of Gender», in Beatriz Colomina (ed.): *Sexuality and Space*, Princeton, Princeton Architectural Press, 1992, p. 336.

experiences and identities, but rather how architectural spaces are always also social and gendered spaces, how identity is always also a spatial phenomenon, and which forces are at work at their intersection.

Elizabeth Grosz has shown how in Western culture the idea of space is both product and agent of the polarisation of genders. Space has generally been associated with the realm of the feminine, as a passive, static and penetrable entity, in opposition to time, associated with movement, activity and therefore masculinity[19]. However, male subjects have also been conceived as possessing an interiority generally denied to subjects coded as feminine. This polarity subsumes the attribution of corporeality to female bodies – a corporeality that causes anxiety and must be negated, rendering female bodies a locus of desire and one that simultaneously needs protection, paradoxically through the deployment of a containing space. Within this system, which polarises rationality and corporeality, privileging the former,

> «men place women in the position of being «guardians» of their bodies and their spaces, the condition of both body and space without body or space of their own: they become the living representative of corporeality, of domesticity, of the natural order that men have had to expel from their own self-representations in order to construct themselves as above-the-mundane, beyond the merely material»[20].

And indeed, if Gina is responsible for the functioning of the domestic spaces and of the maintenance of gender identity in marriage, Miovanni is «monumentally the same»[21] and sees himself as «outside time and space»[22]: he is made into a figure who defies temporal and spatial boundaries, that needs to be seen as transcendental and essential, beyond the contingencies of daily life.

It is, however, in «Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots» that Loy's approach to this question broadens to explore the intersection of the metaphorical, social, economic and sexual aspects of the spatialization of gender identity.

2. THE ECONOMICS OF MARRIAGE

> «The seeking after the «vicious» is a small ineffectual wriggle which life makes to escape the boredom of the «pure», but «vice» cannot throw off its «pure» character. The two are one – related to each other as the obverse and reverse of a coin: the under and over of the same psychological condition: as the prostitute is the twin-trader of the legally-protected pure woman. Where there are excise officials there are smugglers. Let therefore the womanly women abandon the «privileges» which enable them to make a corner in a commodity the demand for which they sedulously stimulate,

19. Grosz, Elizabeth: *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of the Bodies*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 112.
20. Ibid., pp. 121-122.
21. Ibid., line 95.
22. Ibid., line 45.

> and the pirate brigs which ply on the outskirts of the trade will become purposeless».
>
> Dora Marsden, «The Chastity of Women», 1914[23]

In her 1914 review of Christabel Pankhurst's «The Hidden Scourge and How to End It» (1913), Dora Marsden, then editor of «The Egoist», attacks the head of the suffragist movement's pledge for female and male chastity as a way to stop the spreading of venereal diseases, but also as a moral weapon. Women, according to Pankhurst, were superior to men also because of their ability to practice celibacy and chastity. Marsden, who left Pankhurst's «Women's Social and Political Union» (WSPU), not only refused to accept the equation of celibacy and morality, but dismantled in her review Pankhurst's gendered polarization of «purity» and «vice»: Marsden sees them as the product of a deeply flawed ideology that also contributed to creating the mutually exclusive and reductive myths of the pure, respectable woman and the prostitute – an ideology which, as argued in the epigraph above, has its own economy. The author argues that Pankhurst's advocation of purity is nothing but a pledge for «virginity», which Marsden sees simply as a commodity that enhances the value of women before marriage.

The equation of marriage with trade and even with prostitution emerged in the late nineteenth century in the writings of social and political thinkers such as Friedrich Engels, Thorstein Veblen, August Bebel, as well as in the writings of suffragists and proto-feminists; following the proliferation of scientific, literary, and popular texts on marriage, and especially on women's sexuality[24], by the early twentieth century the woman's question became a subject matter of poets and artists of the avant-garde. Perhaps as a reply to the Futurists' provocations and to Valentine de Saint Point's *Manifesto of the Futurist Woman*, Mina Loy joined the numerous voices calling for a radical rethinking of the family structure, of marriage, and of the social stigma on female sexuality. Her unpublished *Feminist Manifesto* of 1914 reacts to the feminist movement[25], judged «inadequate», and argues for free love and sex outside marriage, in order to return women their creative powers, which they can express fully through maternity. As Paul Peppis points out, in this text «Loy relies on arguments crucial to racist and patriarchal defenses of empire, [but] she unconventionally uses them to promote a «race» of free-loving, independent, and avant-garde mothers and children[26]. However, the strength of Loy's arguments is sustained by the exposure and refutation of marriage and procreation as activities of economic exchange, in which virginity is the most sought-after good:

23. Marsden, Dora: «The Chastity of Women», *The Egoist: An Individualist Review*, 3:1 (1914).
24. Michel Foucault gives an account of the nineteenth century proliferation of discourses around sexuality, its confinement in the domestic space and as the prerogative of the married couple, in Foucault, Michel: *The History of Sexuality I. The Will to Knowledge,* Robert Hurley (trans.), London, Penguin, 1998 (1976). See also Mort, Frank: *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830*, New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.

> «Leave off looking to men to find out what you are not – seek within yourselves to find out what you are
>
> As conditions are at present constituted – you have the choice between Parasitism, & Prostitution – Negation
>
> Men & women are enemies, with the enmity of the exploited for the parasite, the parasite for the exploited –at present they are at the mercy of the advantage that each can take of the others sexual dependence–. The only point at which the interests of the sexes merge – is the sexual embrace.
>
> […]
>
> The advantages of marriage are too ridiculously ample – compared to all other trades – for under modern conditions a woman can accept preposterously luxurious support from a man (without return of any sort – even offspring) – as a thank offering for her virginity»[27]

As opposed to Valentine de Saint Point's 1912 *Manifesto of the Futurist Woman*[28], which strives to promote an image of woman resembling the futurist man, Loy's text emphasizes sexual difference and challenges the normative role of masculinity. In this text, women's identity is seen as still grounded in their bodies, especially in their reproductive potential, but Loy simultaneously suggests that women's bodies are attributed a meaning within the «sex-gender system», that is

> «both a socio-cultural construct and a semiotic apparatus, a system of representation which assigns meaning (identity, value, prestige, location in kinship, status in the social hierarchy, etc) to individuals in society»[29].

In the *Feminist Manifesto* women's bodies enter this system through the economic value attributed to virginity, which Loy wants to see destroyed:

> «the first self-enforced law for the female sex, as a protection against the man made bogey of virtue – which is the principal instrument of her subjection, would be the unconditional surgical destruction of virginity through-out the female population at puberty –».[30]

The «surgical destruction of virginity» is not advocated as a physical intervention on the female body, but rather as a metaphorical appeal to refute that bodies and «sex» may be naturally given. Loy continued this reflection in

25. It is not clear here whether Loy refers to Valentine de Saint Point's feminism, to Anglo-American feminism, or the suffrage movement.
26. Peppis, Paul: «Rewriting Sex: Mina Loy, Marie Stopes, and Sexology», *MODERNISM / modernity*, 9:4 (2002), p. 570.
27. Loy, Mina: «Feminist Manifesto», in Mina Loy: Op. cit., p. 154.
28. De Saint Point, Valentine: «Manifesto of the Futurist Woman» (1912), in Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zuccoli (eds.): *The Women Artists of Italian Futurism*, New York, Midmarch Art Press, 1997, pp. 163-166.
29. De Lauretis, Teresa: *Technologies of Gender. Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1987, p. 4.
30. Loy, Mina: «Feminist Manifesto», op. cit., pp. 154-155.

«The Black Virginity» (1915), a poem about young boys training to become priests in a Catholic seminary. In this text, virginity is the result of training, education and spatial segregation:

> «Fluted black silk cloaks
> Hung square from shoulders
> Truncated juvenility
> Uniform segregation
> Union in severity
> Modulation
> Intimidation
> Pride of misapprehended preparation
> Ebony statues training for immobility»[31]

In this poem and in «Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots», virginity is a cultural fabrication which simultaneously endows people with a form of identity, and erases their individuality. The boys and the virgins are each a collective group defined by the «intensification»[32] of their bodies and sexual potential, to the point that the virgins have neither names nor sex: they are just embodiments of virginity, which here is a mainly an economic construct[33]. Virgins are such because they have no dots[34] to buy their future husbands, but the economic nature of virginity and marriage is hidden by a romantic narrative[35]:

> «We have been taught
> Love is a god
> White with soft wings
> Nobody shouts
> Virgins for sale
> Yet where are our coins
> For buying a purchaser
> Love is a god
> Marriage expensive
> A secret well kept»[36]

Money is abstract and impersonal; it circulates constantly, and can be attached to neither object nor agent, nor does its circulation allow for the possibility of retracing direct relationships of causality and agency[37]. Similarly,

31. Loy, Mina: «The Black Virginity», in op. cit., p. 42, lines 8-16.
32. See Foucault, Michel: Op. cit., p. 123.
33. An indication given already in the subtitle of the poem, «Latin Borghese», suggesting that the texts refers to the middle classes of a Latin country, presumably Italy.
34. Loy, Mina: «The Black Virginity», in op. cit., p. 42, line 5.
35. Mary Galvin also makes this point in Galvin, Mary: Op. cit., p. 66.
36. Loy, Mina: «Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots», in Mina Loy, op. cit., p. 22, lines 33-38.
37. Simmel, Georg: «Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben» (1903), in Georg Simmel: *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1901-1908. Band I*, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1995, pp. 116-131.
38. «Houses hold virgins / The door's on the chain», lines 1-2; «nobody shouts», line 32; «Somebody who was never / a virgin», lines 43-44; «So much flesh in the world / Wonders at will», lines 51-52.

the poem is characterised by impersonality[38] and constant shifts in points of views. This strategy allows Loy to reflect here on the functioning of a system, a «set of arrangements by which society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied»[39] or, more precisely, a system through which «the body is figured as mere instrument or medium for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related», and in «the body is in itself a construction, as are the myriad 'bodies' that constitute the domain of gendered subjects»[40].

In «Virgins» the domestic spaces participate in this system as agents and products. The walls of the house protect the economic value of the virgins, but also function as boundaries endowing the virgins with a specific form of self-representation, which makes them «present to themselves»:

> «A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greek recognised, the boundary is that form at which something *begins its presencing*. That is why the concept is that of *horismos*, that is, the horizon, the boundary. Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds»[41].

According to Carolyn Burke, in Loy's early poems the house functions both as a sort of container for the self, and a metaphor for female destiny, whereby the spaces of domesticity and corporeality overlap[42]. Virginia Kouidis reads the house in the poem as a «symbol of the human body and the feminine principal» and as signifying virginity[43]. However, I agree with Mary Galvin, who suggests that Loy's text «was striving for even more than an emblematization of the female plight»[44]. Through the spatialization of gender identity, Loy offers in this text a way of thinking beyond gender categories.

Certainly, the walls of the house confine and protect the virgins in spite of themselves; walls and windows separate spaces into an inside, the home, and an outside to which the virgins have only limited access; they are part of a system of surveillance and a scopic regime which contribute to shaping the virgins' perception of themselves, of the men, and the non-virgins. The virgins are delivered to a penetrative gaze from the outside of the house, whereas theirs is restricted to «looking out» or at the mirror[45], thus doubling up as surveyed and surveyors[46]. In this sense, the spaces of the poem may be seen as

39. Rubin, Gayle: «The Traffic in Women», in Rayna R. Reiter (ed.): *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1975, p. 159.
40. Butler, Judith: «Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire», in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires (eds.): *Feminisms*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 280.
41. Heidegger, Martin: «Building Dwelling Thinking», in Martin Heidegger: *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Albert Hofstadter (trans.), New York, Harper Colphon Press, 1971 (1954), p. 154.
42. Burke, Carolyn: Op. cit., p. 199.
43. Kouidis, Virginia: *Mina Loy. American Modernist Poet*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana University Press, 1980, p. 32.
44. Galvin, Mary: Op. cit., p. 68.
45. Lines 13 and 15.
46. Berger, John: *Ways of Seeing*, London, Penguin, 1972, p. 46.

agents that «operate to transform individuals» by carrying «the effects of power over them […], to alter them»[47].

However, in «Virgins» the spaces and the visual regime of the text are in turn shaped by the duality which informs the virgins' world-view: men and non-virgins are described as being by definition the opposite of how the virgins characterise themselves:

> «See the men pass
> Their hats are not ours
> We take a walk
> They are going somewhere
> And they may look everywhere
> Men's eyes look into things
> Our eyes look out»

The dichotomies informing the virgins' perception of themselves and the world are themselves perceived as restrictive. The virgins are only able to see the world, including the spaces they occupy, as series of opposites. As in «Marriage» though, Loy refrains from just associating specific spaces with a power to transform individuals, and suggests, rather, that spaces are themselves invested with a meaning that precedes them. Simultaneously, the poem opens up the possibility of bypassing these dichotomies: Mary Galvin has convincingly analyzed the shifts in the position of the speaking voice, showing how the distant third-person narrator looking *at* the virgins at the beginning of the poem gradually gives way to a duplicity of language granting the virgins more agency, until in the sixth and seventh stanzas the speakers' voices begin to blend and to finally mingle[48]. By the end of the poem the paradigmatic and related series «us/them» and «inside/outside» have given way to the introduction of a new position –«you»[49]– and to a blurring of spatial and personal boundaries.

As a result, it is no longer possible to establish as definite position for the speaking voice, and we are also forced to reconsider the triad «virgins», «men», «non-virgins»: the terms resist being assigned to specific gendered positions, and any attempt to do so would inevitably imply deploying the categories that Loy's text tries to disrupt. If the spatial images of «The Effectual Marriage» point to the way in which men and women are literally and metaphorically «confined in difference»[50], «Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots» prompts us to think beyond the «prison-house» of gender.

47. Foucault, Michel: *Discipline and Punish*, Robert Hurley (trans.), London, Penguin, 2000 (1975), p. 172.
48. Galvin, Mary: Op. cit., p. 69.
49. Line 57.
50. Bal, Mieke: «Enfolding Feminism», in Elisabeth Bronfen and Misha Kavka (eds.): *Feminist Consequences. Theory for the New Century*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2001, p. 437.

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WALKING THE IMPERIAL METROPOLIS: JANET FRAME'S *THE ENVOY FROM MIRROR CITY*

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Janet Frame (1924-2004), a titanic figure of New Zealand literature, is the author of a twelve novels and four short stories, but it is her autobiography that has earned her more popularity among critics. Frame's autobiographical trilogy –*To the Is-land* (1982), *An Angel at My Table* (1984), and *The Envoy from Mirror City* (1984)–, has been regarded as «one of the century's great feats of imaginative self-description»[1]. Its second instalment has been popularised by Jane Campion's 1990 film version under the same title. Regarding the reasons that led her to dive into life-writing, Frame has asserted:

> «… it was the desire really to make myself a first person. For many years I was a third person –as children are. 'They', 'she'… and as probably the oppressed minority has become, 'they'. I mean, children are forever 'they' until they grow up»[2] .

Frame perceives her autobiography as a way to assert her own individuality, growth and counteract those who had *othered* her. This meant shaking off the mad woman image that preyed on her, after being misdiagnosed with schizophrenia by her New Zealand doctors. Frame spent her early life in small towns, where her father worked for the railways. Her upbringing was blighted by her family's poverty, a sense of inadequacy, and the deaths by drowning of two of her sisters. While she was working as a trainee teacher in Dunedin in 1945, her alienation and her family bereavements triggered an emotional breakdown, which doctors mistook for schizophrenia, a misdiagnosis which kept her in mental hospitals for almost a decade. As a critic remarks in an article published by *The Guardian* on the occasion of her recent death, the fictional

1. Schaffer, William: *Mapping the Godzone: A Primer on New Zealand Literature and Culture,* Honoloulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1998, p. 160.
2. Alley, Elizabeth: «Janet Frame Interviewed by Elizabeth Alley», in Elizabeth Alley and Mark Williams (eds.): *In The Same Room. Conversations with New Zealand Writer,* Auckland, Auckland University Press, p. 40.

use that Frame had made of her time in mental hospitals and family tragedies, «her insights into the world of the insane», led to a widespread belief that she was a «mad genius, whose creativity had its origins in mental disorder»[3]. In her autobiography, then, Frame disclaims madness as an explanation for her art. Besides, she records her development as a writer despite being encouraged by her family and teachers to devote herself to teaching, a more fitting professional possibility for a woman in her time and place.

Not surprisingly, Frame's autobiographical trilogy has drawn the attention of critics working in the field of women's autobiography. In her volume *Gendered Resistance*, Valérie Baisnée analyses the autobiographies of Simone de Beauvoir, Maya Angelou, Marguerite Duras and the first instalment of Janet Frame's trilogy –*Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* (1958), *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), *L'amant* (1984) and *To the Is-Land* (1984) respectively– to illustrate how «autobiography has become a place in which the female subject not only records personal growth but also tackles certain political issues linked to the position of women in society»[4]. In their autobiographies, Baisnée goes on to argue, these four women comment on a period, that between the two World Wars, «which has redefined the role of women specially in terms of education and work»[5]. The focus of this paper will be on the third volume of Frame's trilogy, *The Envoy from Mirror City*, first published in Great Britain by The Women's Press, in which Frame recounts her youth and the beginning of her career as an internationally known writer in 1950's London.

This essay charts Frame's narrative of her appropriation of the public spaces of London in the mid-1950s and early 1960s, claiming her as a flaneur-artist. I adhere to Keith Tester's predicament that the flaneur is a «recurring motif in the literature, sociology and art of … the metropolitan existence» rather than a figure tied to a specific place –Baudelaire's Paris– and time –modernity and its artistic manifestations[6]. In her essay «Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity», feminist art historian Griselda Pollock launches a recovery of nineteenth century female painters excluded from the male-dominated modernist cannon. Although her focus is on impressionist artists, Pollock argues that unfortunately, the configuration that shaped their work continues to affect the lives of women in our contemporary world:

> «Modernity is still with us, ever more acutely as our cities become, in the exacerbated world of postmodernity, more and more a place of strangers and spectacle,

3. King, Michael: «Janet Frame», *The Guardian*, January 30, 2004, online: http://books.guardian.co.uk (accessed March 2005), paragraph 5.
4. Baisnée, Valérie: *Gendered Resistance. The Autobiographies of Simone de Beauvoir, Maya Angelou, Janet Frame and Marguerite Duras*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1997, p. 12.
5. Ibid.
6. Tester, Keith: «Introduction», in Keith Tester (ed.): *The Flâneur*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 1 and 16.

> while women are ever more vulnerable to violent assault while out in public and are denied the right to move around our cities safely»[7].

Much work remains to be done on the issue of women and space regarding female writers who, due to their location outside modernity and/or to their national affiliations have been overlooked by this kind of scholarship. Those who, like Caribbean-born Jean Rhys, have not been neglected, have been approached without the due specificity. Rachel Bowlby's essay on Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight*[8], for instance, does not discuss the interface between Rhys's un-Englishness and her treatment of space and femininity in this novel. In my discussion of Janet Frame, I will address how her cultural specificity as a New Zealander determines her perception of metropolitan space in *The Envoy from Mirror City*.

1. THE WRITER IN THE CITY

The Envoy from Mirror City recounts Frame's seven-year stay in London, where she travelled in 1956 on a literary grant awarded by her country to broaden her experience as a writer. In London, Frame manages to stretch her grant money by doing part-time jobs which do not divert her from her main task, writing and elbowing her way through London's literary world. A crucial part of Frame's daily agenda in London are her daily strolls and bus rides though the city, which she admits to be «absorbing in its seasons»[9]. Indeed, Frame displays a modern sensibility towards the city, which spurs her creativity and provides her with materials for her fiction:

> «… during my time at Grove Hill Road I had been aware of a subtle shifting of my life into a world of fiction where I spread before me everything I saw and heard, people I met in buses, streets, railway stations, and where I lived, choosing from the displayed treasure frag-ments and mo-ments that combined to make a shape of a novel or poem or story. Nothing was without its use. I had learned to be a citizen of the Mirror City»[10] .

From this passage we gather that Frame attaches a two-fold dimension to the city. It is, on the one hand, the bustling city of London, the real setting of her idle strolling; and on the other hand, the realm of the imagination, the «Mirror City», where experiences and revelations are stored and processed by the artist's sensibility. On arriving in London after a one-moth sea voyage from New Zealand, Frame realizes that the letter she had sent booking a room at the Society of Friends' Hostel at Euston Road had never reached its destination and there was no room available for her there. She eventually got a room for two

7. Pollock, Griselda: *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, London, Routledge, 1994.
8. Bowlby, Rachel: *Still Crazy After All These Years. Women, Writing, and Psychoanalysis*, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 34-57.
9. Frame, Janet: *The Envoy from Mirror City*, London, Paladin, 1987, p. 112. Hereafter, page references to this book will be made parenthetically within the text.
10. Ibid., p. 154.

nights at the YMCA Hostel, which reminded her of «a mental hospital without the noise»[11]. Despite the nuisance, Frame experiences this mundane incident as a moment of intense feeling where some truth is revealed:

> «For a moment the loss of the letter I had written seemed to me unimportant beside the fictional gift of the loss as if within every event lay a reflection reached only through the imagination and its various servant languages, as if, like the shadows in Plato's cave, our lives and the world contain mirror cities revealed to us by our imagination, the Envoy»[12].

From early in the volume Frame reveals herself as «a secret spectator of the spectacle of the spaces and places of the city», to borrow Keith Tester's words drawing on Baudelaire[13], a walker endowed with an active imagination for whom experienced reality has the meaning she attributes to it, thus displaying the motifs associated with the figure of the flaneur.

In her restless search for the best place to live in London, Frame stays in a cottage in the countryside, Suffolk, where she is allowed to live in exchange for her caretaking services. However, she soon realizes that, in spite of the peaceful and pastoral atmosphere, the bustle of London is more congenial to her writing, bearing out Tester's statement that «The poet is the man for whom metropolitan spaces are the landscape of art and existence»[14]. The city, with its impersonal crowd, speaks a more meaningful language to Frame than nature does:

> «In Suffolk I … was … eager to go walking in the dew-wet lanes, watching the hares in the corn, seeing the wildflowers, primroses, cowslips, bluebells, blackthorn; but my heart was in London, I wanted to return there where I was happy to be alone in the crowd, surrounded and sustained by the immensity of people, of the human race, who, although it –we- had destroyed or crippled much of the natural world, including my northern hemisphere sky, could still send representatives to explore the Mirror City, and … struggle home to create their works of art»[15].

While in Suffolk, Frame misses her place in the metropolitan crowd and feels the need to escape from the seclusion of the Suffolk countryside and its domestic tasks, «*garden, clean, walk the dog, shop*»[16]. While performing her gardening duties, she is seized by the fever of digging out stones, «English, Roman, Saxon, Danish relics from another city»[17], which point at her longing for a metropolitan existence. Her position in the crowd must be qualified, since even though she feels «surrounded and sustained» by it, she needs detachment. Frame knows that she possesses some «nobility» in relation to all the other members of the metropolitan crowd, as Baudelaire would put it[18]. She is above the crowd

11. Ibid., p. 19
12. Ibid.
13. Tester, Keith: Op. cit., p. 7.
14. Ibid., p. 2.
15. Frame, Janet: Op. cit., p. 158.
16. Ibid., p. 157.
17. Ibid., p. 159.
18. Tester, Keith, Op. cit., p. 3.

in her knowledge of history, in her awareness of the harmful effects of British imperialism, which reached and exploited distant lands like New Zealand, her «northern hemisphere»; and in her ambivalent status as descendant of British settlers but New Zealand-born and raised. Besides, she is aware of the fact that there are only a few gifted people like herself among the crowd, who shuttle in and out of the urban scenery in order to create their works of art.

Frame observes the spectacle of the city, paying attention to its most fleeting moments as well as to its rituals of public spaces. In a dark winter evening, the flux of metropolitan life unfolds before her eyes:

> «I watched the leaves turning and falling and drifting against the black iron railing of the parks. I saw the sun change to blood-red and stand on end upon the winterbeaten grass of the Common; I watched the people with a new urgency in their gait, hurrying to their homes, if they had homes to escape the dark and the cold; and those with no homes depending for warmth and shelter on the doorways of peopleless places like banks and insurance buildings and … on the seats of the railway stations and bus terminals and down from the Strand, by the river, underneath the arches. Then after dark, the new life of London, the glitter, the people in taxis and dark polished cars … wandering misfits shouting at the sky …»[19]

In this passage, Frame is attentive to the transient moments of nature, the drifting of the leaves, or the red sunset against the green of the Common. She records her impressions with the eyes of a poet, aestheticising the colours of the city: the greenness of leaves and parks, the redness of the sun, the blackness of iron railings and cars, the polish and the glitter of the metropolitan night. She notices the effect the encroaching darkness and cold has on the city-dwellers, the commuters returning home at the rush hour, the haves and the have-nots, and the simultaneity and frenetic rhythm of contemporary city live as it renews itself after sunset. Endowed with a special sensitivity to marginality, Frame does not overlook the fact that, as Certeau argues, «urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded», «hierarchizing all deviances»[20]. Thus, she notices with sympathy how the homeless occupy spaces such as the doorways of banks or the seats in train stations, or the insane roaming of the «misfits», those who have not found their place in the city.

2. COLONIAL FLANEURS

The absence of female flanery in the literature of modernity, Janet Wolff explains, is due to women's uneven access to the possibility of «lone travel», «voluntary uprooting», or «anonymous arrival at a new place»[21]; the flaneur is

19. Frame, Janet: Op. cit., p. 170
20. De Certeau, Michel: «Walking the City», in Lawrence Grossberg (ed.): *Cultural Studies*, London, Routledge, 1992, p.130.
21. Wolff, Janet: *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991.

usually, Wolff points out, a «person on the margins of society»[22], for whom the spectacle he observes does not trigger a feeling of belonging, able to roam around the public spaces of the city unnoticed, and thus uncensored. Janet Frame, the New Zealand writer going about mid-1950s London on a literary grant, fits the pattern of the lone, uprooted traveller. Her national affiliation as member of a former British settler colony and now a Commonwealth country gains her a high degree of detachment and anonymity in London. It is thanks to her unbelonging, I argue, that she is able to wander the streets confidently and unacknowledged. Frame is outspoken about her marginality as a New Zealander in London: she knows that speaking the English language and having received an English education does not guarantee acceptance in the Mother Country, although it is not acceptance as British that she is after. Significantly, all the people she interacts and identifies herself with in the metropolis tend to be from countries like Ireland, Australia, or West Africa. Soon after her arrival in London she develops a brief friendship with Nigel, a Nigerian:

> «We shared much. We were both colonials with 'similar' education – heavy doses of British Empire, English history, produces, rivers, cities, kings, and literature. He too had been given lists of the good, the strong, the brave, with friends and enemies clearly, permanently identified. He too had read of other places, other worlds with a mantel of invisibility cast upon his own world. I was more favoured, however, in having my ancestors placed among the good, the strong, the brave, the friendly, in the position of the patronizing disposers, the blessed givers»[23].

Both Frame and Nigel come from cultures which have been defined against the British, considered the norm. Frame is more «favoured», however, because she is a Pakeha, or white New Zealander, the descendant of the British settlers and not a Maori native; Nigel, in turn, comes from an overwhelmingly black society, where the British ruled as a small elite. That is the reason why Nigel addresses Frame as «you English»[24]. The ambivalence of Frame's identity is clear when we notice that whereas she is perceived as English by a Nigerian, she sees herself as a colonial in awe of the imperial metropolis, the Old World. A similar bond develops between Frame and her neighbour Patrick Reilly, an Irish immigrant that she considers her first friend in London. Patrick expects Janet to understand «what the English had done to Ireland»[25]. Yet Frame resents Patrick's bigotry since, despite being an immigrant himself, he warns her about the blacks in London, who «are stealing all the work»[26]; in post-war Britain the Irish suffer as much housing discrimination as other immigrants, as the signs «'no children, pets, coloured or Irish'»[27] that Frame encounters suggest.

22. Ibid., p. 39.
23. Frame, Janet: Op. cit., p. 34.
24. Ibid., p. 35.
25. Ibid., p. 23.
26. Ibid., p. 25.
27. Ibid., p. 130.

In her interactions with other foreigners in London, Frame shows a strong awareness of the cultural construction of difference. Her biases are first put to the test during the sea-voyage towards Britain. When the ship stops at Curaçao, a Dutch colony, she walks about the streets of its capital, Willenstad, feeling tempted to survey the poverty surrounding her with a civilizing gaze characteristic of nineteenth century British explorers[28]. But as soon as she becomes aware of her resorting to «the old clothes of prejudice»[29], she makes an effort to overcome them. This gesture implies that, when she is the subject of the look, Frame refuses to be complicit with prevailing stereotypes, in this case those associated with a masculinist gaze. Frame is doing here what Pollock describes when analysing the paintings of Mary Cassat. Whereas male impressionist painters portray women as the passive subjects of their gaze, Cassat carries out a «rearticulation of traditional space so that it ceases to function primarily as the space of sight for a mastering gaze[30]». Thus, the women depicted by her, specially the widow in *At the Opera* (1879), appear as agents of their own looking or any other activity. The space of Willenstad, its exoticism and backwardness, is susceptible to be the object of a mastering gaze, which Frame will not hold. As I pointed out above, her mind is a receptacle of new experiences, alert to the «displayed treasures» that her stay abroad unravels.

The urban landscape of London, the heart of the empire, becomes a place of search full of «spaces of mystery»[31] for the colonial flaneur-artist to observe. In her London strolls, Frame becomes a «reader of the urban text», to quote Patricia Parkhurst's words[32]:

> «And the words of London fascinated me – the stacks of newspapers and magazines, sheets of advertisements in the windows of the tobacconists and newspapers shops, the names on the buses, the street signs, the menus chalked on blackboards outside the humble Transport Cafes … the numerous bookshops and libraries. I had never had so much opportunity for public reading»[33].

Besides common names on advertisements and shops, Frame is haunted by proper names such as «Mortlake, Shepherd's Bush, Swiss Cottage»[34], or «Crystal Palace, Ponders End, Piccadilly Circus, High Wycombe»[35]. The poetry and historical reverberations in these names stimulate Frame's sense of wonder in a way that New Zealand's names do not. New Zealand is a New World where place names «still echo with their first voice»[36]. London, in turn, is the source, a site to be excavated by Frame in her search for origins and meanings.

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28. See Pratt, Mary Louise: *Imperial Eyes*, London, Routledge, 1992, chapter 9.
29. Frame, Janet: Op. cit., p. 12.
30. Pollock, Griselda: Op. cit., p. 31.
31. Tester, Keith: Op. cit., 13.
32. Parkhurst Ferguson, Priscilla: «The flâneur on and off the streets of Paris», in Keith Tester: Op. cit., p. 29.
33. Ibid., p. 26.
34. Frame, Janet : Op. cit., p. 26.
35. Ibid., p. 27.
36. Ibid., p. 28.

Michel de Certeau states:

> «People are put in motion by the remaining relics of meaning, and sometimes by the … remainders of great ambitions. Things that amount to nothing, or almost nothing, symbolize and orient walkers' steps: names that have ceased precisely to be proper»[37].

The motivation of names, the value engraved on them by urban planners and managers, is slowly lost in the course of time and replaced, Certeau explains, by the meaning that these names have in walkers' lives. Set in motion by London's proper names, Frame ponders on such contradictions. The spell cast on her by the reverberations of British history and literature that these names bring is broken once she observes the spectacle of urban decay they have come down to. Very often, the topographical features reflected in names have not survived centuries of history and change. Indeed, the pastoral connotations of «Shepherd's Bush» are at odds with the street's, «dreary-looking buildings set in a waste of concrete and brick and full of people who appeared to be pale and worried»[38], that Frame notices in her strolling. Likewise, Frame learns «the truth of Piccadilly Circus», that it was not a real circus[39]. In fact, even the circular shape designated by the word *circus* has changed through years of urban planning. London's names and buildings are in fact relics of earlier, more pastoral times, and of the city's former glory as the heart of a vast empire. The London that Frame encounters in the mid-1950s is, in fact, a declining imperial power, the target of immigrants from former colonies[40], and remains traumatised by the Blitz: «The relics were evident: bombed sites not yet rebuilt, overgrown with grass and weeds and scattered with rubble; the former Underground station with its hundred of entombed Londoners caught in an air raid …»[41]. The colonial's high expectations from the Mother Country are shattered by her experience of the real city.

London's architecture and urban planning bears, indeed, the imprint of past ambitions. As Jane Jacobs states, «the cultural politics of place and identity in contemporary First World cities is enmeshed in the legacies of imperialist ideologies and practices»[42], which were the work of men. Piccadilly Street was named after a house belonging to a wealthy tailor famous for selling «piccadillies», a kind of collar, in the 18th century; this came to replace the street's former name, Portugal Street, in honour of Catherine de Braganza, the queen consort of

37. De Certeau, Michel: Op. cit., p. 133.
38. Frame, Janet: Op. cit., p. 26.
39. Ibid., p. 20.
40. India had achieved its independence in 1947, and the Caribbean colonies were released gradually over the 1960s, to cite some examples. The *Commonwealth Migration Act* (1962) was meant to curtail black migration from the colonies, which came in large waves in the post-war period. See Lopez Ropero, Lourdes: *The Anglo-Caribbean Migration Novel: Writing from the Diaspora*, Alicante, University of Alicante Press, 2004, chapter I.
41. Frame, Janet: Op. cit., p. 30.
42. Jacobs, Jane: *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 4.

King Charles II of England[43]. In the nineteenth century, John Nash, George IV's favourite designer, undertook a massive renovation of central London, designing the big avenues of Regent Street and Piccadilly Circus, among others. Nash saw the construction of Regent Street as an opportunity to separate the good from the bad streets, leaving the latter to the East[44]. At the turn of the century, the London Council realised the city lacked the broad avenues of continental cities like Paris[45]. The face of London did not match the city's splendour as the heart of a global empire. They thus undertook the broadening of the Strand and the construction of a big artery running north from it which would eventually be called Kingsway. In the crescent built to link the Strand and Kinsway, the Aldwych, several emblematic representations of the British Empire were located –the Australia House, the India House, and the Africa House[46], creating the kind of atmosphere the Council had intended. At present, the city is pervaded with symbols of the country's wealth and power –Trafalgar Square, Cleopatra's Needle and Sphinxes, the Bank of England, and the like. London architecture and planning have historically been the backdrop for imperial policies. Both arenas, architecture and politics, have hindered women's activities.

In her walks about the city, Frame is oblivious to the connection between architecture and politics, or empire and patriarchy, although she admits to feel fear at the «Victorian atmosphere and appearance of many of the buildings»[47]. However, the routes that she takes through the metropolis describe a shift away from peripheral marginality into the heart of the complex London publishing world. After living in marginal districts of North and South London, and even in the countryside, Frame is eventually given an apartment in Kesington, the West End, by her publisher. In one of the concluding chapters of the volume, Frame carefully describes the bus ride and walk that would take her from Camberwell, a district in South East London where she lived at that time, up to the Strand area, where she was to meet her publisher, W. H. Allen:

«I set out to the Strand and the publisher W.H. Allen in Essex Street. I sat in the bus enjoying the familiar route … Now down past the Institute of Psychiatry, the Maudley Hospital, King's College hospital …past the new council flats, the dilapidated shops, the surge of East Street market and cluttered pavements, past the Elephant, the Eye Hospital, the Old Vic, Waterloo Station, Waterloo Bridge to the Strand … I had my photo taken in a PolyFoto studio at Charing Cross. Then I walked back towards Essex Street, loitering as I was too early, by looking at shop windows. And then I had turned the corner from the Strand and was in Essex Street, standing in front of W. H. Allen»[48].

43. Online: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piccadilly_Circus, (accessed March 7th, 2005)
44. Tucker, Herbert: *Victorian Literature and Culture*, London, Blackwell, 1999, p. 434.
45. Schneer, Jonathan: *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis*, Yale, Nota Bene, 2001, p. 24.
46. Ibid, p. 27.
47. Frame, Janet: Op. Cit., p. 20.
48. Ibid., pp. 148-149.

The route described in this passage, which culminates in a publishing house of central London where Frame would sign the contract of her lifetime, encapsulates Frame's appropriation of the public spaces of the city, those of decision-making and visibility.

The city of London has no spaces forbidden to Frame. She frequents the bars in Soho, where the «outsiders» to London, many aspiring artists, meet. She explores the seamy side of the city, meeting prostitutes, «both male and female»[49], listening to their stories in order to increase her experience of life. The only conservative force that she has to confront in her London years is her Irish friend Patrick Reilly. The end of this friendship is crucial to Frame's progress in the city, since he threatened to curtail her freedom to move around with his patronising advice. Patrick, whose race bias I discussed above, holds the views that have kept women off the public spaces of the city. Working as a bus driver, he carries out a panoptic surveillance of the London streets, «rescuing young Irish girls from prostitution» and sending them to the Irish Hostels[50]. Be these Irish girls prostitutes or not, it is obvious that for Patrick, women should not enjoy the same degree of public visibility as men. He enacts a narrative of sexual danger to restrain Janet's movements in the city and in Europe, for she has plans to visit Paris and Ibiza. He advises her not to travel alone, and to devote herself to school teaching instead of writing, and disapproves of her bohemian friends. The streets of London offer Frame too much freedom and artistic possibilities to let herself be patronized by Patrick, so that she is compelled to «shake herself free» of him[51], who eventually leaves London for being too evil a city.

My concern in this paper has been to show Janet Frame's rearticulation of London's urban space in the last volume of her autobiography, written in the 1980s but providing a commentary on post-war Britain. Rather than the traditional space of female invisibility, the public spaces of the metropolis have become the setting of Frame's strolling and a rich source of materials for her writing. Furthermore, she has achieved visibility in the London publishing world, located at the heart of the city, and earned the international success that New Zealand did not grant her. An important part of my argument has been to highlight Frame's colonial condition, and its impact on her perception of the city. Her un-Englishness has granted her a marginal status in metropolitan society, which has resulted in a high degree of detachment and freedom to move. Her cultural background has provided her with a special insight into the construction of difference, as wells as with a critical vision of London, a declining imperial power in the post-war period, and its urban landscape. As a subject of the look, she has refused to adopt an orientalising gaze characteristic of masculinist discourses. I have also wished to underline that the scholarship on women and space in literature needs to expand its corpus to include Com-

49. Ibid., p. 123.
50. Ibid., p. 24.
51. Ibid., p. 147.

monwealth writers, and shift away from the modern period into more contemporary configurations.

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FINESTRA ENDINS I ENFORA: SOBRE ALGUNES PROTAGONISTES DE MONTSERRAT ROIG

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1. DESPRÉS DEL SILENCI

De l'escriptora i periodista Montserrat Roig s'ha dit que dedica l'obra literària a una delicada tasca d'excavació a través de capes de silenci que, com un palimpsest, amaguen històries mai no escrites. Profundament arrelada a la ciutat de Barcelona, dibuixa personatges femenins que també senten per la ciutat una atracció intensa, que hi estableixen una relació conflictiva –pel que té de vedada. El que ella denomina el perfum d'una història oblidada, marginada de la crònica oficial –la percepció de personatges femenins enclaustrats en l'interior dels sumptuosos pisos burgesos del l'Eixample barceloní– passen d'objecte a subjecte en les pàgines de les seues novel·les, subverteixen l'ordre establert per segles de bons costums en un intent de testimoniar una altra memòria, d'arrelar en una genealogia femenina confinada en l'àmbit privat la posterior invasió de l'espai públic de la qual Roig, com a intel·lectual, periodista, feminista, conferenciant, escriptora... és pionera.

2. ESPAIS I GÈNERE: EN ELS PATIS INTERIORS DE L'EIXAMPLE

La crònica oficial margina a consciència una part de la història de les ciutats que mai no ha ocupat les pàgines de cap diari, de cap prestigiosa enciclopèdia. Com assenyala Janet Wolff,[1] la literatura de la modernitat descriu la consciència masculina de les transformacions del món públic i el privat, la separació de les esferes amb l'aparició de les institucions dirigides per i per als homes. Wolff es lamenta de la pobresa d'una crònica que ignora la diferent experiència de l'altra meitat de la població de les ciutats. Roig percep aquesta mateixa absència:

1. WOLFF, Janet: «The Invisible Flâneuse. Women and the Literature of Modernity», en *Feminine Sentences. Essays on Women and Culture*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1990, p. 34.

> «Quan va obrir-se el camp de visió de la meva infantesa, que fins aleshores havia estat, en gran mesura, limitat pels patis interiors de l'Eixample, vaig començar a imaginar-me totes aquelles mirades de dones, la percepció visual de les quals a penes si ens ha deixat algun rastre. D'aquesta manera, les ciutats perden part de la seva història, de la seva memòria».[2]

Des del seu emplaçament públic com a *flanêuse* impenitent de la ciutat de Barcelona, Roig s'imagina en el marc d'una petita finestra gòtica el rostre d'una dona del segle XIV, observant l'espectacle del carrer o la plaça, badallant potser a l'espera del marit que torna de la mar o inquieta davant la possibilitat d'albirar un amant que no pot atrapar. «Dona finestrera, es cansa de ser soltera», diu el refrany popular que cita. Era perillós, aquest espai llindar, frontera, que és la finestra, l'obertura al món de les dones confinades a l'interior de les seues cases. Quasi tan perillós com el balcó, autèntic espai de transició suspés entre el mur de la casa i l'aire del carrer. El món exterior sempre és font de temptacions gens profitoses per a la naturalesa dèbil i pecaminosa de la dona, una de les propietats més importants de l'home i la que més convenia vigilar si volia conservar el seu honor (el de l'home) intacte. En arquitectura, açò es tradueix en directrius com les del tractat d'Alberti, del segle XV. Sobre la dona, Alberti escrivia que calia tancar-la en les profunditats d'una seqüència d'espais, a la distància més gran possible del món exterior, mentre que aquest espai havia de ser el regne de l'home, més preparat per als afers públics. La casa, en el seu tractat, s'entén com un mecanisme de domesticació.[3]

Roig és conscient d'aquest procés:

> «La dona que baixava a la plaça a l'Edat Mitjana, filava al carrer i xafardejava amb les veïnes, l'han tancada lentament dins la llar: si no vol que l'acusin de bruixa, haurà de ser discreta, assenyada, estalviadora i respectuosa amb la nova moral ciutadana. El carrer, clamen els moralistes, és ple de perills, i ella hi té molt a perdre 'per la seva extremada feblesa'. La seva honra és un fonament de la societat. Per això, a fi de protegir-la, primer hi haurà el pare i després el marit»[4].

Aquesta idea es manifesta en l'arquitectura de ciutats com Barcelona. Roig, que la reelabora en la seua literatura i li dedica també un ampli capítol en *Digues que m'estimes encara que sigui mentida*, troba en l'estructura del barri de l'Eixample una nova concepció de la ciutat, més humana, més càlida. Fruit del pla d'un enginyer del segle XIX, Ildefons Cerdà, l'Eixample desplaçarà el centre de la ciutat de Barcelona més enllà de les seues muralles; el mar i la muntanya seran ara les seues fronteres. «Cerdà tingué un somni quadriculat on les línies es repetien fins a l'infinit»[5]. Va concebre així blocs octogonals, amb amplis

2. Roig, Montserrat: *Digues que m'estimes encara que sigui mentida*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1991, p. 124.
3. Wigley, Mark: «Sense títol: l'allotjament del gènere», en Beatriz Colomina (ed.): *Sexualitat i espai. El disseny de la intimitat*, Barcelona, Edicions UPC, 1997, p. 212.
4. Roig, Montserrat: *Digues que…*, op. cit., p. 137.
5. Ibid., p. 136.

xamfrans on s'encreuarien les vies i «la gent tindria temps d'aturar-se i mirar-se als ulls»[6]. A l'interior de cada edifici, lluny del tràfec dels carrers, protegit de l'exterior, Cerdà va situar-hi patis i galeries envidrades. Aquest espai és el que habitaven les senyores burgeses que protagonitzen algunes de les novel·les de Roig. «La senyora s'imagina el món tot mirant la volta blava que cap, ben just, dins un quadrat: el que fan els patis de l'Eixample»[7].

Balcons de retorçuts dissenys modernistes, galeries de llum tamisada, patis amb estudiada vegetació... Aquestos llocs fascinen Roig, que troba, «darrere de cada porticó, [...] una història per a narrar»[8]. Les històries de senyores recloses en la part darrera de pisos immensos, que procuren situar-se i establir un espai propi apart del que els és vedat:

> «Les senyores del Eixample sabien que, al davant, hi havia el despatx del seu home, advocat o fabricant de filats. Ella va construir tot un món a la part del darrere, a les galeries, a les saletes i als menjadors. Allí s'hi escoltava, en diversos capítols de vegades deslligats, tot un cabal de literatura parlada»[9].

Ara bé, la construcció d'aquest món interior, privat, no implica necessàriament un sentit de la propietat: en aquests casos no esdevé la cambra pròpia que imagina Virginia Woolf en el conegut assaig que la du per títol. És sovintejat per les dones de la família, però, com afirma Françoise Collin, «no es a título personal, como personas, que se encuentran allí, sino como esposas y madres. La casa está concebida con relación a una pareja, una familia, [...] de manera que una mujer siempre está allí entregada a la otra parte.»[10]

És el despatx del marit l'únic espai individual de la casa, el límit intern de l'autoritat de la dona dins de la llar. En aquest sentit, Roig coincideix amb Mark Wigley, qui afirma que «el primer espai veritablement privat fou el gabinet de l'home, una petita cambra tancada adjacent al dormitori on ningú més pot entrar, un espai intel·lectual més enllà d'aquell de la sexualitat»[11]. S'hi guarden els documents financers i genealògics de la família, els seus secrets: els afers públics s'amaguen i es protegeix a l'espai privat, a l'interior. Segons Wigley, ací és on naixen les memòries –en l'origen, registres destinats a confirmar el prestigi de la família, que van anar, a poc a poc, derivant en l'exaltació de l'individu i del seu poder i projecció en l'àmbit públic.

Les memòries que, malgrat tot, escriuen les protagonistes de Roig no parlen de poder ni de representació pública. En la mesura en què els és vedat l'accés a aquest àmbit (i també al despatx, l'indret que el guarda dins de la casa), els registres de la seua percepció del món són privats, interiors, sentimentals, aliens

6. Ibid., p. 136.
7. Ibid., p. 145.
8. Ibid., p. 148.
9. Ibid., p. 149.
10. Collin, Françoise: «Espacio doméstico. Espacio público. Vida privada», en *Ciudad y mujer. Actas del curso: urbanismo y mujer. Nuevas visiones del espacio público y privado*, Málaga-Toledo, 1993-1994, p. 235.
11. Wigley, Mark: Op. cit., p. 218.

al transcurs de la història. Fragmentaris, per tant: diaris, cartes, monòlegs... La literatura privada que Roig imagina darrere de cada finestra. Barbara Łuczac[12] assenyala el caràcter subversiu d'aquesta estratègia memorialística femenina en la literatura de Roig, que a més va inevitablement unida a la percepció de les dones que observen la ciutat des dels espais frontera (galeries, balcons...):

> «Gràcies al seu caràcter subversiu i transgressor, la paraula de les memòries femenines de Roig es planteja redefinir la relació entre la dona i l'espai del carrer i, per extensió, el de la ciutat, entesos com a territoris de dominació lingüística i cultural masculina».

Així doncs, Roig atribueix als personatges femenins de les seues novel·les una capacitat discursiva, precària –sense una cambra pròpia– però creadora i, per tant, d'índole pública.

3. EN LA CIUTAT: MIRADES NOVES, DONES *FLÂNEUR*?

Si bé l'escriptura de memòries exerceix un punt de subversió contra el silenci imposat, és la lectura de la ciutat, la possessió íntima dels espais urbans, el dret que situa algunes protagonistes de Roig en la vi(d)a pública. Tanmateix, és la figura de la dona *flâneur* la que trobem en les pàgines de la seua literatura, o només una versió esbiaixada?

La novel·la *Ramona, adéu* (1972) constitueix el primer graó en la llarga trajectòria dels personatges femenins de Roig a la recerca d'una identitat pròpia, que culminarà en obres posteriors; concretament, *El temps de les cireres* (1977) i *L'hora violeta* (1980). En aquestes novel·les, personatges com Natàlia o Norma envaeixen l'espai públic en qualitat de professionals emancipades, observadores i creadores de realitat –mitjançant la fotografia i la creació literària, respectivament. Però són nous temps, temps de primavera i una nova esperança: Natàlia és la primera que llig els carrers de la ciutat, la primera possible *flâneur* de l'obra de Roig, la que troba, en el barri de Santa Maria del Mar, els arrels que necessita per trobar-se i esdevenir, de retruc, pont entre generacions, transmissora de la identitat catalana –diluïda fins el no-res en personatges com el seu nebot Màrius, fill del franquisme. Però no podem comprendre l'apropiació de l'espai públic efectuada per Natàlia sense analitzar, primer, els fracassos de les dones que la precediren en el temps, i també el primer èxit parcial d'una d'aquestes protagonistes –si és que el podem considerar així: el de la més jove de les Mundetes de *Ramona, adéu*, que aconsegueix trencar el cercle viciós que la lliga a la genealogia familiar quan decideix anar-se'n de casa.

12. Łuczac, Barbara: «L'espai de les memòries en *Digues que m'estimes encara que sigui mentida* de Montserrat Roig», en Joaquim Espinós – Anna Esteve – M. Àngels Francés – Antoni Maestre – Juli Martínez (eds.): *Memòria i literatura. La construcció del subjecte femení. Periodisme i autobiografia*, Alacant – València, Denes, 2002, p. 119.

3.1 Sobre el concepte de *flâneur*

Baudelaire definia, en la seua cèlebre obra *El pintor de la vida moderna* (1863), el terme *flânerie* com l'activitat del poeta espectador, sobirà de les multituds, passejant per la ciutat per a trobar aquelles meravelles que ocuparan, per un breu i lluminós instant, la seua mirada i que, per tant, completaran la seua identitat, incompleta en l'origen; satisfaran la seua existència, insatisfeta si no; reemplaçaran, en fi, l'angoixa amb la vida.[13] És l'home *de* la multitud, no *en* la multitud, perquè té la capacitat de passar inadvertit, de no deixa empremta alguna en la retina dels vianants amb què es creua, de ser anònim i trobar-se *a casa* en cadascun dels racons de la ciutat. I tot això perquè «completion requires an escape from the private sphere. The hero of the modern life is he who lives in the public spaces of the city»[14]. Sense aquesta fugida lluny de l'interior domèstic, l'home llangueix com una perla closa en una inadvertida ostra.

Tant Baudelaire com Benjamin associen la figura del *flâneur* a la modernitat i la urbanitat contemporània. No és casual que emergira en aquest context: és fruit d'un paisatge social i cultural en procés de canvi, de l'intent dels escriptors d'extraure'n el significat.

Aquesta *masculinització* de la figura del *flâneur* ha atret l'atenció de la crítica feminista més recent. Déiem abans que Janet Wolff[15] i, també, Griselda Pollock[16] troben que les dones contemporànies al *flâneur* de Baudelaire o Benjamin tenen una percepció diferent de la ciutat moderna, una visió que ha estat obviada i silenciada com a secundària; la manca de llibertat femenina per caminar i mirar sense traves i, sobretot, sense ser observades fan impossible trobar-ne una versió alternativa: «there is no female equivalent of the quintaessential masculine figure, the flâneur: there is no and could not be a female flâneuse»[17]. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson[18] analitza la figura en diversos autors i addueix, segons aquestos, diverses raons per les quals la dona no pot desenvolupar l'activitat de *flânerie*. En primer lloc, pel fet que, per naturalesa, és incapaç de sostraure's als encants de la ciutat del consum: desitja els objectes que exposen els aparadors i no pot assolir, per tant, la distància estètica fonamental per a la superioritat del *flâneur*[19]; la dona, a més, estableix lligams i relacions amb la realitat que l'envolta en lloc de contemplar-la des d'una distància de seguretat[20]. La raó més important, però, per la qual les dones no poden ostentar la identitat

13. Tester, Keith: «Introduction» a Keith Tester (ed.): *The Flâneur*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 4.
14. Ibid., p. 5.
15. Wolff, Janet: «The Invisible Flâneuse. Women and the Literature of Modernity», en *Feminine Sentences. Essays on Women and Culture*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1990, pp. 34-50.
16. Pollock, Griselda: «Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity», en *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, Londres, Rouledge, 1988, pp. 50-90.
17. Ibid., p. 71.
18. Parkhurst Ferguson, Priscilla: «The flâneur on and off the streets of Paris», en Keith Tester (ed.): *The Flâneur*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 22.
19. Ibid., p. 27.
20. Ibid., p. 31.

del *flâneur*, és que són components essencials del drama urbà que aquest observa, són objectes que *consumir* o dels quals *gaudir*, conjuntament amb la resta d'espectacles que ofereix la ciutat[21].

Roig també es mostra escèptica sobre la possibilitat d'una versió femenina del *flâneur*. En efecte, encara que ella, com a escriptora, mira i escriu –crea el món amb els seus ulls–, és conscient que encara és mirada com a dona. Roig es pregunta:

> «Ens trepitgen la mirada no tenint-la en compte, tot practicant allò que els mexicans en diuen *ninguneo*, una manera de no voler veure allò que tu veus? Hem deixat la finestra i hem baixat al carrer? La dona parla, però continua essent mirada. Feu la prova, poseu-vos un barret i entreu en un bar»[22].

Sense l'anonimat necessari, sense una metamorfosi prèvia d'objecte a subjecte, lliure per observar sense ser vist, les dones no poden *llegir* la ciutat com ho faria un *flâneur*. Per a Barbara Łuczac, és impossible trobar-ne una versió femenina en les pàgines de Roig –ni enlloc. Łuczac fonamenta la seua argumentació en la idea de la mirada bòrnia que Roig elabora en *Digues que m'estimes encara que sigui mentida*[23]:

> «Això vol dir que, en un ull, hi duem un pedaç, i això ens permet seguir mirant cap endintre, escoltar la nostra veu, la no expressada o no admesa, com la Gran Veu, la dels Sacerdots que regeixen els cànons a seguir, tant a la crítica com a les universitats, mentre que l'altre ull mira cap enfora, vola lliure, activament, sense ulleres fosques, ni càmeres, ni binocles. L'ull que mira cap enfora s'ha escapat del tema, ensopit, redundant, de la dona. L'altre, passa comptes. No podem ocultar que «encara» duem un pedaç».

Segons Roig, doncs, la dona mira en dues direccions divergents i simultànies: amb un ull mira enfora, lliure; amb l'altre, tapat per un pedaç, mira endins, es llegeix, s'analitza. Per a Łuczac,

> «aquest pedaç que la dona duu en un ull condiciona la relació que s'estableix entre ella en qualitat de subjecte que mira i l'espai contemplat, i implica que la mirada amb què la passejant contempla la ciutat no pot ésser la d'un equivalent femení del *flâneur*, malgrat les similituds aparents. [...] La incapacitat d'escapar-se del tema de la dona, 'ensopit' i 'redundant', fa que la mirada femenina no pugui contemplar l'espai urbà de manera neutra o indiferent, com un espectacle essencialment aliè»[24].

Łuczac es refereix ací a la mirada del *flâneur* segons la definició que en fa Zygmunt Bauman, que la compara amb una instantània fotogràfica, un *snapshot* que «no hi veu i que confereix a l'experiència urbana un caràcter superficial,

21. Ibid., p. 27.
22. Roig, Montserrat: *Digues que*…, op. cit., p. 83.
23. Ibid., p. 81.
24. Łuczac, Barbara: Op. cit., p. 120. Alejandro Varderi també observa el caràcter introspectiu d'aquesta mirada bòrnia, com un *boomerang*, «mirada cega que veu vers l'interior, i en tornar es tanca sobre si mateixa». Vid. Varderi, Alejandro: «Montserrat Roig: ulls enlaire! Mirades de dona vers la 'rosa de foc'», *Catalan Review,* vii:2 (1993), p. 192.

epidèrmic, episòdic»[25]. Sens dubte, si ens atenem a aquesta definició de la mirada del *flâneur*, sembla poc probable trobar personatges femenins en la literatura de Roig que s'hi adeqüen a la perfecció. Ara bé, el punt de partida d'aquest article és que sí que és possible trobar-hi una altra versió, una alternativa de mirada femenina, resistent, basada en una forta simbiosi amb la ciutat com a font d'identitat.

Per trobar, però, aquesta figura en la literatura de Roig cal efectuar el que Deborah Parsons[26] anomena «a redefinition of the *flâneur* to acknowledge its related but distinct uses as a conceptual term and as socio-historical phenomenon.» En lloc de contradir Wolff i Pollock, Parsons basa la seua reelaboració del sinuós concepte de *flâneur* en dues premisses:

> «first, that the concept of the *flâneur* itself contains gender ambiguities that suggest the figure to be a site for the contestation of male authority rather than the epitome of it, and secondly, that a mode of expression can be seen to develop in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that emphasize observation of the city yet is distinct from the characteristic practice of the authoritative *flâneur*, comparable instead to the marginalized urban familiarity of the rag-picker»[27].

Per a Parsons, certes escriptores en llengua anglesa de finals del segle XIX i principis del XX elaboren aquesta metàfora alternativa de l'observadora urbana, possible gràcies a un context social que facilita una progressiva incorporació de les dones als espais públics de la ciutat. Aquest fenomen desafia l'especificitat masculina de la percepció estètica i urbana que representa el *flâneur*, i trau a la llum el que Parsons denomina «[the] women's highly self-conscious awareness of themselves as walkers and observers of the modernist city»[28]. Analitza així la narrativa d'escriptores com Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, Anaïs Nin o Doris Lessing, entre d'altres, per a les quals la ciutat opera no sols com un lloc o una imatge, sinó com a constituent d'identitat[29]. Amb la ciutat estableixen una connexió intensa que la revela com un palimpsest de capes d'història[30]; en paraules de Minnie Bruce Pratt, «[a] way of looking at the world that is more accurate, complex, multi-layered, multi-dimensioned, more truthful: to see the world of overlapping circles»[31].

En efecte, la percepció que les protagonistes de Roig tenen dels carrers de Barcelona no és epidèrmic en absolut: estableixen intensos lligams sentimentals amb l'espai que observen, hi arrelen el seu passat, present i futur. De la ciutat, en fan memòria, i és el centre de gravetat on sempre acaben per tornar. Com les protagonistes d'Anaïs Nin o Doris Lessing, prefereixen «wandering away from

25. Łuczac, Barbara: Op. cit., p. 121.
26. Parsons, Deborah: *Streetwalking the Metropolis. Women, City and Modernity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 5.
27. Ibid., p. 6.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 7.
30. Ibid., p. 10.
31. En Parsons, Deborah: Op. cit., p. 15.

planned pathways to backstreets, where they find the myths and memories of both the city and themselves»[32]. És el cas, per exemple, de Mundeta Claret, que en els carrers de Barcelona efectua la seua particular revolta i acaba fent un primer intent de fugida –precari i parcial, però amb la importància de serne el primer pas. Es manifesta millor en el personatge de Natàlia, que retorna a Barcelona després d'una estada a Londres i reconeix, en els seus carrers, la identitat del poble a què pertany. Si bé no són *flâneuses* en el sentit tradicional de terme, aquestes protagonistes de Roig sí que podrien ser, segons els paràmetres de Deborah Parsons i les puntualitzacions terminològiques d'Anke Gleber,[33] *flâneurs* femenines de mirada resistent, subjectes i no sols objectes a la mercè del consumidor masculí. Mundeta Claret –i Natàlia després– és, en part, càmera, espectadora i, finalment, directora d'un text propi, en oposició a Mundeta Jover i Mundeta Ventura, dones-perles enclaustrades que llangueixen a l'interior. Vegem-ho.

4. MUNDETA JOVER: LA VIDA DES D'UN BALCÓ

La geografia literària de Roig comença en universos closos. La seua primera novel·la, *Ramona, adéu* (1972), ho demostra. A través d'una complexa estructura fragmentària i enllaçada temàticament per imatges i motius comuns, hi veiem dibuixats els moments clau de la vida de tres generacions de Mundetes[34] que comparteixen, a més del nom, idèntiques preocupacions i experiències, fins al punt que els temes principals de la novel·la es desenvolupen per triplicat.[35]

De les tres dones, Mundeta Jover és la que millor representa els valors de la burgesia barcelonina de principis de segle. La seua interacció amb els espais que habita és intensa i en determina la visió del món, que coneixem gràcies a fragments del seu diari personal. A través d'aquesta escriptura privada

32. Ibid.

33. Gleber, Anke: «Female Flânerie and the Symphony of the City», en Katharina von Ankum (ed.): *Women in the Metrópolis*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London, University of California Press, 1997, p. 84. Gleber prefereix el terme *femme flâneur* al de *flâneuse* perquè, segons ella, «the term *flaneuse* bears associations of the 'typical' female, of 'necessarily' menial occupations such as those of the *Friseuse* (female hairdresser) or *Maseuse* (female massage worker), the latter two carrying contingent, sexually suggestive, and discriminatory connotations.» Ibíd, p. 69.

34. El crític Àlex Broch situa la novel·la entre les de cicle familiar i social dels setanta, encara que li reconeix unes característiques de construcció que la diferencien de la resta. En efecte, les biografies dels tres personatges femenins de la novel·la, Ramona Jover (1874-1970), la seua filla Ramona Ventura (1909-) i la seua néta Ramona Claret (1949-) «són relats encadenats i successius més que no pas una estructura interrelacionada i cohesionada que expliqui l'evolució complexa d'un nucli o cèl·lula familiar amb els diversos personatges que hi intervenen». Vid. Broch, Àlex: *Literatura catalana dels anys setanta*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1980, pp. 72-73.

35. Bellver, Catherine G.: «Montserrat Roig or the Creation of a Gynocentric Reality», en J. L. Brown (ed.): *Women Writers of contemporary Spain. Exiles in the Homeland*, Associated University Presses Inc., Londres, 1991, p. 221. En efecte, segons Àlex Broch, cadascuna de les tres Ramones s'explica per la seua relació sentimental, per la condició del seu oponent masculí i per la relació dialèctica que estableixen amb el marc històric en què es troben. Vid. Broch, Àlex: «Maria Aurèlia Capmany i Montserrat Roig o el temps com a memòria col·lectiva», *Catalan Review,* vii:2 (1993), p. 31.

observem la decadència quasi vertical dels ideals i les il·lusions romàntiques d'una dona apassionada i lúcida, que s'enfonsa lentament en una quotidianitat insuportablement gris. El seu matrimoni esdevé presó: «marriage, as such, represents increasing confinement in a narrowing world.»[36]

L'adolescència de Mundeta apareix retratada com una edat idíl·lica. La vida encara li ofereix un horitzó de temps per a descobrir el món, i no importa si a penes s'albira des de l'interior: «He passat les hores mortes de la meva vida mirant al carrer, procurant endevinar-hi un bocinet de cel, una llenca, amb núvols que s'estiren i s'arronsen. Així no em posava trista perquè els nuvolets m'explicaven els seus viatges.»[37] Mundeta imagina destinacions exòtiques des de la finestra, o es creu heroïna de les romàntiques històries que llig a les golfes, un espai silenciós, ple d'andròmines velles, secundari, però a penes sovintejat per cap altre membre de la família. A les golfes és on les crítiques nord-americanes Sandra Gilbert i Susan Gubar[38] situen la seua particular boja, símbol de l'ansietat d'autoria de les escriptores que gosen prendre la ploma en un món reservat als homes; a les golfes és on Mundeta transgredeix també l'ordre establert llegint novel·les que l'ajuden a evadir-se vers mons exòtics, altrament fora del seu abast. Un cert instint narcisista la du a desitjar espies observant-la, bé com l'actriu protagonista d'algun drama dels que llig, bé amb connotacions eròtiques, en la banyera de marbre rosa de que gaudeix, sola, en el seu viatge de noces a París: «Quan em banyo em penso que sóc la Casta Susana i que m'esguarden per la finestrella»[39].

París representa el *glamour* sols a l'abast de burgesos adinerats com l'home amb qui s'acaba de casar. És l'espai del somni: «em veig dansant amb ell en una de les terrasses de Versailles, sota el clar de la lluna, i uns desmais al fons, entre gent molt jove i molt bella, amb vestits majestuosos i joies rutilants»[40]. Tanmateix, és en aquesta ciutat que no podrà posseir quan s'adona que, per la seua condició, mai satisfarà l'ànsia d'un quelcom indefinible amb què sentir-se viva. La seua experiència de París s'assembla sorprenentment a la de Barcelona, els carrers de la qual tampoc li són propis: «Els senyors que passegen per les Tulleries, amb la boira grisa i el fred de l'hivern, fan la mateixa cara de satisfacció que els senyors barcelonins quan davallen pel passeig de Gràcia»[41]. Com apunta Alejandro Varderi[42],

> «solament com 'la reina d'en Francisco Ventura' (p. 43) el cos podrà seduir, la casa serà habitable, i París li semblarà 'tan mesquina i provinciana com Barcelona';

36. Rogers, Elizabeth: «Montserrat Roig's *Ramona, adiós*: A Novel of Suppressions and Disclosure», *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, 20.1 (1986), p. 107.
37. Roig, Montserrat: *Ramona, adéu*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1976 (1972), p. 32.
38. Gilbert, Sandra – Susan Gubar: *The Madwoman int the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Yale UP, 1979.
39. Roig, Montserrat: *Ramona...,* op. cit., p. 42.
40. Ibid., p. 43.
41. Ibid., p. 47.
42. Varderi, Alejandro: «Montserrat Roig: ulls enlaire! Mirades de dona vers la 'Rosa de Foc'», en *Catalan Review,* VII:2 (1993), p. 191.

sense ella adonar-se que, en circumscriure a la jurisdicció de l'altre, està hipotecant la seva mirada i per tant condemnant el seu llenguatge dins d'un onanisme del qual no sortirà mai més».

Amb la mirada hipotecada en l'origen, doncs, s'hi sent estrangera i decebuda; la seua il·lusió per descobrir un món diferent fracassa en el que intueix que serà l'únic viatge de la seua vida, però sobretot lamenta passar per la Ciutat de la Llum «com aquell qui fa visites, d'esquillentes»[43].

A la tornada, la realitat en la nova casa, a Gràcia, és encara més desoladora. No s'hi troba en el paper que té assignat, no sap fer les feines domèstiques però no es refia de les minyones, en aquesta perifèria[44] de l'autèntica ciutat: «Tot seria diferent si visquéssim a Barcelona, però aquí, encofurnada en aquest cau de xafarderia i de vulgaritat!»[45]. N'enyora l'empremta de sensacions que la Rambla li deixa en la memòria, els passeigs, sempre del braç del seu home, els diumenges: «em captiva l'olor que alenen les acàcies i els baladres que pugen de la Rambla. És una olor de mar, viva i engrescadora»[46].Canvia incessantment els mobles de lloc, intentant redecorar al seu gust l'espai que habita per veure si, així, desordena també la rutina gris que presideix la seua vida, però fracassa en tots dos objectius.

Francisco, el seu home, i els que, com ell, estan a punt de patir el desastre econòmic que va implicar per al país la pèrdua de les colònies americanes en el tombant de segle, habiten el saló d'estil que se situa en el centre de la casa. A ella sols li és permés accedir-hi amb la imprescindible i protocol·lària safata de té i pastes; per descomptat, els afers financers del nucli familiar de què forma part li són vedats: «En Francisco no em vol explicar com van les coses, diu que no les entendria»[47]. Ella escolta, observa i intueix la catàstrofe que se'ls ve damunt. Somia amb les llunyanes illes de clima tropical i enveja la pobra gent que s'embarca a buscar-hi fortuna, a la recerca d'aquell «paradís desconegut, enorme»[48] que descriu cercles concèntrics en la seua ment.

Si aquesta sensació de tancament i vida artificial la sumeixen cada vegada més en un desengany permanent, l'experiència traumàtica d'un avortament natural acabarà de mostrar-li com serà la seua vida a partir d'aquest moment: la dimensió simbòlica de l'entrada del 28 de setembre és simptomàtica del que serà el seu futur. Mundeta, de passeig amb Francisco per Vista Alegre, se sent sobtadament presa d'una eufòria boja, de un «desig irreprimible de llançar-me a volar pel damunt de Barcelona»[49], i comença a córrer seguida de prop pel seu home, desconcertat i avergonyit per l'espectacle: «m'afigurava que era

43. Roig, Montserrat: *Ramona...*, op. cit., p. 46.
44. Gràcia era una població autònoma de les rodalies del nucli urbà de Barcelona: amb l'expansió de la ciutat, va passar a formar-hi part. Els prejudicis classistes de la protagonista li impedeixen veure-la com part de la Barcelona que coneix i estima.
45. Roig, Montserrat: *Ramona...*, op. cit., p. 50.
46. Ibid., p. 91.
47. Ibid., p. 56.
48. Ibid., p. 57.
49. Ibid., p. 64.

una papallona, gràcil, delicada, llangorosa, sempre a punt d'olorar una flor»[50]. L'ànsia de volar que la posseeix acaba tristament: una «escalfor molt dolça» entre les cames, que en un principi podria semblar una experiència pròxima a l'orgasme i que connecta amb la insatisfacció de la seua vida sexual, és tanmateix l'hemorràgia produïda per l'avortament natural d'un fill que no sabia que esperava. En la febre de la convalescència, somia un monstre meitat dimoni meitat dona: «em cridava i m'abraçava i vaig veure els meus morts, els meus pares, el iaio de Siurana, que em deien que era una perduda»[51]. S'hi manifesta així la seua noció de culpa per desitjar altres mons, per menysprear l'entorn en què ha nascut i la tradició que pesa sobre ella com una llosa: el monstre sembla l'encarnació del sentiment d'insatisfacció permanent que l'angoixa, la demonització dels plaers terrenals que ansieja, distorsió pròpia de l'imaginari religiós en què ha estat educada.

La seua visió rejoveneix amb la mudança a un pis nou en el bell cor de la ciutat, a l'Eixample que comença a albergar la burgesia del moment i esdevé punt neuràlgic de la vida social de principis del segle XX. Els espais frontera de la casa adquireixen color i so: «els quatre balcons són plens de plantes, d'anemones, assutzenes, hortènsies, clavells, corretjoles. [...] També he comprat ocells, caderneres, canaris i un periquito de color verd desmai que em crida: '*Ramona, ven*'[52]. És aquest espai l'escenari on es produirà el clímax de la seua vida, la passió per un jove estudiant que ella observa i imagina en el balcó d'una pensió a l'altre costat del carrer, com una moderna Güelfa.[53]

La visió de la figura esvelta i jove de l'estudiant li encén a Mundeta el desig adormit per anys d'insatisfacció sexual.[54] Ell acaba per descobrir-la, i des de l'altra banda del carrer esdevé sense saber-ne un *voyeur* còmplice: «Avui l'estudiant m'ha resseguit el cos mentre jo regava les plantes del balcó»[55]. Del desig silenciós naix l'intercanvi de cartes, i coneix el seu nom, Víctor Amat (ben simbòlic, d'altra banda).[56]

Mundeta i l'estudiant tenen trobades fugaces pels carrers de Barcelona, però no és fins a un passeig per la Barceloneta, el barri de pescadors on ningú sembla advertir la seua pecaminosa presència, quan es produeix se el primer contacte

50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., p. 65.
52. Ibid., p. 104.
53. Des d'una finestra s'enamora Güelfa del jove Curial, en la clàssica *Curial e Güelfa*, obra anònima del segle XV, una cita de la qual obre la novel·la. D'una manera similar començarà la relació entre Mundeta i l'estudiant.
54. «Endevino que els seus ulls són vius, flamejants, a voltes tristos, i que els llavis li deuen tremolar davant d'una cosa bella, uns llavis ardents, uns llavis que parlen per un cor fogós, uns llavis...» Roig, Montserrat: *Ramona...,* op. cit., p. 108.
55. Roig, Montserrat: *Ramona...*, op. cit., p. 112.
56. Hi contrasten els poemes que rep d'ell, en català (per a ella, la llengua més sincera, pròpia) amb els que li escriu el marit, en castellà (que ella sent distant i fred). Segons Alejandro Varderi (Op. cit., p. 193), amb les cartes de Víctor Mundeta recobra la catalanitat que inconscientment havia perdut en casar-se. Malgrat tot, l'estudiant no privilegiarà un diàleg sinó que portarà a terme una doble intrusió dins el llenguatge i el cos de Mundeta, com després veurem.

físic entre els dos. Mundeta es desinhibeix dels seus prejudicis classistes, mesclant-se amb gent que abans hauria mirat de lluny amb aprensió; hi és lliure perquè no és observada: «Hem entrat en una taverna plena de mariners i de pescadors i ningú ens ha fet cas. Això m'ha estranyat però m'ha esbargit la vergonya»[57].

L'última missiva de Víctor la cita en el parc de la Ciutadella per al comiat: en acabar el curs, ell ha de tornar al poble dels seus pares. Mundeta es debat entre els negres presagis del seu confessor i el desig urgent; finalment es decideix a anar al seu encontre. La freda pluja contribueix a ocultar-la mentre transgredeix les normes que haurien de retenir-la a casa, com la respectable senyora que és, i més encara en un dia de tempesta. Descriu cercles, vol i no vol arribar-hi: «Durant tot el camí no vaig fer més que giragonses, semblava acorralada»[58]. La Ciutadella no és la mateixa dels dies de sol: hi regna un silenci ombrívol, sols interromput pel so del vent gelat que li travessa el cos, atrapat en el fastuós i pesat vestit mullat, i la ment, turmentada per la culpa. Sols l'estàtua de Venus desafia, solitària i ardida, la pluja. Però ella no és valenta com Venus i Víctor ha deixat de ser l'amable estudiant que l'admira en silenci:

> «No veia res més que l'ombra, l'ombra que s'acostava cada cop més definida, més exacta, amb els ulls sortits, sangonosos. I vaig sentir una massa que em queia a sobre, que m'estrenyia la cintura, que em ficava la mà dintre el vestit... »[59].

La noció de pecat transforma la trobada en una amenaça de violació, o almenys així és com ella ho veu. Mundeta s'autoimposa un càstig exemplar per haver gosat desafiar la moral de l'època en què viu; en ella operen les convencions que, segons Anke Gleber[60], contribueixen a impedir l'eixida de la dona als carrers que no li pertanyen. En efecte, encara que ha reunit el valor per arribar a la Ciutadella, aquest coratge l'abandona davant la figura masculina, probablement contaminada en la seua ment per les amenaces dels homes encarregats de protegir-la de les agressions que podria patir si vaga sola per la ciutat; elements físics com l'alta costura que ella, com a burgesa, sol vestir, fan més pesat el camí, carregada com va de penediment i angoixa.

La següent entrada del diari relata la fugida de Mundeta dels braços de l'estudiant; aconsegueix agafar un cotxe i arriba a casa malalta de fred i de pànic. El seu marit la rep i la gita en el llit, on ella passa dies i nits febrils. El monstre que poblava els seus malsons reapareix ara per acusar-la d'adúltera; el desig insatisfet pren la forma de milers de mans que recorren el seu cos encés. En la seua imaginació, les veus dels seus avantpassats, l'autoritat del patriarca de la família, la turmenten amb els seus crits de condemna.

Després d'aquest episodi hi ha un silenci, en el seu diari, de vuit anys. En el transcurs d'aquest temps, Mundeta ha tingut una filla lletja i trista, que sembla haver heretat, amb el nom de sa mare, també la infelicitat: «Si haguéssim tingut

57. Roig, Montserrat: *Ramona...*, op. cit., p. 133.
58. Ibid., p. 138.
59. Ibid., p. 139.

un nen... un home és lliure, pot triar el seu camí. Una dona no hi té res a fer, en el món!»[61]. Mundeta, que un dia havia volgut volar lliure, esdevé en realitat un ítem més de la col·lecció de papallones que guarda el seu marit, precioses, de tots els colors i les formes, «fermades amb agulletes de plata i amb el cap de perla»[62].

5. MUNDETA VENTURA, ENTRE EL CAOS BÈL·LIC

Mundeta Ventura hereta de sa mare el nom i la pena:

> «La nena és lletja i trista. Té uns solcs a la cara que la fan escarransida i els ulls sortints, com si fossin de vidre. No serà feliç. Part de culpa la té en Francisco, posar-li Ramona! Ell deia que era un nom preciós, un nom per a una noia sense fums ni pretensions. A mi em sembla un nom de poble, per a dones desgraciades»[63].

En efecte, el seu destí sembla determinat per aquestos negres presagis. La nena creix a l'ombra d'una mare sense esperança, intuint «que hauria de passar per la vida desapercebuda i agraint el fet de ser-hi»[64]. L'amor la desperta de la letargia en què està permanentment sumida; li aclareix la mirada: «tinc uns ulls que miren de debò perquè és la primera vegada que esguarden un home, el meu»[65]. L'Ignasi Costa és un jove anarquista, compromés amb uns ideals que ella no entén, que la inicia en una precària relació amb la tèrbola realitat política del 1934. L'enamorament li descobreix a Mundeta un instint de possessió quasi ferotge[66] i li revela aspectes d'ella mateixa que ni tan sols sabia que guardava: emparada en els models de conducta transmesos pel cinema del moment, la Mundeta-Greta (per la Garbo en *La reina Cristina de Suecia*) s'aventura pels carrers de Barcelona davant l'atònita mirada de la tieta Patrícia, diligent guardiana de la virtut de la nena:

> «Tan poqueta cosa. Tenia raó, la seva mare. Per això apartà d'una revolada el braç de la tia Patrícia i començà a caminar de pressa. La Mundeta–Greta sentia com si res els crits desconcertats de la Patrícia que li pregaven de retornar [...] Però la Mundeta–Greta ja no la sentia, travessava el carrer Viladomat, el carrer Urgell, sempre en línia recta, sense sortir de la vora esquerra de les Corts Catalanes, l'empenyia una fúria nova, el desig de veure l'Ignasi, de comprovar, amb la presència de l'home que l'estimava, com es difuminaven les boires que l'havien atrapada tota la vida»[67].

Mundeta vola per la ciutat, però no la llig, no hi reconeix l'ambient tens que s'hi respira, hi és aliena: «El silenci que emplenava la ciutat semblava el preludi d'un gran soroll final. Però la Mundeta Ventura no recollia res d'això, la Mundeta-Greta remuntava les Corts, cada vegada més prop de la plaça de

60. Gleber, Anke: Op. cit., p. 73.
61. Roig, Montserrat: *Ramona...*, op. cit., p. 145.
62. Ibid., p. 80.
63. Ibid., p. 145.
64. Ibid., p. 141.
65. Ibid., p. 128.
66. «el defensaria amb les urpes, si calia.» (Ibid., p. 129)
67. Ibid., pp. 142-143.

la Universitat, atabalada, absent de l'espectacle públic»[68]. La seua alienació històrica li impedeix, també, arribar a entendre la profunda angoixa de l'Ignasi, qui se suïcida, trastornat per no haver estat capaç d'evitar la mort de dos companys en una operació de lliurament d'armes crucial per a la causa obrera.

Si bé aquesta cursa per una ciutat en suspens no deixa empremta alguna en la consciència històrica de Mundeta, una segona oportunitat li és donada en temps de guerra. L'episodi, narrat en forma de monòleg interior, se situa en plena guerra civil i narra la recerca de Joan Claret, el seu marit, entre les runes del cinema Colisèum, destrossat per un bombardeig. És la crònica d'un dia, una nit i un matí en què la Mundeta, morta de por i de fred, regira les escombraries dels edificis pròxims al cinema, on Joan havia de negociar la seua fugida vers el bàndol nacional. L'absència de respostes enmig del caos la duu al dipòsit de cadàvers, on espera tota la nit per si algun dels cossos mutilats per les bombes té el rostre del seu marit. Al llarg del camí es troba una sèrie de personatges anònims, caracteritzats per la indumentària i algun tret físic, que adquireixen dimensió simbòlica per tal com col·laboren en el desvetllament de la consciència d'ella. El senyor de la bata blanca, «l'adobador de cadàvers», és poeta i sobreviu com pot a l'olor de guerra i de mort que respira cada dia; el vell dels ulls de ploviscó, un anarquista que busca el seu nebot entre els morts, esdevé company en la tragèdia: entre els dos s'estableix una relació que haguera resultat insòlita, per no dir impossible, en circumstàncies normals. L'experiència vital del vell, que ha lluitat per la revolució i ha perdut un fill en la guerra, és un mirall en què Mundeta s'adona i s'avergonyeix de la seua ignorància. Com apunta Catherine Davies,[69] el seu és un autèntic descens als inferns, la recerca de la vida enmig de la mort. L'escena enllaça amb l'epíleg en què Mundeta, que s'ha vist obligada a afrontar els seus prejudicis de classe en la conversa amb l'anarquista, arriba a albirar la possibilitat d'una vida nova, individual, emancipada: «She does not find her husband and, as a consequence, she finds herself and meaning in her previously purposeless life»[70]. La victòria de Franco, però, significa per a ella, com per a moltes dones de la seua generació, la immersió en la mort en vida, una claudicació contínua sota l'autoritat de Joan Claret, que la redueix a una mena d'ombra per a la resta dels seus dies. Sense un rol significatiu en la societat, la vida de Mundeta roman dispersa i fragmentària, com la mateixa narrativa que la descriu.

6. EL COMIAT: MUNDETA CLARET

Mundeta Claret és la menor de la nissaga Ventura-Claret. La seua trajectòria vital és contemporània a la de l'autora; experimenta el trasbals dels anys del canvi, amb la confluència de valors nous i ràncies tradicions que ancoren el personatge en una mena de cruïlla existencial. És l'època de la militància

68. Ibid., p. 143.
69. Davies, Catherine: *Contemporary feminist fiction in Spain. The work of Montserrat Roig and Rosa Montero*, Oxford – Providence, Berg Publishers, 1994, p. 37.
70. Ibid., p. 38.

marxista en la clandestinitat, les repressions de la policia i l'angoixa de la censura, mentre a les universitats s'alcen veus rebels que intueixen la davallada del franquisme i la proximitat de nous temps. Mundeta es troba en un ambient on ressonen proclames d'esquerra, on es parla de l'alliberament de la classe obrera però experimenta, de la mà dels mateixos companys, la mena de masclisme que encara es troba arrelat en la societat que habita. Amb la revolució sexual, Mundeta experimenta el conflicte entre la moral repressora en què ha estat educada (és filla d'un franquista i una dona atemorida i trista) i les noves consignes, sàviament manipulades pels companys progressistes per obtenir rèdit sexual de desorientades burgesetes sentimentals com ella. De la crisi en sortirà una dona nova, no sense abans haver pagat les taxes d'una llibertat cara i solament parcial.

Mundeta Claret passeja Barcelona. Ho sabem, per exemple, gràcies a un títol explícit: «Una de les innombrables passejades que la Mundeta Claret féu, quan era jove, per Barcelona.»[71] El conte s'obri amb una citació de Cesare Pavese, sobre la incomunicació entre els cossos que comparteixen espai però no s'adonen, els uns dels altres, dels secrets guardats gelosament i la vida interior que oculten: «¿Et quedes parat de veure que els altres et passin pel costat i no sàpiguen, quant tu passes pel costat de tanta gent i tampoc no saps, no t'interessa quines penes tenen, quin secret cranc duen?»[72]. El relat és el monòleg de Mundeta, on es combinen els seus pensaments i fragments de diàlegs amb l'Anna, companya de classe i de gresques nocturnes, i amb Jordi, líder universitari i company de llit. Mundeta parla entre les boires de l'alcohol: el seu discurs és caòtic i sovint absurd.[73] Sobta l'absoluta necessitat de Mundeta de ser escoltada i la manca de suport que cal deduir del seu ambient: l'Anna que se li escapa contínuament amb comentaris de tipus intel·lectual i aires de superioritat, i els comentaris implícits de Jordi també són de burla: «Jordi, he fotut llibres aquesta tarda, i demà hi tornaré. ¿Dius que no me'ls llegiré? Ets un fill de puta! Vés-te'n, em menysvalores, eh? És clar, com que ets un home... Dius que això no té res a veure?»[74]. L'episodi acaba amb l'escena en què Mundeta, borratxa i furiosa per la indiferència de Jordi, *provoca* un «obrer que passa» amb un inequívoc menyspreu de classe: «La suor dels treballadors m'encanta! Eh, com et dius? Ets molt *guapo* i *muy hombre*! [...] Eh, mireu, em grapeja i se'm vol tirar, pel que es veu!»[75]. Els carrers de Barcelona no són, en aquesta ocasió, font d'identitat o objecte d'observació i lectura, sinó que guarden una explícita connexió amb els encontres sexuals esporàdics que cal esperar de dones que, com Mundeta, desafien els bons costums imperants i hi passegen de nit. I això és tan vàlid

71. Roig, Montserrat: «Una de les innombrables passejades que la Mundeta Claret féu, quan era jove, per Barcelona», en *Molta roba i poc sabó... i tan neta que la volen*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1978, p. 99.
72. Ibid., p. 99.
73. S'hi barregen temes d'activisme polític amb records d'infantesa, somnis, fragments de literatura en castellà (trossos d'una traducció de *Mujercitas*, de Louise M. Alcott), etc.
74. Roig, Montserrat: «Una de les...», op. cit., pp. 105-106.
75. Ibid., p. 106.

per als anys de la hipocresia moral franquista com per als del desvetllament feminista i la revolució sexual; Anke Gleber ho comenta a propòsit d'un titular del periòdic *Oxford Mail* del 1979: «Any woman walking alone after dark *invites* trouble»[76]. I encara que Mundeta no camina, en aquesta ocasió, sola, sí que ho està en certa manera, com hem pogut deduir del seu monòleg (la tria d'aquesta estratègia no és, tampoc, casual): pertany a un món falsament llibertari de pressupòsits marxistes però experimenta la mateixa mena de masclisme que abans, ara en companys de militància esquerrana que utilitzen els pressupòsits de l'alliberament sexual per a la satisfacció pròpia. En aquesta escena, és ella qui tria el rol que vol desenvolupar, qui prefereix el paper assignat a les *flâneuses* que gosen recórrer els carrers nocturns: ella és una de les dones «more likely victims of rape, assault, intimidation, and other forms of harassment.»[77].

Aquesta masoquista tendència de Mundeta envers el risc del sexe es manifesta també en la mena de fascinació que sent per la ciutat: «Era una ciutat que l'atreia amb la força d'un amant cruel.»[78] És el centre del seu univers, hi té arrels profundes, i d'alguna manera sap que no se n'anirà mai, de Barcelona. «Ara, en el silenci entebeït de la nit barcelonina, desitjava sentir-se empassada, engolida, dins la seva somorta personalitat. No ser ningú entre un formiguer de ningús»[79]. I en els seus carrers és on Mundeta acaba per abocar l'amargor de la traïció, on du a l'extrem les seues perilloses incursions en l'aire nocturn i es prostitueix voluntàriament, sols per demostrar que ho pot fer, si vol; i per rebutjar després, definitivament, el rol imposat per la tradició i la genealogia femenina familiar que pesa sobre ella com una llosa.

L'origen de la revolta –absurda i instintiva, però revolta al cap i a la fi– de la més jove de les Mundetes és la traïció del seu amant, cruel com la ciutat, amb l'Anna, «la meuca de la universitat». L'Anna, que paga la seua llibertat molt cara, «era coneguda com una mena d'estudiant prostituïda; però ho acceptava com un mal que residia en els altres i no en ella»[80]. Mundeta, feta «de petites lleialtats, mesquines, subjectes als instints»[81], se sent atreta per aquesta mena d'independència però no és capaç d'assolir-la. «Si l'Anna era una meuca, per què no ella», es pregunta, amunt i avall per la carretera de Sarrià. «És com anar de puta, per a l'inrevés»[82]. Amb el vestit que duu queden clares les seues intencions, pensa; caldria que hi afegírem, a més, la seua sola presència en aquella carretera flanquejada per prostíbuls. El conductor d'un esportiu la convida a pujar-hi; fan camí vers un *meublé* mentre ella intenta estar a l'alçada del paper que ha volgut interpretar. «M'admiraran i pensaran que sóc una dona emancipada. I que no els necessito per a res»[83].

76. Gleber, Anke: Op. cit., p. 73.
77. Ibid., p. 73.
78. Roig, Montserrat: *Ramona...,* op. cit., p. 93.
79. Ibid., p. 95.
80. Ibid., p. 80.
81. Ibid., p. 94.
82. Ibid., p. 105.
83. Ibid.

Després, «bon vent i barca nova»[84]. Amb l'aire fresc de la matinada, Mundeta veu la ciutat d'un altre color. L'explotació sexual a què se sotmet per despit és el graó més baix d'una llarga trajectòria de victimització afectiva. El més baix i l'últim, però. El seu és un ràpid descens als inferns, del qual surt amb una nova consciència. Perquè, en lloc d'enfonsar-la en la més absoluta alienació i acabar amb la seua recerca d'una identitat pròpia, l'amargor de l'experiència funciona com a catalitzador i la llança en sentit contrari. Ni burgeseta sentimental ni prostituta: Mundeta fuig de tots dos extrems. Lentament, estripa els bitllets que s'acaba de guanyar i deixa enrere tota una etapa; amb els bocins de paper i l'alba, trenca amb antigues recances i pren, finalment, un nou rumb lluny del silenci i el cercle viciós en què es troba immersa. Experimenta el que Anke Gleber denomina «the persistent, real, and material limitations on women's access to the street»[85]: fins i tot representa l'única forma femenina present en el carrer que és real i perceptible. Ara bé, contràriament a les prostitutes reals, que no posseeixen ni l'espai ni, en última instància, el propi cos, ella invalida l'acte mercantil que acaba de tenir lloc destruint els diners que li han pagat i transformant-lo en un acte de voluntat. I una promesa de canvi. La seua presència en l'espai públic, malgrat les conseqüències explícites d'aquesta transgressió, n'indica la ferma determinació de localitzar una experiència pròpia de la ciutat i, per extensió, de la seua vida. Pren la decisió de partir, dóna títol a la novel·la i, per primera vegada, se n'ix del patró que les seues predecessores havien dibuixat per a ella.

7. CONCLUSIONS PROVISIONALS

La interacció de les protagonistes de *Ramona, adéu* amb l'espai que les envolta és, com hem vist, intensa: a la ciutat de Barcelona les arrela un amor profund que, tanmateix, no esdevé aprenentatge significatiu fins a la més jove de la nissaga (i encara). La mirada de Mundeta Jover li retorna la seua pròpia imatge, reflectida en els vidres de la galeria interior, on llangueix com la perla inadvertida de què parlava Baudelaire: a ella no li és donada la possibilitat de triar si vol completar la seua identitat en els misteriosos carrers que recorre el poeta *flâneur*. En canvi, escriu memòries en un espai prestat, exercint així una peculiar transgressió –insuficient, en qualsevol cas. París és un somni fora del seu abast; els carrers de Barcelona també ho són, encara que, per breus moments de fugissera glòria, tasta la llibertat de l'anònim i experimenta l'amor, que dels ideals romàntics davalla a l'abisme de la noció de pecat i culpa. La seua infelicitat es transmet com una malaltia a la seua filla, arraulida i trista: Mundeta Ventura, tanmateix, també desafiarà el seu confinament a l'interior a la recerca de l'amor, que l'ompli de vida l'estiu del 1934. Novament, el fracàs va de la mà de l'alienació històrica en què es troba el personatge: de la mateixa manera que no *viu* ni *llig* els carrers d'una Barcelona en la tensió de la preguerra,

84. Ibid., p. 107.
85. Gleber, Anke: Op. cit., p. 73.

tampoc no comprén l'home que estima ni sap evitar-ne la mort. Paradoxalment, és amb la guerra, que capgira les convencions prèviament establertes, quan ella albira que un nou futur és possible; això no obstant, la història escrita pels vencedors s'encarrega, de nou, de retornar-la a l'espai domèstic que havia gosat abandonar. I no és fins que arriba el canvi, als anys de davallada del franquisme i l'adveniment de la Transició, que Roig fa possible la versió femenina alternativa al *flâneur* que proposava Deborah Parsons, això sí, amb unes quantes dècades de retard respecte de les escriptores angleses que Parsons estudia –retard comprensible, d'altra banda, si fem una ullada a la repressió i la misèria de l'Estat espanyol durant el període de temps que envolta la guerra civil espanyola. La figura de Mundeta Claret és una nova versió de dona a la recerca d'una identitat basada, ara sí, en una consciència històrica, precària, instintiva, però amb la força suficient per empènyer-la fora de la casa que ha habitat des de sempre. La conquesta de l'espai públic passa per una insòlita i absurda assumpció del paper de prostituta, experiència traumàtica des de la qual és capaç de remuntar i assolir la capacitat per rebutjar, d'aleshores ençà, aquest i els altres papers atorgats a les dones de la seua condició. Mundeta Claret és l'única que no hi roman, tancada: és una possible esperança de futur.

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RE-INHABITING PRIVATE SPACE: CARMEN MARTÍN GAITE'S *EL CUARTO DE ATRÁS*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an article last year in the *New York Review of Books* Daniel Mendelsohn argued that Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* can be read as an «authentic women's literature»[1], for the novel attempts to record «that which men's literature dismissed as trivia.»[2] Whether or not this is the case (because after all we have novels of the obscure such as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Fontane's *Effie Briest*, *Fortunata y Jacinta* etc.) Woolf herself believed that her novels were in fact recuperating: «these infinitely obscure lives that remain to be recorded»[3] –lives which transpired within the domestic sphere and which did not directly participate in public life and therefore in the production of History (with a capital H –that is, produced by great men). This is a useful way of understanding Carmen Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás*. Against the monumental, heroic history of the Francoist regime, Martín Gaite's 1978 novel brings to the forefront those stories which have been ignored and marginalized by the Francoist regime: namely, the stories recounting the experiences of women during the almost forty years of dictatorship. Her novel, in very much the same vein as *Mrs. Dalloway*, «intricately records the obscure and hidden worlds and movements in women's lives,»[4] during the Franco years and in so doing forges these stories into a new kind of literature. But Gaite's text does not simply invert a hierarchy of value which had labeled the private as trivial and the public as significant, but suggests a complex relation between the two. For *El cuarto de atrás* suggests that the revitalization of public life is itself dependent on imagination, ideas and memories which are themselves drawn from private life – particularly when, as in the

1. Mendelsohn, Daniel: «Not Afraid of Virginia Woolf», *The New York Review of Books*, 50 (2004), pp. 1-10.
2. Ibid., p. 2.
3. Lee, Hermione: *Virginia Woolf*, New York, Vintage Books, 1999, p.13.
4. Mendelsohn, Daniel: Op.cit., p.2.

time of the dictatorship, public life has itself been debased and emptied of all true political significance. Gaite's novel is therefore a kind of «authentic women's literature» (in Woolf's and Mendelssohn's senses) which, in portraying a woman's emergence as an agent of history, is also a kind of political literature.

The process represented by the novel must begin with the protagonist's memories – memories associated with the historically female spaces of the kitchen, the bedroom, and the backroom. But Gaite's novel shows that for these memories to become available for the protagonist's political self-renewal, they have to be put into a narrative. And the narrative itself requires that one remember through a process of exchange and interaction with an *interlocutor*. In *El cuarto de atrás*, the novel itself turns out to be the record of this exchange. And the novel's many readers then become part of a collective «working through of the past» initiated by literature – a process which has begun with the apparently insignificant memories and associations of one woman in her back room.

2. PSYCHOANALYSIS AND STORYTELLING

Carmen Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás* can be read as a meditation upon Spain's most recent past (the civil war, post war and Francoism) which has only become possible after the death of Franco. In the first pages of the novel we find a woman protagonist who from the depths of her refuge seeks to narrate her past through an art of memory. But we find that this attempt to articulate her past is frustrated due to the fact that, perhaps, she has nobody to whom the story can be told. The protagonist is in need of an *interlocutor* – someone who would help her to recover «todas las cosas que he estado recordando y sabe Dios cúantas más…»[5] But this *interlocutor* is not simply a listener, but someone whose role can be more closely associated with that of an analyst – someone who not only listens to the patient's stories, but who also seeks to organize these stories into a coherent narrative. According to Peter Brooks, the analyst «must help the analysand construct a more coherent, connected, and forceful narrative discourse, one whose syntax and rhetoric are more convincing, more adequate to give an interpretative account of the story of the past than those that are originally presented, in symptomatic form, by the analysand.»[6] It becomes clear throughout the novel that the protagonist's attempt to remember and articulate her past happens only when she is encouraged by her *interlocutor* to put her memories into a form of narrative.[7] What emerges is the narrative of the primarily private experiences of a woman who has lived through the

5. Martín Gaite, Carmen: *El cuarto de atrás*, Barcelona, Destino, 1981, p. 22.
6. Brooks, Peter: *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling*, Cambridge, Blackwell, 1994, p. 53.
7. There are many articles and books that have been written on the mysterious appearance of the man dressed in black. To many critics this sudden appearance justifies identifying the novel partly as a fantastic novel. See Linda Gould Levine: «Carmen Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás*. A Portrait of the Artist as Woman»; Joan Bro wn Lipman: «A Fantastic Memoir: Technique and History in *El cuarto de atrás*»; Julian Paley: «El interlocutor soñado de *El cuarto de atrás*, de Carmen Martín Gaite»; Manuel Durán: «*El cuarto de atrás*, Imaginación, fantasía y misterio; Todorov y algo más.»

Francoist regime – a record of experiences which, like those of many other women, has been obliterated from the official written history of the Francoist regime. The protagonist can be seen as the transmitter of an oral discourse, a discourse that had been confined to the private space of the household up until the death of Franco.[8]

In this sense the private space of the home has served as a refuge for people who had had to withdraw from a public life and public space which had been entirely appropriated by the totalitarian regime. According to the protagonist, Franco had indeed projected himself upon all spaces belonging to the public: «(Franco) había conseguido infiltrarse en todas las escuelas, cines y cafés, allanar la sorpresa, y la variedad, despertar un temor religioso y uniforme, amortiguar las conversaciones y las risas para que ninguna se oyera más alta que otra»[9]. The protagonist suggests that, in addition to infiltrating all public life, Franco had also been capable of controlling History and Time itself: «(Franco) había sido el motor tramposo y secreto de ese bloqueo del tiempo. Y el jefe de las máquinas, y el revisor, y el fabricante de las cadenas del engraje, y el tiempo mismo, cuyo fluir amortiguaba, embalsaba y dirigía, con el fin de que apenas se sintiera rebullir ni al tiempo ni a él…»[10]. Faced with a control of space, History and time, Spanish citizens were compelled to withdraw into the private spaces of the home in order to survive: «Y aprendimos a esperar, sin pensar que la espera pudiera ser tan larga. Esperábamos dentro de las casas, al calor del brasero, en nuestros cuartos de atrás, entre juguetes baratos y libros de texto…»[11]. But *El Cuarto* suggests these private spaces not only provided the citizens with a physical refuge from the terror of the dictatorship, but also functioned as refuges for memories, imagination and dreaming. According to Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: « Political contacts between men are severed in tyrannical governments and the human capacities for action and power are frustrated. But not all contacts between men are broken and not all human capacities destroyed. The whole sphere of private life with the capacities for experience, fabrication and thought are left intact.»[12] But living exclusively within this refuge and not publicly «working through» a traumatic past cannot, the novel tells us, be sustained for a lifetime. The protagonist's initial attempt to remember, and narrate, her past from the isolation of her back room is shown to fail. This is evidenced by the protagonist's initial efforts, documented in the first chapter – an effort which results in an incoherent narrative riddled with gaps, contradictions in chronology, faulty narrative syntax and unconvincing rhetoric. In the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt argued that an exclusively pri-

8. Interesting comparisons can be made to other women writers use of private space as a *refuge* during dictatorial regimes. I am particularly interested in Marta Traba's *Conversación al sur*, Tununa Mercado's *En estado de memoria* and Diamela Eltit's *Vaca Sagrada*.
9. Martín Gaite, Carmen: Op. cit., p. 132.
10. Ibid., p. 137.
11. Ibid., p. 153.
12. Arendt, Hannah: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1968, p. 172.

vatized life was the absolute triumph of tyrannical forms of governments over the individual, because in isolating these individuals in their back rooms and interior patios, and thereby eliminating contact between them, these governments were able to gradually eliminate their ability to distinguish between fiction and reality, thereby compromising these people's abilities to identify the political fictions of the regime:

> «…the experience of the materially and sensually given world depends upon my being in contact with other men, upon our common sense which regulates and controls all other senses and without which each of us would be enclosed in his own particularity of sense data which in themselves are unreliable and treacherous. Only because we have common sense, that is only because not one man, but men in the plural inhabit the earth can we trust our immediate sensual experience»[13].

At the beginning of *El cuarto de atrás*, Gaite's protagonist, confined to her back room and interior patio, seems to exhibit exactly this incapacity. But the interaction and dialogue produced by the protagonist and the *interlocutor* within the novel directly unsettles such totalitarian attempts as Franco's to completely disenfranchise its citizens from politics and each other. According to Theodor Adorno, an anamnestic «working through the past» entails a:

> «seriously working upon the past, that is, through a lucid consciousness breaking its power to fascinate rather than closing the books on the past and, if possible, even removing it from memory. The attitude that everything should be forgotten and forgiven, which would be proper to those who suffered the injustice, is practiced by those party supporters who committed the injustice»[14].

It is no surprise then that as the protagonist speaks to the *interlocutor* she starts to notice pages emerging from her desk: «Por la parte superior de la máquina asoma un folio empezado, leo de refilón: '…al hombre descalzo ya no se le ve.' ¿Cuándo he escrito esto?, tenía idea de haber dejado la máquina cerrada y con la funda puesta…»[15]. These pages, of course, are the story she begins to unravel as she speaks to the *interlocutor* – a story which, by the end of the novel will be revealed as the novel itself. This novel becomes a public record of one character's emblematic effort to then publicly work through a traumatic and difficult past during a time (the Spanish Transition) when people seem to have opted to forget rather than remember.

3. INTERIORS

In the course of the novel, the protagonist is able to piece together her past and organize it into a coherent narrative – a process which allows her to constitute her own identity. But the recovery of the past not only happens through her interaction with the *interlocutor* but also through the objects (the mirrors,

13. Ibid., p. 174.
14. Adorno, Theodor: *Critical Models, Interventions and Catchwords*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 6.
15. Martín Gaite, Carmen: Op. cit., p. 31.

couches, chairs, armoires) which have migrated with her and have occupied certain spaces (the kitchen, the backroom, the attic) within the many houses she has inhabited as a child and as an adult. For the protagonist these intimate objects function as repositories of memory: «objetos cuya historia, inherente a su silueta resuena apagadamente en el recuerdo y araña estratos insospechados del alma, arrancando fechas…»[16]. Her «working through of the past» which constantly evokes recent moments of Spanish history (the Spanish Civil War as well as Franco's dictatorship) are not alluded to through the use of archives or history books but rather through particular objects within her house. In this case her recuperation of Spain's history is based on «lived experience» rather than on monumental history: «…no somos un solo ser, sino muchos, de la misma manera que tampoco la historia es esa que se escribe poniendo en orden las fechas y se nos presenta como inamovible, cada persona que nos ha visto o hablado alguna vez guarda una pieza del rompecabezas que nunca podremos contemplar entero»[17]. The protagonist's mistrust of history – in particular Francoist historiography – causes her to find alternative ways of narrating the past as a child and later as an adult: «pero yo entonces aborrecía la historia y además no me la creía, nada de lo que veía en los libros de historia ni de los periódicos me lo creía, la culpa la tenían los que se lo creían…»[18].

In this case the domestic, historically associated with an inferior compartment of existence, becomes in Gaite's novel a tactile, sensuous space for remembering and ultimately for writing:

> «Pienso en los interiors de Vermeer de Delft: el encanto del cuadro emana de la simbiosis que el pintor acertó a captar entre la mujer que lee una carta o mira por la ventana y los enseres cotidianos que le sirven de muda compañía, la relación de la figura humana con esos muebles usados que la rodean como un recordatorio de su edad infantil»[19].

The Protagonist's narration will take us into her intimate spaces – real or imagined – (her childhood house, her grandmother's house, the backroom, her imaginary island of Bergai, her own apartment), while at the same time pointing to the fact that these particular spaces are not only to be read as sites of everyday life but more importantly as spaces of renewal and recovery. In Martín Gaite's novel, even domestic spaces such as the kitchen – usually understood either as trivial or unimportant, or, alternatively, as the sites of an enslaving domestic ideology –, are also represented as possible spaces of freedom and creativity for women. The separation within the private sphere between – on the one hand – the domestic, the banal and the routine (traditionally thought to belong to the realm of the «feminine») and – on the other hand – the drawing room or salon as the privileged realm for the emergence of the aesthetic – a

16. Ibid., p. 16.
17. Ibid., p. 167.
18. Ibid., p. 54.
19. Ibid., p. 74.

domain traditionally thought to belong to men – is unsettled in Gaite's novel. For in *El cuarto de atrás*, the protagonist makes supposedly unpolitical and unimportant spaces and experiences into the aesthetic material for her novel.

While in the kitchen the protagonist is able to conjure up a whole array of childhood memories just by looking at pieces of furniture which once belonged in her childhood home: «Cuántas habitaciones desembocan en ésta, cuántos locales! Querría hablarle al hombre de negro del vehículo narrativo que suponen los muebles, regalarle todas las imágenes que, en este rato, se me han aparecido entre el aparador y el espejo. Y muchas más surgirían si se asomara él aquí y empezara a darme pie con sus preguntas ligeras y quebradas que nada indagan, que son como dibujos de humo en el aire.»[20]. It is important to point out that this process of recollection does not only recover private experiences and memories but also a people's experience with history and popular culture during Francoism. Throughout the narration we find detailed descriptions of the movies, clothes, children's games, hairstyles, and songs which influenced women's attitudes towards each other and towards culture in general: «…hemos sido víctimas de las mismas modas y costumbres, hemos leído las mismas revistas y visto el mismo cine, nuestros hijos puede que sean distintos, pero nuestros sueños seguro que han sido semejantes…»[21]. What the protagonist of the novel seems to achieve throughout her narration is to write the history of every mark and scratch of the particular interiors she has inhabited and at the same time capture specific historical moments through a sort of collective memory. In this case, the bedrooms, kitchens and living rooms that are evoked and used as vehicles for her imagination and for writing are places where women have lived in the past (rooms with no privacy) whose walls can be said to be permeated by their creative force.

4. PRIVATE SPACE AS PUBLICNESS

Gaite's representation of the elements of popular memory in *El cuarto de atrás* does not only serve to underline the actual points of contact between everyday life and history, but also shows how these apparently private experiences and memories associated with the intimate sphere become the basis for a political alternative to the totalitarian regime. In his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Jurgen Habermas pointed to the emergence in eighteenth century Europe of what he called «a public sphere of private persons.»[22] In Habermas's account the public sphere arose out of civil society in the eighteenth century in opposition to the political domination of the absolutist state. This public sphere of private persons was the medium by which the new middle class articulated its resistance to feudal political domination. This public sphere, in principle, was to be accessible to everyone. Within it a process of critical debate would

20. Ibid., p. 97.
21. Ibid., p. 137.
22. Habermas, Jurguen: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, MIT University Press, 1992, p. 27.

take place where ideas were exchanged and where new ideas emerged during a process of interaction. These open spaces of discussion would then allow the public to come to consensus about what was practically necessary and in the general interest – allowing this public not only to eventually assert control over political authority, but also, perhaps, to transform the nature of political authority itself. Feminist criticisms of Habermas's model have pointed to the fact that in the historically existing bourgeois public sphere, needs and positions of other groups, namely women, were in general excluded from consideration as merely «private» matters.[23] According to this criticism, Habermas' model of the public sphere assumes that all participants should be able to bracket off their life in the intimate sphere and become disembodied minds in the public arena, leaving women, for example, to take care of the private sphere. This both raises issues of women's exclusion from the public in this model, and also of woman's relationship to the private, either as a space that she is 'confined' to, or which, perhaps, she might choose to occupy.

However, while it may be true that Habermas overestimates the ideal character of a bourgeois public sphere which was composed mostly of property-owning fathers and husbands, these criticisms tend to overlook the usefulness of Habermas' model for describing how a new politically effective public can emerge from what we think of as the private sphere. For a crucial part of Habermas' argument is that private experiences associated with new forms of socialization in the later eighteenth century (the family, new practices of child-rearing, and so on), become a source of resistance to the dominant absolutist order. Moreoever, while the bourgeois public spheres of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries largely overlooked gender issues, it is also true, as Seyla Benhabib, and Habermas himself, have argued, that the public sphere is a self-transcending institution – that, in the twentieth century, the very gender arrangements which the early bourgeois public sphere presumed as a matter of course become the *object* of political debate.

What makes Habermas's conception of the public sphere particularly useful in analyzing *El cuarto de atrás*, is that his model of how private, bourgeois publics emerged under absolutism can easily be applied to the emergence of counterpublics under various totalitarianisms – including Franco's. While Hannah Arendt's model centers on what she terms «the space of appearances»[24] – the face-to-face interactions of human beings who share an ethos – Habermas allows one to understand how it is that resistance is able to form amidst diverse, private, individuals in the intimate space – and eventually resurface and become politically effective. This is exactly what *El cuarto* depicts. One can argue therefore that Martín Gaite points to the important function of the dialogue between the protagonist and the interlocutor as an «alternative public sphere»

23. Fraser, Nancy: «Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,» in Craig Calhoun (comp): *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1996, pp. 109-142.

24. Arendt, Hannah: *On Revolution*, New York, Penguin Boos, 1965, p. 240.

– In other words, that the private space of the home is being used as a space in which, as in Habermas' model, ideas are exchanged and new ideas emerge through a process of discursive interaction. But most importantly, resistance to the dominant regime happens precisely through subjects constituting themselves as private subjects, whose identities are not dependent on the dominant regime. The protagonist of *El cuarto* herself suggests this when she writes:

> «Estoy lejos, en una isla, aislamiento viene de isla, era una sensación peligrosa, prohibida por las mujeres de la Sección Femenina, cuando se fomenta conduce al victimismo: hay un morbo irracional en ese vago deleite de sentirse incomprendido, que no se apoya en argumento alguno ni se dirige contra nadie, que encenaga al individuo en la mera autocompasión placentera»[25].

During a stormy night, the protagonist/writer and the interlocutor exchange ideas about history, memory and writing. What is important here is that new ideas about writing, memory and history are produced not only by the individual writer but out of a process of exchange between the writer and interlocutor. The protagonist chooses to occupy her own private space. This space in turn is used in order to bring private-intimate experiences/memories into the public sphere – and thereby subject them to critical questioning. It is also important to note that the exchange of ideas which takes place in the protagonist's home challenges the official discourse of the state in the same way as bourgeois public spheres challenged the absolutist states in the eighteenth century. The backroom becomes a kind of public sphere, in which an oral discourse is broadcast far beyond the walls of the home. Interestingly enough, the character's meditation on Spain's recent traumatic past occurs from a detached and leisurely position of a private citizen and this position is ultimately not questioned by the author but rather celebrated as the necessary model for critical reflection and perhaps even visionary transformation.[26] As I will argue later in the paper, the discovery of the manuscript of *El cuarto de atrás* at the end of the novel points to the emancipatory power of the book as an artifact which will reach out to what Benedict Anderson would call an «imagined community.»[27]

5. ALLEGORIES OF THE POLITICAL

The discussion between the protagonist and her interlocutor can be understood as a nascent public sphere. Among the topics discussed in this public sphere are dominant modes of inhabiting private space which the narrator wants to contest: the *Angel of the Home's* characteristically spotless house, and the Francoist regime's relegation of women to the private sphere after the civil war. What the protagonist's discussions of these two forms of domestic order makes clear is that Franco's effort to impose total control not only on the

25. Martín Gaite, Carmen: Op. cit., p. 120.
26. In contrast, other novels such as Rodoreda's *La Plaza del Diamante* exposes the particular hardships experienced by working class women who do not have (cannot afford) to have a room of one's own and must learn to survive in the streets during and after the Spanish civil war.
27. Anderson, Benedict: *Imagined Communites*, New York, Verso, 1991.

streets, but also in the home has an unintended consequence: the very domestic sphere which is supposed to safely isolate women (in particular) from the political itself becomes politicized. For, as Gaite shows, the protagonist's criticisms of domestic order themselves take on a proto-political character.

The protagonist of *El cuarto de atrás* is confronted with the use of private space by a domestic *Angel of the Home* upon her many visits to her grandmother's house in Madrid: «Mucho más que en mi casa de Salamanca, ni en la de verano de Galicia, fue en esa de Madrid, cuando veníamos en vacaciones de Semana Santa o Navidad, donde se fraguó mi desobediencia a las leyes del hogar y se incubaron mis primeras rebeldías frente al orden y la limpieza»[28]. As the child enters this private space she immediately feels enclosed and repressed by the atmosphere of the house. It is a place where order is venerated, where we see examples of a private space that is being carefully arranged by an *Angel of the Home*:

> «…y me sentía tragada por una ballena; se me propagaba todo el bostezo de la casa con su insoportable tictac de relojes y su relucir inerte de plata y porcelana, templo del orden, sostenido por invisibles columnas de ropa limpia, planchada, guardada dentro de las cómodas, ajuar de cama y mesa, pañitos bordados, camisas almidonadas, colchas, entredoses, encajes, vainicas…»[29].

The use of private space by her grandmother evokes the mid-Victorian age where the house was necessarily a battlefield – a place where daily, summer and winter, mistress and maid fought against the dirt and cold for cleanliness. This is the scene of labor, effort and perpetual struggle: «…mientras llegaba de la cocina o de las alcobas el amortiguado trajín de las dos criadas que conocieron a mi padre de niño y que continuaban desde entonces limpiando, impertérritas, cazuelas, azulejos, picaportes y molduras, siempre limpiando»[30].

El cuarto shows that the idea of the *Angel of the Home* is not simply a general gender ideology, but one put to specific use by Franco. For the regime is interested in relegating women to the private space of the home for political, as well as gender, ideological reasons. The novel shows that Francoism involves an effort to colonize private space, and thereby erode possible sources of resistance. According to the protagonist, women were the ones who felt most acutely the repressive apparatus of the regime: for Francoism represented the end of the emancipatory efforts undertaken during the years of the Republic. The young protagonist of the novel is educated by the Church and forced to attend classes given by the Women's Section of the Falangist Party[31] that educated young women into being good mothers and wives:

28. Martín Gaite, Carmen: Op. cit., p. 75.
29. Ibid., p. 78.
30. Ibid.
31. Pilar Primo de Rivera was in charge of the *Sección Femenina*. In a speech on behalf of the Falangista women of Spain, Pilar Primo de Rivera was quoted saying the following: «We are here solely to celebrate the victory and to honor your soldiers. Because the only mission women

«Las dos virtudes más importantes era la laboriosidad y la alegría, y ambas iban indisolublemente mezcladas en aquellos consejos prácticos, que tenían mucho de infalible receta casera… Cumpliríamos nuestra misión de españolas, aprenderíamos a hacer la señal de la cruz sobre la frente de nuestros hijos, a ventilar un cuarto, a aprovechar los recortes de cartulina y de carne, a quitar manchas, tejer bufandas y lavar visillos, a sonreír al esposo cuando llega disgustado…»[32].

But to the extent that Francoism penetrates into the domestic sphere, it also unintentionally politicizes it: for the character's *resistance* to this domestic order becomes a symbolic struggle against Franco as well:

«El polvo se descolgaba en espirales por los rayos de sol, se posaba silenciosamente sobre los objetos, era algo tan natural y tan pacífico, yo lo miraba aterrizar con maligno deleite, me sentía cómplice del enemigo descarado, que con mayor terquedad reduplicaba sus minúsculos batallones cuanto más asediado se veía por las batidas implacables. Desde muy temprano, con el primer rayo de luz que traía hasta mi cama una lluvia menuda de motas de polvo, coincidían las diligencias para su captura, las órdenes fanáticas a toque de diana, el despliegue de aparejos escondidos en un cuartito oscuro del pasillo, y en seguida aquel arrastrar, frotar y sacudir de escobas, escobillas, plumero, zorros, cogedor, paño de gamuza, bayeta, cepillo para el lustre. Yo había hecho frente común con el perseguido, le daba secretas consignas y secreto albergue, le abría el embozo de mi cama. 'Que vienen, escóndete aquí. Tu venganza es burlarte y renacer en otro sitio, no podrán contigo.'»[33].

In this passage, the grandmother's temple of domestic order becomes an allegory of the regime itself, and of its struggles against anti-Francoist insurgencies. The child's camaraderie with the hunted dust and fugitive objects takes on the character of a political sympathy for the insurgents, who must be sheltered from the fanatical housekeeping measures of the regime. The child's dream of escape from this order itself becomes a political allegory: «Yo soñaba con vivir en una buhardilla donde siempre estuvieran los trajes sin colgar y los libros por el suelo, donde nadie persiguiera a los copos de polvo que viajaban en los rayos de luz, donde sólo se comiera cuando apretara el hambre sin más ceremonias»[34]. If the grandmother's temple is the regime, the dreamt-of garret becomes an anarchic utopia, where order is not venerated and where things can exist in free disorder. In Gaite's novel then, the protagonist's desire for an alternative to the pacified space of the clean home is not simply a rebellion against a gendered ideology, but takes on a specifically political coloring under the Franco dictatorship. Her desire for a garret can be read as a desire for a dif-

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have as their patriotic task is the home. That is why, with the arrival of peace, we will increase the labor initiated in our formatory schools, to make life for men so pleasant that within their homes they will find all that they lacked before, and therefore in their spare time they will not have to look for satisfaction in the taverns or casinos» (Mangini, Shirley: *Memories of Resistance: Women's Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995, p. 94).

32. Martín Gaite, Carmen: Op. Cit., pp. 94, 96.

33. Ibid., pp. 87-88.

34. Ibid., 89.

ferent polity: one not strictly organized from above, but in which objects and people can find their own places.

It is important to point out that the source of the protagonist's alternative political vision – an anarchic utopia of freely associating, rather than hierarchically organized, objects – comes from a specific intimate, domestic memory: her experience of the backroom. This is a space which the children inhabited freely and which stood in stark contrast to the uses of backrooms during the Franco years as waiting rooms devoid of any sense of publicness. In this back room, creativity and happiness predominated:

> «Las habitaciones del primer pasillo daban a la Plaza de los Bandos, las del otro, a un patio abierto donde estaban los lavaderos de la casa, y eran la cocina, la carbonera, el cuarto de las criadas, el baño y el cuarto de atrás… Era muy grande y en él reinaban el desorden y la libertad, se permitía cantar a voz en cuello, cambiar de sitio los muebles, saltar encima de un sofá desvencijado y con los muelles rotos al que llamábamos el pobre sofá, tumbarse en la alfombra, mancharla de tinta, era una reino donde nada estaba prohibido»[35].

This room provided the children with an interior/private space which they could use however they wanted to use it. In this space, the rules of order did not apply – that is, they were free to use the space in an alternative way. The children did not feel the need to venture outside of the home because they could find freedom in the back room of the house. With the beginning of the war, this changes. As the narrator tells us, the back room begins to be appropriated by the world of adults because it needs to be used in order to store «articles of prime necessity.» It is interesting to note that the space of the kitchen, that is the space that has historically belonged to women, begins to take over the backroom. Order slowly takes over the chaos of the room and this change is represented through the changes in the use of a large *aparador*:

> «Antes de nada hay que decir que en el cuarto de atrás había un aparador grande de castaño; guardábamos allí objetos heterogéneos, entre los que podía aparecer, a veces, un enchufe o una cuchara, que venían a buscar desde las otras dependencias de la casa, pero esa excepción no contradecía nuestra posesión del mueble, disponíamos enteramente de él, era armario de trastos y juguetes, porque la función de los objetos viene marcada por el uso, ¿no cree?... Y, sin embargo, su esencia de aparador constituyó el primer pretexto invocado para la invasión. Cuando empezaron los acaparamientos de artículos de primera necesidad, mi madre desalojó dos estantes y empezó a meter en ellos paquetes de arroz, jabón y chocolate, que no le cabían en la cocina. Y empezaron los conflictos, primero de ordenación para las cosas diversas que habían quedado sin guarida, y luego de coacción de libertad...»[36].

This change in the use of the space of the back room happens gradually until the children are displaced from the room and their childhood is taken over by the world of the adults, that is, by the conditions that emerge from the war:

35. Ibid., 187.
36. Ibid., p. 188.

«hasta que dejamos de tener cuarto para jugar, porque los artículos de primera necesidad desplazaron y arrinconaron nuestra infancia, el juego y la subsistencia coexistieron en una convivencia agria, de olores incompatibles»[37]. With the disappearance of the back room the child is then forced out of pure necessity to look for alternative spaces in which she can exercise her need for freedom.

Initially, the child is seduced by the world of consumerism; she desires to fill the emptiness created by the disappearance of the back room by acquiring a set of porcelain dishes: «…pero cuando llegaba el invierno, me olvidaba y sucumbía a las exigencies de una industria que fomentaba el descontento y el afán de consumo»[38]. The child visits the storefront continuously and stares at the set of porcelain dishes through the window with longing. One day she decides to take her friend to see it, but the friend is not impressed and in turn initiates her into the world of invention and imagination: «Fue cuando me empezó a hablar de Robinson Crusoe, me dijo que a ella los juguetes comprados le aburrían, que prefería jugar de otra manera, 'De que manera?' 'Inventando; cuando todo se pone en contra de uno, lo mejor es inventar, como lo hizo Robinson.» (194). From this moment on, the protagonist and her friend begin to create an imaginary island called Bergai – an alternative private space to where they can flee in order to escape the confinement of the world that surrounds them: « 'Si te riñen, te vas a Bergai -dijo ella-, ya existe. Es para eso, para refugiarse'»[39].

In colonizing the back room, the kitchen has also extended the logic of *necessity* into the deepest recesses of the house. Even the backroom has been made unsuitable as a refuge for creativity and imagination. Faced with the loss of even this last fugitive physical space, the children invent a fictive one, and the process of invention itself involves a process of interaction and collaboration between the two girls – that is, a kind of public sphere. Most importantly, the space of *Bergai* takes shape *as literature*: «Al día siguiente, inauguramos las anotaciones de Bergai, cada una en nuestro diario, con dibujos y planos; esos cuadernos los teníamos muy escondidos, sólo nos los enseñábamos una a otra. Y la isla de Bergai se fue perfilando como una tierra marginal, existía mucho más que las cosas que veíamos de verdad, tenía la fuerza y la consistencia de sueños… incluso soportaba sin molestia el olor a vinagre que iba tomando el cuarto de atrás…»[40].

6. CONCLUSION

The image of the back room and the island of Bergai as alternative private spaces that save her from the realities of the post-war period, her distaste for order, domesticity, and the ideology of the Women's Section of the Falangist party, and her distrust of history are all conjured up by the protagonist for the man in black in her own back room during a stormy night. The differences are

37. Ibid., p. 189.
38. Ibid., 190.
39. Ibid., p. 179.
40. Ibid.

clear; the protagonist of the novel refuses to be relegated or confined to the domestic sphere as an angel of the home or a good mother and wife, yet she does not reject private space altogether, choosing rather to re-inhabit and consequently find strength and inspiration in it. Discussing her memories of private experiences with the interlocutor frees them from what figures like Arendt would grasp as «the shadowy realm of the private,» bringing them instead into the broad light of publicness. In remembering and recounting her life during the Franco regime, the protagonist of *El cuarto de atrás* introduces an analysis of the everyday life of women during Francoism, including the popular culture, the films, games and songs (chifles, modistas, escondite inglés, Conchita Piquer and songs) which are all but absent from Monumental histories. Her narration, then becomes a «working through of the past» because as Mircea Eliade argues: «aquel que se acuerda de su pasado lo domina y se adueña de su destino...»[41]. For the protagonist of M. Gaite's novel, remembering then, becomes an important tool against collective forgetting.

By the end of the novel, the protagonist's remembrances, brought into the open through her discussions in the back room of her apartment, become the novel itself. As Bachelard suggests in his *Poetics of Space:*

> «And all the spaces of our past moments of solitude, the spaces in which we have suffered from solitude, enjoyed, desired and compromised solitude, remain indelible within us, and precisely because the human being wants them to remain so. He knows instinctively that this space identified with his solitude is creative; that even when it is forever expunged from the present, when, henceforth, it is alien to all the promises of the future, even when we no longer have a garret, when the attic room is lost and gone, there remains the fact that we once loved a garret, once lived in an attic. We return to them in our night dreams»[42].

The writer does not only hide out in her *refugio* – this *refugio* also helps her achieve a critical theoretical distance which enables her to read her past and the past of Spain. Domestic utopias such as the backroom, the attic and the island of *Bergai* become the models for alternative conceptions of the political, at a point when Franco has crushed all the other available public models. Written in the private space of the protagonist's home, the novel breaks out into the public realm through the printed page, offering the private experiences of a woman in Francoist Spain to a community of readers, writers and interpreters. In short, her private experiences, transformed into a novel form, achieve publicness and perhaps even encourage a public «working through of the past.» In a society which has been collectively traumatized, the memory-work performed by one particular individual can set a precedent for collective remembering or storytelling. Addressed to an imagined community of differing individuals, one individual's private experiences become potentially parabolic. When the tyrant

41. Eliade, Mircea: *Mito y Realidad*, Barcelona, Colección Labor, 1994, p. 35.
42. Bachelard, Gaston: *Poetics of Space: The Classical Look at How We Experience Intimate Spaces*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1994, p. 10.

had taken over the streets, political energies were funneled into private space; private experiences then become allegories of the public and political. Re-telling the stories of these private experiences, of the imagination and creativity which continued to flourish within these real and imagined private spaces, becomes a resource for a new publicness. The means for this renewal is literature.

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HOMEWARD BOUND: DOMESTIC SPACE, IDENTITY AND POLITICAL AGENCY IN MAYA ANGELOU'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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1. QUESTIONING SPACE CATEGORIES

Maya Angelou's six-volume autobiography[1] is cast across a variety of geographical spaces, from her native California to the small town of Stamps, in rural Arkansas, from the West coast to the Babel of New York, from the United States to Europe and Africa. It is the aim of the present article to explore the relationship established between the narrator's wandering across physical space and the process of self-construction along the narrative journey, by analysing spatial representation as configured through the constant interaction of physical, socio-cultural and political dimensions.

Theories of Diaspora have not been the first to acknowledge the coexistence and simultaneous interaction of such dimensions, but they have certainly proved necessary to take into account the individual's perception and representation of geographical space so as to explain the dynamism and ambivalence of their location within socio-cultural spheres of identification or exclusion. Social categories, cultural systems and political practices interweave interactive networks, which individuals cannot elude and which theories of self-construction cannot ignore, since «real lives are forged out of a complex articulation of these categories», as Avtar Brah points in her work *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*[2]. According to recent postcolonial feminist theories[3], such complexity may be charted out in the same way that physical

1. Published in successive waves along more than forty years and constituted, in chronological order, by *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Gather Together in My Name, Singin' and Swingin' and Getting' Merry Like Christmas, The Heart of a Woman, All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes,* and *A Song Flung Up to Heaven.*
2. Brah, Avtar: *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities,* London, Routledge, 1996, p. 102.
3. Mohanty, Chandra T.: «Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,» in Ch.T. Mohanty, A. Russo & L. Torres (eds.): *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1991, pp. 1-47. Mirza, Heidi S. (ed.):

spaces are represented and interpreted on geographical maps, stressing thus the existence of «a series of homologies between the spatial, symbolic and social orders»[4]. It is in this sense that my analysis of Angelou's narrative will focus on the mechanisms through which the diverse representations of domestic space reflect different stages in the narrator's progress through life and depend on the specific position adopted by the individual within or against social structures. Moreover, since space in Angelou's narrative is conceived as a multi-layered reality in which symbolic and social orders are inextricably linked with the material, her nomadic experience implies a dynamic approach to both geographical and social space, a perception of life as a journey across visible and invisible barriers, a voyage in which the changes undergone by physical landscapes match the changes to which the narrator's self is subject.

Precisely because of the fluidity with which both processes of space representation and self-definition take place, Angelou's construction of domestic space cannot be based on an opposition between public and private dimensions, but it is articulated through a dynamic process along which the individual's position is negotiated in relation to physical and symbolic collective spaces. Her representation of domestic space depends on its configuration as either a space of belongingness or a space of un-belongingness to a social context. Therefore, it is not constructed as an isolated physical dimension, separated from any external reality by a rigid material frame, but it is delimited by permeable boundaries which allow for a continuous osmosis between the inside and the outside. As Blunt and Rose argue:

> «The definition of the private as a domestic space separate from the public world of commerce was rarely meaningful in black communities; to the extent that it did resonate, the private was understood as a place, often a neighbourhood, beyond everyday encounters with white racism».[5]

The socio-cultural barriers which precluded Afro-Americans' access to the space of visibility in politics, commerce, and work are structurally different from those which relegated white middle-class women to domestic, family space. Furthermore, domestic space in Angelou's works is used to negotiate the individual's location within micro-social, as well as macro-social structures, thus considerably enlarging its functional configuration from the exclusive reign of family life to a site of socio-political agency. This does not simply convey the idea that domestic space is a malleable reality to be rearranged according to the

Black British Feminism. A Reader, London, Routledge, 1997. Blunt, Alison & Rose, Gillian (eds.): *Writing Women and Space. Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies,* London, The Guilford Press, 1994. Ang-Lygate, Magdalene: «Charting the Spaces of (Un)location: On Theorising Diaspora,» in H.S. Mirza (ed.): *Black British Feminism. A Reader,* London, Routledge, 1997, pp. 168-186.

4. Moore, Harriet L.: *Space Text Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 1.
5. Blunt, Alison & Rose, Gillian: «Introduction: Women's Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies», in A. Blunt & G. Rose (eds.): *Writing Women and Space. Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies,* London, The Guilford Press, 1994, p. 4.

narrator's shifting experiences, but also that within domestic space individuals can construct their self-identity, a social community can assert their collective identity and political discussions and actions can take place in order to break into and deconstruct hegemonic institutions. Therefore, domestic space, on both a physical and symbolic level, contains and is identified with personal, communitarian and public space.

2. DOMESTIC SPACE AS THE PLACE OF (UN)BELONGINGNESS

> «Until I was thirteen and left Arkansas for good, the Store was my favourite place to be. Alone and empty in the mornings, it looked like an unopened present from a stranger. Opening the front doors was pulling the ribbon off the unexpected gift. The light would come in softly (we faced north), easing itself over the shelves of mackerel, salmon, tobacco and thread. It fell flat on the big vat of lard and by noontime during the summer the grease had softened to a thick soup. Whenever I walked into the Store in the afternoon, I sensed that it was tired. I alone could hear the slow pulse of its job half done. But just before bedtime, after numerous people had walked in and out, had argued over their bills, or joked about their neighbors, or just dropped in «to give Sister Henderson a 'Hi y'all,'» the promise of magic mornings returned to the Store and spread itself over the family in washed life waves»[6].

Her grandmother's General Store, with its small backrooms where the family slept and ate their meals, is the first space with which Maya[7] feels identified. Indeed, not only does she describe it with longing tenderness, but she even talks of it as a living creature, awaking and falling asleep, working and resting in synchrony with family life: the Store actually represents her family's whole life. The process of identification with its spatial dimension begins, thus, with the assimilation of physical space to the function it has been assigned in everyday life: inside the front shop area, work is done, money is earned and people are met and talked to, while, in the rooms at the rear of the Store, food and night sleep are shared by the four members of the family. The fundamental social and physiological activities in their lives are all contained within the physical space of this or that room[8], while the Store, as a unity, contains all of them at once. Therefore, in the young girl's experience, the superposition of a symbolic dimension of space onto the physical one is a direct consequence of life being so inextricably linked to the space it takes place in, that both the former and the latter must converge into a single whole.

Identification between the space described in the quoted paragraph and the narrator, between the observed and the observer, is patent in the silent communication which the child establishes with the Store and which she

6. Angelou, Maya: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, London, Virago, 1984 (1969), p. 16. Henceforth, *Caged Bird.*
7. In order to distinguish the literary *persona* of the narrator from the author, I will refer to the former as Maya and to the latter as Angelou.
8. Except for the attendance of religious services, which, albeit is possibly considered by Maya's grandmother as the most important activity in people's lives, takes place outside the domestic sphere of the Store and falls outside the methodological framework of the present analysis.

»alone could hear». A space belonging to, and also clearly identified with Maya's family transcends both its value as a physical reality and as a social space moulded around her family structure, to reach the ultimate significance of personal space. The intimacy of the child's relationship with the Store is rendered through the former's interpretation and articulation of the emotions oozing from the building: she alone understands it and gives it a voice, while, at the same time, the shop enables her to speak out her own sensations by projecting them onto its walls. Its personification originates from an act of imagination on behalf of the child, who places, upon the physical dimension of the Store, an image mirroring her inner emotional landscape. Thus, the Store portrayed in the fragment above is not her grandmother's Store, nor the same space as perceived by her brother Bailey or her uncle William, but *her* Store, constructed upon mutual reflections of the symbolic onto the physical. The existence of such reciprocity prevents the child's imagining of the Store from being merely an act of appropriation, but it constitutes the basis for a much deeper link binding the girl and the Store together: their belonging to each other: «[u]ntil we became familiar enough to belong to the Store and it to us, we were locked up in a Fun House of Things where the attendant had gone home for life»[9].

The concept of belongingness is central to Maya's sketching of the Store as her first home, more so since the place could not be defined as private, following the traditional understanding of the term. It is a place where «numerous people» wandered in and out of from early morning till late afternoon[10], where neighbours lingered for some chat, «barbers sat their customers in the shade of its porch, and troubadours […] leaned across its benches and sang their sad songs»[11]. The «alone and empty» Store that the narrator defines as an «unopened gift», comes to life when its front doors are opened to the public. Its configuration as Maya's personal space of belongingness is not limited to a one-to-one intimate dialogue; on the contrary, the Store assumes its full identity in the eyes of the little girl when it bestows its gifts on village people and foreigners, on family members as well as on strangers. What makes Maya think of the Store as home is not, therefore, the exclusiveness of an enclosure to which admittance is barred from whomever is not recognized as a rightful member of the family circle. Even though the place is outlined in the quoted paragraph as an independent world within the world, it was, nonetheless, «built in the heart of the Negro area, and it became the lay center of the activities in town»[12]. Its physical boundaries allow for an osmotic stream to flow in and out, the openness of the place contrasting against the selectiveness of the Western bourgeois domestic space. Maya's first home is not limited to domestic space, but it spreads out to include the space of work, social

9. Angelou, Maya: *I Know Why…*, op. cit., p. 8.
10. Ibid., pp. 8-10.
11. Ibid., p. 7.
12. Ibid.

intercourse, and community life, all of which calls for a different definition of the very idea of «home».

The Store, that unfamiliar «Fun House», becomes home when Maya and her brother eventually recognise it as «familiar», as part and parcel with family life. It is, therefore, the establishment of kinship links with her grandmother and uncle that brings Maya to acknowledge the space they occupy, first as an extension, and later, as the physical embodiment of the concept of family itself. At the same time, the process of symbolic construction of the child's identity begins with the conception of family as an extension of the individual self, whose specificity derives from and is determined by its interrelationship with the whole. The process of self-identification with the Store is, thus, a consequence of Maya's identification with her family: the net of blood-links and emotional interdependence conforms a space of belongingness which is extrapolated to physical space, so that it is through their identification with family space that both Maya and the Store acquire their full identity and can be said to mirror each other. In fact, if the Store constitutes the core of Maya's childhood, the heart and centre of the Store is Momma Henderson, who not only «had [the place] built» and «had owned [it] some twenty-five years»[13], but also communicates to the place she inhabits the centrality of her character inside the community. Maya's grandmother, is, at one and the same time, a caring othermother[14] and a model of the «majesty»[15] of Black women[16]. She is a community mother, and a mother of the church[17], a pillar in the Afro-American side of the rural Arkansas town, so that the fact that Maya is recognised as Sister Henderson's granddaughter places her not only within the circle of familiar space, but also at the very centre of the Black community. Like a stone dropped in water, the certainty of belonging to her grandmother creates a succession of concentric ripples which transmit the concept of belongingness to the Store, as well as to the neighbourhood.

Personal, family and community space contrive to participate of the same defining elements as long as the feeling of belongingness glues them together. Indeed, identification between Maya and physical space is torn away as soon as she leaves her grandmother's sphere to enter into that of her blood-mother, Vivian Baxter. Their first encounter takes place in her maternal grandparents' house, where Maya and her brother sat «on the edge of [their] seats in the overfurnished living room»[18], and where Maya feels the icy sting of mis-recognition:

13. Ibid.
14. Angelou, Maya: *Singin' and Swingin' and Getting' Merry Like Christmas*, London, Virago, 1985 (1976), p. 48.
15. Angelou, Maya: *A Song Flung Up to Heaven,* London, Virago, 2003 (2002), p. 211.
16. Angelou, Maya: *I Know Why…s*, op. cit., pp. 28-32.
17. Ibid., pp. 32, 45-46.
18. Ibid., p. 58.

> «[Bailey] never shared the icy wind of solitude with me. She was his Mother Dear and I resigned myself to his condition. They were more alike than she and I, or even than he and I. They both had physical beauty and personality, so I figured it figured. […] Our father left St. Louis a few days later for California, and I was neither glad nor sorry. He was a stranger, and if he chose to leave us with a stranger, it was all of one piece»[19].

Unable to define herself as belonging to this beautiful woman she had no memory of, Maya senses the blank void of a domestic space which she does not belong to because she lacks the ability to mirror herself in her mother's face. Belongingness to a maternal figure is still central to the configuration of family space and to the subsequent creation of a personal bond with the physical space of residence, only, in this case, it is the idea of un-belongingness that determines space representation. Thus, the sense of alienation that emerges from the impossibility of recognising herself in her mother's features transcends to a domestic space which can be called a house, but not a home any longer:

> «Moving from the house where the family was centered meant absolutely nothing to me. It was simply a small pattern in the grand design of our lives If other children didn't move so much, it just went to show that our lives were fated to be different from everyone else's in the world. The new house was no stranger than the other, except that we were with Mother»[20].

Sharing the same domestic space with her blood-mother does not make it a familiar space, as much as sharing life with Vivian Baxter does not turn her into Maya's mother. Identifying domestic space with personal space is not possible when self-identity is threatened by the chasm of symbolic orphanage and the thread of belongingness has been cut by the absence of mutual recognition. Domestic spaces are represented as precarious camping sites from which to move onwards in search of a true home. The idea of life as a chain of incessant movements is clearly stated in the passage above, uprootedness being conceived as an impending doom, as the watermark of Maya's very existence, just as the ambivalent movement between geographical and imagined landscapes is at the basis of the diasporic experience. The quest for a homeland as a process of self-definition is asserted even more clearly a little further in the text:

> «As quickly as I understood that I had not reached my home, I sneaked away to Robin Hood's forest and the caves of Alley Oop where all reality was unreal and even that changed every day. I carried the same shield that I had used in Stamps: 'I didn't come to stay.'»[21]

Space is not owned, but merely used to move on to the next stage in her life. What is more, her unequal experience of domesticity at her grandmother's and now at her mother's teaches Maya that home is a place defined by the *who*,

19. Ibid., p. 59.
20. Ibid., pp. 66-67.
21. Ibid., p. 68.

not by the *where*. Therefore, space will be used, from this moment onwards, to negotiate her un/belongingness to a collective identity and, ultimately to define her own individuality.

Thus, Maya's quest for her identity is paralleled by a winding journey through different houses, which, in the first place, will encourage her to search for any traces of her belongingness to the family clan. During her first sojourn at her mother's house in St. Louis, and the summer holiday spent at her father's house in Los Angeles, as well as during the successive periods in which she will lodge with Vivian in San Francisco, Maya will never cease to look for a way to bridge the distance which separates her from her kin. If she certainly fails at doing so as far as her relationship with her father goes, –«if I disappeared Dad would be relieved»[22]–, her relation to Vivian is much more complex. In a first stage, Maya assumes the role of a symbolic stepdaughter to her biological mother, thus positioning herself as an outcast excluded from the close relationship between Vivian and Bailey. Their closeness to each other occupied the central stage in the family drama, while «from the wings [Maya] heard and watched the pavane of tragedy move steadily towards its climax»[23]. The choice of a spatial metaphor to convey the sense of her marginality in the family order, stresses the existence of a clear overlapping of physical and psychological space, as the narrator reaffirms later on, by stating that «[t]he house was smudged with unspoken thoughts and it was necessary to go to [her] room to breathe»[24]. Maya, who has «been left out of their power/love struggles, and forgotten on the sidelines»[25] is materially cornered in her room, alien to a house belonging to other people.

However, the absence of parental belongingness between Vivian and Maya enables the latter to establish a connection which, different as it were from the mother-daughter intercourse, constitutes a lasting point of reference for the narrator, who will always look at Vivian as a model of Black resistance and agency. «During this period of strain Mother and I began our first steps towards mutual adult admiration»[26], states the narrator, revealing the attainment of a reciprocal recognition as equal individuals and, what is more, as Black women. Thus, Vivian is not, at this point, a channel through which belongingness to blood ancestry may be obtained, but a model of Black womanhood linking Maya to her socio-cultural community and, so, to her ethnic ancestry. In the «smoke-filled dining room»[27] of Vivian's boarding-house –«a fourteen-room typical San Franciscan post-Earthquake affair»[28] located in the centre of «San Francisco's Negro neighbourhood»[29]– Maya «was introduced to the most

22. Ibid., p. 243.
23. Ibid., p. 250.
24. Ibid., p. 254.
25. Ibid., p. 251.
26. Ibid., p. 261.
27. Ibid., p. 214.
28. Ibid., p. 212.
29. Ibid., p. 205.

colourful characters in the Black underground»[30]. She experiences a domestic space which merges into community space, just as it did at her grandmother's Store. Once again, privacy is not a fundamental feature of Maya's domestic space. Instead, she finds the domestic and the communal concurring to weave the string of belongingness to a collective identity, that of the Afro-American community.

Years later, her perception of the domestic as the open threshold to a social context will be consciously affecting her choice of Accra, the capital of Ghana, as the place to locate her domestic sphere and, thus, to locate herself within the warm embrace of a social community she aspires to belong to. Maya will shift the object of her eagerness to belong from family space to ethnic space, but the functional centre from which to reach out into collective space will still be identified with the house.

> «Each person had brought to Africa varying talents, energies, vigor, youth and terrible yearnings to be accepted. On Julian's side porch during warm black nights, our voices were raised in attempts to best each other in lambasting America and extolling Africa».[31]

Julian Mayfield's side porch is another transitional element connecting the inside of domestic space with outside of communitarian space. Just like Momma Henderson's porch, it is conceived as a platform from which individuals achieve visible status within the common ground of social structure, the only difference lying in the fact that in Stamps the porches and backyards are material vehicles for interpersonal encounters and mutual recognition as community members inside the framework of a micro-social system, whereas, in Accra, Maya and the rest of the Afro-American expatriates are attempting to make themselves visible in the macro-social cartography of Africa. Moreover, they raise their voices in an effort to be heard, thus opposing their silenced subaltern position within Northern American society against their hope to be recognised as legitimate members of the African macro-social landscape. Even when Maya's «living room had begun to compete with the Mayfield side porch for popularity»[32], the purpose of those meetings inscribed within the boundaries of domesticity are still the same: to negotiate the expatriates' location on the African socio-cultural map of belongingness: «[w]e had come home, and if home was not what we had expected, never mind, our need for belonging allowed us to ignore the obvious and to create real places or even illusory places, befitting our imagination»[33]. What is especially relevant about Maya's reflection on the purpose of her sojourn in Ghana, is, in the first place, the fact that belongingness is not seen as something which the individual is

30. Ibid., p. 214.
31. Angelou, Maya: *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes,* London, Virago, 1987 (1986), p. 18. Henceforth, *All God's Children.*
32. Ibid., p. 39.
33. Ibid., p. 19.

born into, but as the product of the subject's own agency[34], of the individual's ability to «create real or even illusory places». In the second place, domestic space is never a separate, totally autonomous dimension and by moving in and out of domestic space Maya secures or severes her bonds with a given socio-cultural space. In *All God's Children,* Julian Mayfield's or Maya's houses in Ghana are instrumental to their integration in African society. In *The Heart of a Woman,* Maya decided to leave a glamorous white neighbourhood and to begin «searching for another school and another house» because she and her son «needed an area where black skin was not regarded as one of nature's most unsighted mistakes»[35]. Both episodes prove that domestic space is primarily represented as a site of either belongingness or un-belongingness to social contexts.

3. DOMESTIC SPACE AS A SITE OF SELF-ASSERTION

3.1 A house of one's own

The two most important female figures in Maya's life, Vivian Baxter and Momma Henderson, owned their own houses and businesses, they both ruled undisputed in their personal universe and were mistresses of their own fate[36]. It is not surprising, therefore, that domestic space in Angelou's narrative does not only represent the narrator's grade of participation of a collective identity, but embodies, as well, the individual's strife to acquire a distinct personal space and, consequently, a personal identity. Soon after her unexpected son was born, Maya decides that she «would quit the house, take a job and show the whole world […] that I was equal to my pride and greater than my pretensions»[37]. Subsequently, a transfiguration of the symbolic significance of domestic space takes place and, for the first time, it becomes primarily a space of self-assurance in which individuality could be sought outside the family network.

> «I had rented a room (with cooking privileges) in a tall, imposing San Francisco Victorian and had bought my first furniture and a white chenille bedspread. God, but it looked like a field of tiny snow roses. I had a beautiful child, who laughed at seeing me, a job that I did well, a baby-sitter whom I trusted, and I was young and crazy as a road lizard. Surely this was making it»[38].

34. See Eagleton, Mary (ed.): *Feminist Literary Criticism. A Reader,* London, Blackwell Publishers, 1996, pp. 342-345.
35. Angelou, Maya: *The Heart of a Woman*, London, Virago, 1986 (1981), p. 21.
36. In Momma Henderson Maya «saw only her power and strength» (*Caged Bird,* p. 45), and she talks of Vivian as «[her] beautiful mother, who ran business and men with autocratic power, taught [her] to row [her] own boat, paddle [her] own canoe, hoist [her] own sail. She warned, in fact, 'If you want something done, do it yourself'» (Angelou, Maya: *Singin' and Swingin' and Getting' Merry Like Christmas*, London, Virago, 1985 (1976), p. 14).
37. Angelou, Maya: *Gather Together in My Name*, London, Virago, 1985 (1974), p. 8. Henceforth, *Gather Together.*
38. Angelou, Maya: *Gather Together in*…, op. cit., p. 16.

Motherhood, work and a space to herself constitute the three axis around which Maya's personal dimension will be articulated throughout the following autobiographical volumes. According to Mary Jane Lupton[39] and Stephen Butterfly, «[c]ontinuity [along the texts] is achieved by the contact of mother and child»[40]. Domestic space may also be considered as a unifying element across the textual fabric, for its inherent precariousness is a coherent representation of the keep-on-moving nature of Maya's approach to life. Finally, the configuration of domestic space as personal space is tightly bound to Maya's definition of herself as a working subject. On the one hand, the joy of home-decoration is due to the material enactment of self-assertion on physical space, but, on the other hand, it derives from the awareness of the fact that a place of her own has been gained through hard work. Thus, the acquisition of personal space may not be set apart from her ability to find her own stance in what has traditionally been regarded as a public sphere. In other words, she delimits her personal dimension within both the domestic and the work sphere, untying personal space from a given material environment and, so, reaffirming her individual identity beyond the reductive boundaries of the private/public opposition. Indeed, the pride with which she undertakes the task of furnishing her rented room in the fragment above reappears, time and again, in every episode in which the narrator describes her conquest of a new personal space. Every time she succeeds in providing herself with financial and spatial independence, the process of turning a house into a home is described in full detail:

> «The apartment was small and dark and humid, so I bought gallons of white latex paint and a stack of rollers and brushes. I painted every inch of visible wall and the entire floor bone-white. I went over the floor with a few coats of adobe enamel. […] In Los Angeles I bought orange, rust and brown burlap and draped the material casually at windows. I made huge colorful floor pillows and piled them on the floor. Van Gogh and Matisse posters enlivened the walls.
>
> I stacked painted wood planks and burned cheap candles in Chianti and Mateus wine bottles. When the melted wax nearly covered the bottles, I put fresh candles in them and placed them around the room for light and esoteric effect».[41]

With the money Maya has earned singing blues and calypso songs at a Hawaiian night club, she is not only able to support herself, but also to keep moving forward towards new experiences. With her son now a young adult finishing his studies in Ghana, Maya is free to choose the course of her life and she chooses to be on her own. Years have passed since she rented her first room but the urge to transform a neutral, alien space into her own has

39. Lupton, Mary Jane: «Singing the Black Mother: Maya Angelou and Autobiographical Continuity», *Black American Literature Forum,* 24: 2 (summer 1990), pp. 257-276.
40. Butterfield, Stephen: *Black Autobiography in America*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1974, p. 213.
41. Angelou, Maya: *A Song Flung Up to Heaven,* London, Virago, 2003 (2002), p. 56. Henceforth, *A Song.*

not diminished in the least. Moreover, the effort of active manipulation of space turns the anonymous flat into moulding material in her hands, into a pile of amorphous clay to be handled through the plastic experience of artistic creation. Walls and floors painted white become fresh canvasses on which the process of self-projection may begin; orange and rust and brown are splashed on the blank surfaces, which are no longer dead matter, but become alive –*enlivened*– as Maya imprints her identity on them. Like a picture looks back at its creator, inevitably mirroring whoever gave it its form, space is represented as an extension of the narrator's self. Space representation, however, is not limited within the bi-dimensional axes of a picture, as it may be the case with «Van Gogh and Matisse posters», on the contrary, it fully surrounds the observer, who is forced to enter the picture and turn around to take in each detail provided by the narrator: the pillows randomly thrust on the floor suggest the presence of people crouching on them, just as the numerous candles hint at a definite atmosphere of long intimate evenings. The flat is, therefore, carefully designed to be a scenario ready to be filled with actors, a candle-lit stage on which to perform a play whose script is still to be written, but whose tone has already been defined by Maya's conscious choice of hues and nuances. In other words, in this case domestic space is not only being deployed as a reflection of the narrator's subjectivity, but also as a perimeter within which to enact, to *live* that subjectivity.

Thus, even a rented place –and Maya will never buy a house, as far as the six volumes show–, even short-term lodgings which she does not, strictly speaking, possess, can be perceived as personal space, precisely because space is not merely laid out in physical terms, it is not a material commodity to be owned, bought and sold: space, according to Maya's experience, is there to be occupied, to frame a specific location of the subject within the mutable intersections of the social, cultural, political and psychological dimensions. Therefore, a change in the subject's position among such intersecting cartographies determines a change in the perception and representation of the space they occupy. Just as she used to employ her grandmother's or her mother's house to depict her stance in relation to family space and blood-ancestry, she now uses domestic space to materialise her search for self-assertion.

Furthermore, it may be interesting to compare how the same actions, the same attempts at turning alien space into her own, project different images of the narrator on the walls of domestic space, depending on her particular conception of the self at a given point in her life. For instance, in *The Heart of a Woman*, Angelou narrates her moving into one of the «[r]ed-roofed, Moorish styled houses nestled seductively among madrone trees in Laurel Canyon, the official residential area of Hollywood»[42], because she «wanted desperately to live in the glamorous surroundings»[43]. Here too she «painted the small house

42. Angelou, Maya: *The Heart of…*, op. cit., p. 4.
43. Ibid., p. 5.

a sparkling white»[44], but she does not give us a precise vision of the interior of the house, as she does in the paragraph quoted before; instead, she focuses on the outside, on the flowers that «bloomed in a riot of crimsons, carnelian, pinks, fuchsia and sunburst gold»[45], and the same self-satisfaction with which elsewhere she minutely describes her house furnishing, is now extended to her «handsome dated automobile»[46]:

> «The car, a sea-green, ten-year old Chrysler, had a parquet dashboard, and splintery wooden doors. It could not compete with the new chrome of my neighbors' Cadillacs and Buicks, but it had an elderly elegance, and driving in it with the top down, I felt more like an eccentric artist than a poor black woman who was living above her means, out of her element, and removed from her people»[47].

Maya is exploring Los Angeles as a place where her artistic aspirations might come true, since, even though «she accepted as fictitious the tales of amateurs being discovered at lunch counters», she firmly believes that it is «important to be in the right place at the right time, and no place seemed so right to [her] in 1958 as Laurel Canyon»[48]. Again, space is being given a value in accordance to her intentions and, again, it is being approached as a scenario in which she chooses to perform a certain role, in this case, that of an «eccentric artist». In contrast with the previous examples of Maya's use of domestic space as an oasis of individual independence, her small bungalow in Laurel Canyon is fundamentally a means to stand at the centre of an exterior reality. So, the description of domestic space is turned outwards, and, so, the focus of attention is shifted from the inner area of the house to the outer area of the car, a car which is convertible, thus allowing for external visibility, and mobile, so that it permits travelling around the social space of the neighbourhood. It may be said, therefore, that such a representation of domestic space does not include privacy among its outstanding features, just as neither her grandmother's nor her mother's houses were rendered as private, separate areas, closed to any interaction with the social space of community. There is, however, a relevant difference between the Hollywood bungalow and the houses Maya knew during her childhood: while in the latter the social space of the Black community entered the domestic, in the former it is domestic space that is outstretched towards the neighbourhood.

This fact shows, in the first place, that a dichotomist approach to space, as forced by the application of the private/public opposition, is not viable in Angelou's disposition of spatial representation. Moreover, it may also be argued that, as much as the categories of inside and outside are relative, personal space –as defined by the quest for self-assertion– can also be extended beyond the limits of domesticity, so that self-definition is actually worked out anywhere

44. Ibid., p. 6.
45. Ibid., p. 5.
46. Ibid., p. 6.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p. 5.

in particular, and everywhere in general. Indeed, Maya is willing to seek her identity as an artist and a professional subject in an environment which she explicitly considers «above her means», and «removed from her people», thus placing herself outside both ethnic and class categories of belongingness. Social space is still represented through patterns of (un)belongingness, but personal space moves across frontiers because self-identity is not simply sought in relation to «her people», to her original community, but is also negotiated against the *other*. Consequently, it might be deduced that personal space is the journey itself: a work in progress, a dynamic reality that crosses geographical, socio-cultural and symbolic landscapes, not rooted to any, but experiencing them all. Since a journey can be defined as a succession of different locations of a given subject, personal space is the result of Maya's synchronic perception and interpretation of specific spaces as seen from the diachronic point of view of autobiographical narrative. To understand Maya's acquisition of identity is to follow her along the path she has been tracing in time and space.

3.2 Space-acquisition through social networks

Regarding domestic space as a *locus* of self-determination, I have mentioned so far three points of inflection in Maya's progression through her quest for subjectivity. The fourth domestic space to be represented as an extension of a self-constructed, individual identity, triumphant in its freedom, but still growing in its self-assurance, is also the last house to be rented by the narrator in Angelou's autobiography.

> «I had wanted a flat in a brownstone, or at least a large apartment in one of the older buildings on Riverside Drive. Life offered me a one-bedroom apartment in a brand-new building on Central Park West. It was painted white, and its best feature was a long living room with big windows and a view of the park.
>
> The place was clinical and so different from what I wanted that I thought bad fortune had caught me and I would be forced to live, at least for a while, in a cold and sterile environment. But life proved itself right and me wrong. Friends began giving me fine things for the apartment».[49]

On a first reading, a somewhat odd fact meets the eye: a white-walled apartment is perceived as «clinical, cold and sterile», whereas the «bone-white», or even the «sparkling white» walls in previous houses had been painted by the narrator herself. If white is the chosen colour to enlighten a small, dark flat in Los Angeles, it is significant to notice how a luminous, large-windowed apartment in Manhattan is interiorised as a hostile environment. Of course, in this case Maya has not had the chance to choose that colour, so whiteness is represented as an imposed feature and not as a consequence of an act of self-projection, of the subject's agency. However, its emptiness is no longer faced as a tempting canvass on which she might draw her blue-print, but as a threatening blankness, a mute mirror where she cannot recognise herself.

49. Angelou, Maya: *A Song Flung Up…,* op. cit., p. 137.

This may be considered as further evidence of the fact that the representation of physical space is relative to the subject's interiorised perception of material reality and outward projection of their psychological situation. Nevertheless, it is also necessary to include the social environment that surrounds the domestic to understand fully what causes Maya's distress at finding herself inhabiting this «brand-new» apartment. During her sojourn in the candle-lit apartment, she had chosen before-hand the neat working-class neighbourhood as an ideal location for «its rightness of place»[50]. In the case of the Los Angeles bungalow, she had «desperately» wanted to be in the middle of a white upper-class community. Now she finds herself unexpectedly placed at the very heart of an urban area which many Afro-Americans might consider as «enemy's territory»[51]. She has been persistently looking for her place in an area, the Upper West End and ends up somewhere completely outside her personal map of both the City and her life. Her new location makes her feel displaced, thus highlighting the influence that social environments exert over domestic space, which is never described without some explicit mention of the social micro-cosmos in which it is inserted. Moreover, domestic space is often chosen *because of* its social frame[52], so that domestic space is but a marker of Maya's choice of locating herself in a definite socio-cultural setting.

The means by which such an alien space is turned into her own comes as a surprise to Maya: «[f]riends began giving me fine things for the apartment». She realises that social space is essentially constructed over a net of interpersonal relationships, and is not necessarily enclosed in a rigid physical delimitation -such as those barring a ghetto-, and, at the same time, she becomes aware of the fact that she is already placed at the centre of a well-spread web of interrelationships, so that wherever her house might happen to be, it will always be standing in the middle of a space of belongingness. Her *friends,* that is to say, those people whose intercourse she had chosen of her free will, are the basis for a truly personal space to be constructed upon, for not even blood-links nor the bonds of a collective cultural heritage can beget a space so deeply her own as the links which she herself has tied.

> «As soon as it became known that I had an empty apartment, I began to receive good and even great furniture. A desk came from Sylvia Boone, who had just returned from Ghana. The composer Irving Burgee, who had written calypso songs for Harry Belafonte, was the most financially successful member of the Harlem Writers Guild, and when he heard that I had a new apartment, he gave a sleek table and an upholstered chair». [53]

50. Ibid., p. 54.
51. Angelou, Maya: *The Heart of…*, op. cit., p. 155.
52. Angelou, Maya: *The Heart of…*, op. cit., pp. 5, 21, 139; *All God's Children…*, op. cit., p. 4; *A Song Flung Up…,* op. cit. pp. 54, 137.
53. Angelou, Maya: *A Song Flung Up…,* op. cit., p. 138.

Ghana, where Maya had found her ancestral roots; Harlem, where she had discussed and produced literature, and led political activism; the echo of the calypso songs with which she had earned her living for many years and had introduced her into the fertile ground of Afro-American theatre: three essential aspects of Maya's identity –which she had been trying to define during all her life- are reunited into a single domestic space through a net of solidarity she herself had been interweaving along her journey. Her African, Afro-American and artistic identities are no longer the bits and odds of a fractured self, but a whole reality bound together by her belongingness to a social context she had chosen for herself and had patiently built throughout the years. It is the sudden awareness of her having earned both a collective identity and an individual one of her very own doing, that transforms the Central Park West «sterile apartment» into «[her] home»[54] and into a triumph of her struggles for self-assertion.

4. DOMESTIC SPACE AS A SITE OF POLITICAL AGENCY

4.1 The march and the conquest

> «Everyone [in the Killens' family] except Jon, whose nickname was Chuck, talked incessantly, and although I enjoyed the exchange, I found the theme inexplicably irritating. They excoriated white men, white women, white children and white history, particularly as it applied to black people.
>
> I had spent my life on city front steps, in country backyards, kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms, joining in and listening to the conversations of black people, but I had never heard so much attention given to the subject of whites». [55]

So far in Maya's experience, the act of tale-telling as a verbal process of Black identity construction, has always taken place at a safety distance from the space defined by «whitefolks'» identity. Those conversations inside Black domestic space have been intended to reinforce the image of a collective identity, while maintaining the rigid social barriers at the other side of which lays «whitefolkstown»[56]. «In fact», Angelou writes, even in their absence [whitefolks] could not be spoken of too harshly unless we used the sobriquet 'They'»[57]. Physical and social segregation reflects itself on the symbolic space of language, which avoids approaching openly and closely what lays beyond their communitarian territory, since doing so would be equivalent to stepping over visible and invisible barriers and out into «enemy's territory». Therefore, when Maya, just landed at New York and staying temporarily at the Killens', finds herself constantly pushed into passionate debates on whiteness, she is taken aback by the *trans*gressiveness of such acts, which implied a continuous

54. Ibid., p. 142.
55. Angelou, Maya: *The Heart of…,* op. cit., p. 32.
56. Angelou, Maya: *I Know Why…,*: op. cit., p. 24.
57. Ibid., p. 46.

trespassing to alien space. The domestic space of her friends' house, the «roomy brownstone in Brooklyn»[58], is transfigured by such discourses and turned into a political space where, whatever the initial topic of conversation might be, «in minutes [they] were persistently examining the nature of racial oppression, racial progress and racial integration»[59]. This points at a further development of the function assumed by domestic space in Angelou's narrative: it does not simply represent the locus of identity-construction by identification with a social community of belongingness, or by opposition against a social context of otherness; it is not solely a crucial knot that holds together the social network delimiting community space; it is not only a site of resistance against hegemonic discourses, but a space of active political agency spreading towards the very centre of the dominating system. Indeed, domestic space is being used as a springboard into outer space, into a social dimension which exceeds the limits of segregated space and might be conceived as the heart of public space: the political arena.

> «The Cultural Association for Women of African Heritage had its second meeting at Abbey's luxury penthouse apartment on Columbus Avenue. […]The Charter, as drawn up by Sarah Wright and signed unanimously by the membership, stated that since the entire power of the United States was arrayed in fury against the very existence of the Afro-Americans, we, members of the CAWAH, would offer ourselves to raise money for, promote and publicize any gathering sincerely engaged in developing a just society»[60].

What were spontaneous outbursts of political consciousness at the Killens' have now become, a hundred pages later, a clearly defined, structured organisation for political activism. Physically located within the boundaries of domestic space, a group of Afro-American women are actually proposing to face «the entire power of the United States»: the constraining walls of «Abbey's living room»[61] are outstretched to embrace a larger space, that of «a just society». Moreover, the proverbial privacy and intimacy offered by a bourgeois, «luxury», apartment is thus being employed to give public visibility –«publicize»– to a collective that is geographically spread all over the country. The «Columbus Avenue» apartment is configured, therefore, as a space open both to the entire geographical extension of the United States, as well as to its global social landscape. Domestic space is being employed to address two social realities at the same time, that of the Afro-American community and that of the dominant «whitefolks», which both extend further beyond the material enclosure of Abbey's penthouse apartment, and which both occupy radically opposed physical and social dimensions. Consequently, domestic space is represented here as a site for the overcoming of those social and

58. Angelou, Maya: *The Heart of…*, op. cit., p. 31.
59. Ibid., p. 33.
60. Ibid., p. 143.
61. Ibid., p. 143.

physical frontiers, an open ground where both communities might stand face to face. The «sobriquet 'They'» is no longer needed because Maya and the other members of the CAWAH are now addressing a *you* directly.

This confrontation, articulated on the abstract plane of the association's charter, will soon be transferred upon the material dimension of urban space through an overt act of defiance of physical barriers. After hearing of Patrice Lumumba's murder, Maya will turn CAWAH's general statement of principles and intentions into a concrete course of action which will both embody the passage from political awareness to political agency, and the egression from a segregated spatial dimension and into the domains of hegemonic power.

> «After a short, fierce talk, our decisions were made. On Friday, we would attend the General Session of the United Nations. We would carry black pieces of cloth, and when Adlai Stevenson started to make his announcement on Lumumba's death, we six women would use bobby pins and clip mourning veils to the front of our hair and then stand together in the great hall. […] If men joined us, we would make elasticized arm bands, and at the proper moment, the men could slip the black bands up their sleeves and stand with the women»[62].

When «about ten women met at [her] house» to discuss Lumumba's death, their purpose was to do «something large enough to awaken the Black American community in New York»[63]: domestic space is once again turned into a threshold leading to the public dimension of politics, it is a space where a strategy is forged which will open the path to an actual conquest of forbidden land. Therefore, the meeting at Maya's house subverts the physical and social configuration of domestic space by using it as the starting point of a march that will push open the frontiers between «the black American community» and the power fortress of the city of «New York», that will cross the heart and core of the United States of America right into the centre of the United Nations. The intimacy provided by domestic walls, the safety of a refuge removed from the inquiring gaze of the public, are the least interesting aspects of domestic space for a group of women who are not only struggling to open the eyes of their ethnic community, but also determined to place it under the sight of the whole world in the «great hall» of the United Nations. Indeed, when the members of CAWAH met at Abbey's house on that Friday morning to complete the last preparations, the penthouse apartment is described as «a flurry of action»[64], suggesting an embryonic image of «the black throng» that awaits in front of the United Nations building, «packed together on the sidewalk» and spilling «out into the street»[65]. The house full of women «busy, drinking coffee, laying the veils in one box, talking, putting the arm bands into another box»[66] has been consciously chosen to be the first step of a march which will be first invading

62. Ibid., p. 148.
63. Ibid., p. 146.
64. Ibid., p. 153.
65. Ibid., p. 154.
66. Ibid., p. 153.

the General Assembly, where «seventy-five black people were mixed among the whites»[67], then flowing outwards again, where «thousands of people circled the street and all of them were black»[68], and finally marching through 43rd and 46th streets up to the Associate Press building and the Belgian Embassy. Besides, Maya and Abbey Lincoln had previously been to Harlem to «let some folks […] know what [they] intended to do»[69]: the homage to the African civil rights fighter has been laid out as a route through black community space and into «whitefolkstown», from an inclusive domestic space out to exclusive urban landscapes, through the United States and into the international community. Subsequently, the active commitment of a handful of women meeting within a domestic sphere begets a protest march which floods the City's institutional area and physically conquers a space belonging to the ruling elite.

As we have already seen in Maya's construction of her personal dimension, space is outlined as a chain of successive locations within social networks, and, specifically, the space of political agency is marked by the marchers' footsteps across a variety of grounds –still characterised as spaces of belongingness, such as Harlem neighbourhood, or un-belongingness, like New York midtown streets-, so that it does not coincide with any determined spatial outset. On the contrary, political space can be cut out of any physical and social setting, precisely because it is defined by affirmative action *on* physical and social structures either by identification or opposition. Thus, domestic space is but the initial stage in an ongoing process of political assertion which is meant to move onwards across and in-between socio-cultural crevices.

4.2 Come home where you belong

Political agency as a space stretched along a marching line in perpetual movement appears again in *All God's Children*, and again it is begot within domestic space. Gathering as usual at Julian Mayfield's house in Accra, Ghana, the Afro-American expatriates are informed of an upcoming protest «march to Washington, D.C., to be led by Martin Luther King Jr.»[70]. The immediate recognition of the Afro-American community as their own real space of belongingness is the spark that sets fire to the casual atmosphere of a dinner among friends, replacing it with the eagerness of an activists' political meeting.

> «Someone made the suggestion that although we were radicals, as Black Americans we should support *our people* in the States and form a march sympathetic to the Washington march. As products of a picketing, protesting era, we unanimously and immediately agreed. Of course, we would march on the American Embassy with placards and some appropriate shouts»[71]. [emphasis added]

67. Ibid., p. 157.
68. Ibid., p. 154.
69. Ibid., p. 148.
70. Angelou, Maya: *All God's Children…,* op. cit., p. 121.
71. Ibid., p. 123.

Even though «homesickness was never mentioned in [their] crowd»[72] and «under no circumstances did [they] mention [their] disillusionment at being overlooked by the Ghanaians»[73], each one of the exiles at Julian's house is aware of the fact that «the entrance of a few Black Americans» in the country «went largely unnoticed»[74]. Domestic space is not simply being altered by the sheer force of political action and turned into a site of political agency, but it is also re-presented as a space where the aching bonds with their community of birth are healed. Having shifted their location on a geographical plane, their relation to place has undergone a radical change: what had been for years their place of origin, the absent space of a mythical *there*, that is, the ancestral landscape of their Mother Africa, is now a tangible reality, a presence articulated on the 'here and now', whereas «Houston and Macon, Little Rock and St. Louis, Harlem and Chicago's south side»[75] are now painted in the émigrés minds with the vivid colours of an imagined and much longed 'back there', as their eyes «often ached for those familiar sights»[76]. Therefore, Julian's house is functioning primarily here as a space where individuals locate themselves within the circle of a collective identity, as it is clearly evidenced by the fact that, despite their being «radicals», they would support a political act they do not agree with because, «as Black Americans», they feel the urge to show their share in a collective identity. Domestic space is not standing any more on African ground, but it is, at one and the same time, a dimension of its own –removed from the Afro-American community by geographical distance and from Ghanaian society by cultural distance–, and a space tightly connected with both Africa and the States because, inside it, each individual is able to negotiate their position in relation to either. The house is fundamentally perceived as the locus where the individual's progression through any other space is planned, where the individual's identification with any social structure is defined or rejected, where, in short, geographical, political, social and cultural space is mapped out and the self's route through intersecting dimensions is outlined. The house is more than a delimited space, it is the open gate to an unlimited extension of continuous spaces.

If Maya's personal space is marked by her incessant travelling, the space of political agency is defined by an unrelenting collective march, which begins at home and is headed home: «we marched and sang thinking of home and the thousands who were marching in Washington, D.C.»[77]. Even though Maya and her friends, «the Revolutionist Returnees»[78], have spent years trying to step into the picture of a welcoming Mother Africa they had been dreaming of in the

72. Ibid., p. 120.
73. Ibid., p. 19.
74. Ibid., p. 22.
75. Ibid., p. 120.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., p. 125.
78. Ibid., p. 126.

States, the awareness has slowly emerged that, although the African continent is their ancestral home, their condition as displaced subjects provides them with a complex conception of the idea of a home of their own, which is not so much anchored to a geographical context, but rather to a social community they belong to. Notwithstanding their common heritage and their shared condition as objects of hegemonic oppression, Africans and Black Americans are set apart by the experience of a forced Diaspora, as it is stressed by the use of the phrase «our people» in the quoted text. Indeed, the final goal of the programmed marched is not a Ghanaian institution; the «Revolutionist Returnees» are not aiming at making themselves visible on African space: they are marching towards the «American Embassy», in a symbolic, parallel march to Washington, D.C., the centre of American hegemonic institutions.

At this point in Maya's quest for a space of self-assertion and belongingness to a community, it is by locating herself in a dimension of political agency that she resumes her journey home. Indeed, her encounter with Malcolm X and her active involvement with his political struggle provide Maya with the last tiles to complete the picture of a home she has not reached yet, but whose location she is now aware of.

> «When he [Malcolm X] sat with me after a long day of interviews and meetings, he was a big brother advisor, suggesting that it was time for me to come home. 'The country needs you. Our people need you. Alice and Julian and Max Bond and Sylvia, you should all come home. You have seen Africa, bring it home and teach our people about the homeland.'»[79]

The living room where Maya and Malcolm sat «in the late evenings»[80] is no longer holding a political meeting in which the activist «addressed a shocked and attentive audience»[81], as it was often the case during Malcolm's sojourn in Accra; the house is no longer «filled with expatriates eager to meet and listen to him, who sat on chairs, stools, tables and hunched on the floor, excited into a trembling silence»[82]. The atmosphere is now intimate and loaded with the unspoken certainty that the bonds which unite them both to the Afro-American community are symbolically identical to and as strong as the blood links that draw a brother and a sister together. Thus, domestic space is once again the physical embodiment of a metaphysical space of belongingness in which community and family space are superposed to conform an image of home. Nonetheless, this image would not be complete if we did not consider the political implications of Malcolm's suggestion to «come home». Political agency, in fact, is not absent from the scene and, despite the lack of an audience in the room, Malcolm's words are still pointing at a determined public: «our people». Going back «home» is, therefore, seen as a mission whose aim is to

79. Ibid., p. 139.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid., p. 129.
82. Ibid., p. 128.

«teach our people about the homeland», to help their community to build themselves a home and a path to reach it. Inside the domestic setting of the living room an image of home is being constructed which comprehends the said superposed dimensions of ethnic and blood belongingness, but also those of political action and homeward marching. In fact, the term *home* in Malcolm's speech is used to refer not only to the geographical space of the United States of America, but also, and above all, to the socio-cultural space occupied by the Afro-American collective, so that their «home» is their people. On the other hand, the term *homeland* is referring to Africa, as a land as well as a cultural reference of a common origin and a shared heritage for both the inhabitants of the continent and for the subjects of the Diaspora. Then, «home» and «homeland» are concepts clearly distinguished by the speaker, and, nevertheless, they are both necessary to define the political, socio-cultural and geographical space of belongingness, visibility and agency, which is the end of Malcolm and Maya's endeavour. There is no «home» without an original, larger and common «homeland» to come from, and there is no meaning in identifying with a «homeland» if there is no «home» to go to.

The quest for self-identity which began at Stamps has been constructed along a winding path, getting into and out of spaces of belongingness, and ultimately seeking the home which Maya had found herself denied in her mother's house. The quest for collective identity and political assertion, arisen at the Killens' house in New York, is also cast across geographies of exclusion and identification, and is, indeed, intended to take the Afro-American community home. The fact that both quests share the house/home binomial, as respectively their starting point and final goal, evidences the existence of a common denominator in the construction of Maya's identity as an individual and as a member of a community, while, at the same time, it is suggestive of a conception and subsequent representation of domestic space which eludes traditional parameters of privacy and publicity and whose physical and symbolic configuration is inextricably linked to the negotiation of both individual and collective identities.

Finally, the distinction between the concept of house and that of home allows the narrator to conceive the latter as a dimension larger than the former, subverting any fixed and rigidly framed conception of domestic space and transforming her nomadic experience of geographical space into a continuous opportunity for personal and collective progress beyond physical, socio-political and cultural barriers. Indeed, the closing scene of *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* takes place in her mother's house, where for the first time she had consciously felt homeless, and where she still seems to be homeward bound, for the last line in Angelou's narrative is also the first one in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*: «'[w]hat you looking at me for. I didn't come to stay'»[83]. The autobiographical journey is thus endless since it merges with the beginning of the quest for a

83. Angelou, Maya: *I Know Why…*, op. cit., p. 3; and *A Song Flung Up…*, op. cit., p. 212.

home, but is also infinite since the very idea that Maya «didn't come to stay» implies the intention to keep in constant progression, a conception of life in which the individual as well as the community must «rise and prepare to move on and ever on»[84]. If the concept of home represents the space where individual and collective identities are defined and asserted, and the process of identity construction takes places through an endless journey, then home is not a fixed goal: it is progress. It is the unstoppable individual journey and collective march. She refuses, therefore, to consider her movement across socio-physical spaces as headed to a Promised Land, a mystified space of ownership and attainment of a stable identity; instead, she represents geographical and social landscapes as spaces where self-identity and collective assertion are subject to an endless progression and blessed with the chance of continuously reaffirming their will to be. Space is the rimless map where journeys are traced and Maya's *home* is her freedom to choose her own route.

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84. Angelou, Maya: *A Song Flung Up…,* op. cit., p. 212.

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HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY: THE CRITIQUE OF THE PICTURESQUE BY IRISH AND GALICIAN WOMEN POETS

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Since the 1970s there has been a growing interpenetration of both ecology and feminism which has been accompanied by a parallel increase in environmental literature written by women.[1] In this paper I intend to show how these recent cultural and literary changes and innovations have brought about a critique of the traditional canon of nature writing. Although the literary canon is never a monolithic formation, it has, of old, been predominantly constructed as male; nevertheless, the last three decades have seen the accession of numerous women writers to, among other literatures, the Irish and Galician ones, so there is an evident coalition of forces and interests along gender lines that deserves analysis from the perspective of ecocriticism. Since Françoise d'Eaubonne introduced the term *ecoféminisme* in France in the 1970s, this movement for social change has highlighted the connection between the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women.[2] Parallelisms have also been identified between the marginalization of women's writing and that of environmental writing. Therefore, it is not surprising that an important component of the struggle for the liberation of women should concern itself with the preservation of the environment as well.

Recent developments of ecofeminism have questioned the misleading simplicity of the opposition male/female and have introduced in the debates

1. GAARD, Gretta and Patrick D. MURPHY (eds.): «Introduction», in *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*, Urbana & Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1998, p. 5.
2. STARHAWK: «Power, Authority, and Mystery: Ecofeminism and Earth-Based Spirituality», in Irene Diamond & Gloria Fernan Orenstein (eds.): *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, San Francisco, Sierra Club Books, 1990, pp. 73-86. The link woman-nature has provoked dismissals of ecofeminism as an essentialist project. However, ecofeminism actually believes in the interconnectedness of *all* living beings. See GATES, Barbara T.: «A Root of Ecofemism: *Ecoféminisme*», in Greta Gaard & Patrick D. Murphy (eds.): Op.cit., pp. 15-22.

other parameters such as class, race and colonialism.[3] Indeed, in the present analysis of Irish and Galician women poets' critique of the Picturesque I have found that the notions of class, religion and nation are deeply interconnected with that of gender in the writers' perceptions of landscapes. Apart from these considerations, ecofeminism has encouraged an important on-going discussion about the alterity of both nature and women that is illuminating for literary criticism. Along this line, though ecology calls our attention to the connection between human and non-human nature, this bond does not mean that human beings can project all their values and needs on non-human nature, because the environment is not a static site of cultural inscription. In fact, several ecofeminist approaches emphasize the relative «otherness» of nature, the constraints that nature poses to our attempts to construe it, and the transformative relations that we must undertake for the benefit of all.[4] It is my contention in this paper that, contrary to former appropriations of nature by the tradition of the Picturesque,[5] many Irish and Galician women poets have, of late, been elaborating new discourses that attempt to establish a dialogic relationship with nature, one that explores the bonds and the limitations, the connection and the difference in the rapport between human and non-human nature.

Landscapes of areas with a Celtic background have traditionally been presented as Arcadia both in high literature and in popular culture.[6] These two poles of the artistic hierarchy are brought together in the recent, Oscar-winning

3. For this insight, which ecofeminism takes from general feminist theory, see De Lauretis, Teresa: «Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness», *Feminist Studies*, 16 (Spring 1990), pp. 115-150.
4. For the notion of relative difference (the distinction between the «other» and the «another»), and heterarchical relations see Murphy, Patrick D.: *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1995.
5. The *Harrap's Illustrated Dictionary of Art and Artists* (Bromley, Clark Robinson, 1990) provides the following definition of the «Picturesque»: «The view of, or aesthetic approach towards, nature that was characteristic of much British art in the later 18th and 19th centuries [...] Uvedale Price's important early manifesto of the Picturesque, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1794) [...] Accordingly such things as Gothic architecture, peasant huts and the un-Italianate scenery of the Lake District were considered «picturesque» [...] In a broader sense, it was a symptom of the rise of Romanticism». Although I sometimes use the term «pastoral» as a synonym of «picturesque» in this paper, I have predominantly opted for the latter term because it is related to the art of landscape design, i.e. a very active intervention of human aesthetics in the natural environment, whereas «pastoral» usually refers to the literary representation. Besides, as the definition above shows, the Picturesque has its origins in the Romantic movement, which suits my choice of writers with a late romantic perception of nature as those who perpetuate the Picturesque tradition. «Pastoral», however, has its roots in classical Greek and Roman literatures. For an introduction to the the pastoral genre see Gifford, Terry: *Pastoral*, London, Routledge, 1999.
6. The title of this paper borrows its initial sentence from the film by John Ford which presents the descent of a Welsh valley from pristine paradise to despoiled coal mining place. The past tense in the title reveals the nostalgia for the lost paradise. Ford, John: *How Green Was My Valley*, USA, Twentieth Century Fox, 1941. Another film that deals with the topic of a fantasy bucolic Celtic setting is *Brigadoon*, by Vicente Minnelli, which presents two American hunters who, lost in the highlands of Scotland, stumble upon an idyllic imaginary village that charms them. Minnelli, Vicente: *Brigadoon*, USA, Metro Godwyn-Mayer, 1954.

film *Million Dollar Baby* (2004), directed by Clint Eastwood. In this scrutiny of the treacherous world of boxing there are several conspicuous references to John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952), the link between the two films being the imaginary Irish Arcadia that the boxers cling to as their last opportunity for salvation.[7] Both *Million Dollar Baby* and *The Quiet Man* make use of a literary allusion that is crucial to understand the impact of the Picturesque on longstanding perceptions of Celtic landscapes. The leading characters of both films, in their yearning for evasion and peace, recite the poem «The Lake Isle of Innisfree» (1888) by W.B. Yeats (1865-1939), the first stanza of which runs as follows:

> «I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
> And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
> Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
> And live alone in the bee-loud glade»[8].

Yeats's early poetry has been considered as a late romantic celebration of Irish landscapes, above all of the regions of the West (Sligo) and Galway (Coole Park and Thoor Ballylee).[9] In the lines above quoted we perceive the longing for the simplicity of rural life, bountiful nature and isolation from other human beings. In the rest of the poem the poetic persona expresses his desire to merge with nature, its sounds and colours. This fusion with nature might initially sound like the goal of any ecology-conscious approach, but, as I will soon try to show, ecofeminism actually proposes some desirable limitations in our connection with nature. The rural landscape in Yeats's poem is presented as a peaceful one that contrasts with the urban space that the speaker is forced to inhabit: «While I stand on the roadways, or on the pavements grey». Finally, the poem draws our attention to the fact that this space is only imagined, though admittedly in a very vivid way, and not a direct description of any real place: «I hear it in the deep heart's core».

It is important that we should be attentive to any signals of detachment between the speaker and the space he conjures up because one of the tenets of ecofeminism is that canonical nature writing does not sufficiently acknowledge that relative difference or alterity of landscape with regard to the poetic persona.[10] Of course, one poem alone cannot account for the whole canon, but limitations of space require the focus on a text that may be paradigmatic

7. Eastwood, Clint: *Million Dollar Baby*, USA, Warner Bros., 2004. Ford, John: *The Quiet Man*, USA, Republic Pictures, 1952.
8. Yeats, W.B.: *Collected Poems*, London, Picador Classics, 1990, p. 44.
9. Oliveira Da Silva Mcneill, Patricia: «'Heimlich' and 'unheimlich': Landscape in the Post-Symbolist Poems of W.B. Yeats and Fernando Pessoa», in J.F. Fernández Sánchez and M. E. Jaime de Pablos (eds.): *Irish Landscapes*, Almería, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Almería, 2003, pp. 243-250.
10. See Donovan, Josephine: «Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange», in Greta Gaard & Patrick D. Murphy (eds.): Op. cit., pp. 74-96.

and influential.[11] The speaker in this poem is away from the natural setting he describes but his attitude is one of total identification with the place. In fact, one misses a certain acknowledgement of the speaker's position as an outsider, of his noninhabitory and visitational status. Stephen Regan remarks that the poem abounds in syllabic measures and stresses of Gaelic poetry.[12] However, the verse is written in English. Actually, Regan informs us, even the name of the place «Innisfree» has an evocation of freedom that is not contained in the Gaelic toponym «Inis Fraoigh», which evidences the speaker's alienation from this rural landscape as well as the strategies of manipulation involved in any act of appropriation. Yeats claimed that he had conceived this poem while walking through Fleet Street in London and, we might conclude, the result was a piece of nostalgia for a paradise that had been lost and needed to be recovered. However, as I would like to maintain, this bucolic landscape may have never existed, it may have been only the imaginary effect of his desire to belong to an Irish nation from which his position as a privileged member of the Anglo-Irish community estranged him. Again, Regan's observation that the first line of the poem recalls the Protestant ethics of duty and responsibility in its echo of Luke's Gospel (15:18) in the King James Bible –«I will arise and go to my father»– stresses the notion of displacement and alienation from a country with a Catholic majority. Yeats's idealized representation of Irish landscape might then be understood as a strategy for identification with a nation that resists him, what Declan Kiberd calls the «recourse to geography»: «The classic strategy of the Irish Protestant imagination, estranged from community yet anxious to identify itself with the new patriotic sentiment».[13]

If W.B. Yeats's poem about Innisfree can be considered to be a pervasive paradigm of the Irish Picturesque, Galicia boasts another male intellectual whose work is a staple of research on local landscape, Celticism and the shared identity of Atlantic communities. Ramón Otero Pedrayo (1888-1976) was a member of the Generation «Nós» (ourselves) whose name was meant to echo the meaning of Sinn Fein (ourselves alone), although the cultural and political project of these Galician nationalists did not envisage the resort to violence to achieve their goals. The Generation Nós established links of brotherhood with other Atlantic communities on the basis of some shared features: an alleged Celtic origin and an Atlantic civilization to be opposed to the classicism of the Greek and Roman empires. These Galician intellectuals identified seven Celtic

11. Terry Gifford gives us an introductory survey of the anti-pastoral tradition, i.e. of the literary texts that repudiate the idealization of the countryside. Gifford, Terry: *Pastoral*, op. cit., pp. 116-145. One should take heed of Gifford's warning that the pastoral is not necessarily a feature of a period, or of a writer, but that one single poem may contain both pastoral and anti-pastoral passages. As for the impact of the anti-pastoral, I believe that it has traditionally had a peripheral presence in the canon and that its echo in popular culture has been scarce.
12. Regan, Stephen (ed.): «Introduction», in *Irish Writing: An Anthology of Irish Literature in English 1789-1939*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., 2004, pp. xiii-xxxix.
13. Kiberd, Declan: «Yeats, Childhood and Exile» in Paul Hyland & Neil Sammells (eds.): *Irish Writing: Exile and Subversion*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 126-145.

nations: the Scottish Highlands, the isle of Man, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany and Galicia.[14]

According to María Cuquejo, Otero Pedrayo's idea of landscape constitutes the basis for his nationalist doctrine: he links the Galician land to the Celtic race, which results in the national spirit (*Volkgeist*) and in the conception of Galicia as a nation.[15] This political appropriation of landscape should come as no surprise since, according to D.W. Meinig, «every mature nation has its symbolic landscapes».[16] However, this strategy of appropriation runs counter to ecofeminist proposals of respect for the alterity of nature and for its difference from our cultural constructs. In fact, Donna Haraway has noted that ecofeminism underlines the agency of nature in knowledge as opposed to those master discourses that present landscape merely as a resource to be mapped and appropriated.[17] Like W.B. Yeats, Otero Pedrayo objects to the changes introduced in the rural world by the forces of modernization (the bourgeoisie and the market) and both look back to pre-industrial social structures for the preservation of the national essence. These beliefs might have a certain resemblance to the resistance, on the part of present-day ecofeminism, to the damaging effects of some types of technological progress and to the reification –the simplification of natural life to the inorganic– for the convenience of market society, were it not for the hierarchical social structure championed by Yeats and Otero Pedrayo.[18] While considering peasants, sailors and villagers as fundamental components in the articulation of the nation, the Galician intellectual defends the roles of the Church and the nobility in the leadership of the community.[19] Both Yeats and Otero Pedrayo envisage a harmonious social hierarchy that is allegedly accepted by all its members, and both writers resent the role of the middle class in the transformation of this feudal social order. Their notion of landscape is therefore deeply marked by a nostalgia for a supposedly conflict-free past and a hostility for contemporary changes. In spite

14. Palacios González, Manuela & Carmen Ríos Fernández: «Galician and Irish Landscapes in the 1920s: New Hopes for the Regeneration of Atlantic Communities», in J. F. Fernández Sánchez & M.E. Jaime de Pablos (eds.): Op. cit., pp. 103-109. In this article, C. Ríos and I analyse the contacts between the Galician male intellectuals of the Generation Nós and the Irish cultural and political nationalist project, contacts which were made on the basis of the alleged bonds among the seven Celtic nations and the brotherhood of the Atlantic communities.
15. Cuquejo, María: «Introducción», in Ramón Otero Pedrayo: *Sereno e grave gozo. Ensaios sobre a paisaxe*, Vigo, Galaxia, 1999, pp. 7-31.
16. Meinig, D.W.: «Symbolic landscapes. Some idealizations of American communities», in D. W. Meinig (ed.): *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., 1979, pp. 164-192.
17. Haraway, Donna J.: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York, Routledge, 1991, p. 199.
18. Ynestra King has identified certain links between ecofeminism and radical or social ideologies when claiming the antihierarchical practice of ecofeminism and its resistance to the homogenization produced by mass consumer markets, for which all natural resources are just commodities. See King, Ynestra: «The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology», in Judith Plant (ed.): *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, Philadelphia, New Society Publishers, 1989, pp. 18-28.
19. Cuquejo, María: «Introducción», op. cit. p. 13.

of Otero Pedrayo's broad technical knowledge of Galician geography, Ríos Panisse maintains that his accounts are informed by a romantic epistemology.[20] This may initially look like a contradiction, but as a matter of fact most notions of landscape combine the geographical and material with the cultural. Along this line, W.J.T. Mitchell provides the following definition of landscape:

> «Landscape [...] is itself a physical and multisensory medium (earth, stone, vegetation, water, sky, sound and silence, light and darkness, etc.) in which cultural meanings and values are encoded, whether they are *put* there by the physical transformation of place in landscape gardening and architecture, or *found* in a place formed, as we say, 'by nature' [...] Landscape is [...] embedded in a tradition of cultural signification and communication, a body of symbolic forms capable of being invoked and reshaped to express meaning and values».[21]

Otero Pedrayo's pantheistic conception of landscape shows the Galician sailors searching for prophecies in the sky, the moonlight creating fantastic monsters and wintry fears, and the granite stone combining masculine and feminine elements together with a magic dimension. The peasant feels an absolute identification with *his* land, and *his* work is ruled by the seasons –Otero Pedrayo tends to speak of land property and agricultural work as being exclusively in male hands. The rural village is, for this writer, the last reservoir of Galician identity, culture and tradition, a symbol of the values that are disappearing in the urban and industrial societies.[22] Interestingly enough, A. Tinniswood has identified the appropriation of the hamlet as «a tour de force of Picturesque theory and the romantic idealization of country living».[23] I concur with Richard Muir that the fact that the idyllic village may be an illusory image does not detract from its influence as a powerful symbol of durability, timelessness and stability.[24] As a matter of fact, this paper attempts to expose the way in which imaginary constructions, like literary representations of landscape, have a potency that allows them to persist even when there is evidence that the physical and cultural conditions have changed.

Some tentative conclusions of the former analysis of two of the most influential artificers of the Celtic landscape in the twentieth century are that Irish and Galician rural spaces are often presented in a nostalgic way that fits the ideology behind the Picturesque. These idealised, romantic perceptions of landscape are informed by the ideals of nationalism, which locate the national

20. Ríos Panisse, María do Carme: «A paisaxe en Otero Pedrayo», en Anxo Tarrío (coord.): *Actas do Simposio Internacional Otero Pedrayo no panorama literario do século XX*, Santiago de Compostela, Consello da Cultura Galega, 1990, pp. 87-127.
21. Mitchell, W.J.T.: «Imperial landscape», in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.): *Landscape and Power*, Chicago, Chicago U.P., 1994, p. 14.
22. For Otero Pedrayo's elaboration of his ideas about the Galician landscape, see his essays «Ensaio sobre a paisaxe galega», «Ensaios acerca do estilo da paisaxe», «Sobre a aldea» and «A aldea galega no seu decorrer histórico» in Ramón Otero Pedrayo: Op. cit.
23. Tinniswood, A.: *Life in the English Country Cottage*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995, p. 109.
24. Muir, Richard: *Approaches to Landscape*, London, Macmillan, 1999, p. 139.

essence in the rural world even though this political discourse is most likely to be produced by members of the urban middle class. The bucolic representations seem to forge an obstinate discourse of permanence and belonging in the face of evident signals of change and estrangement. Actually, the political appropriations that we find in these writers' perception of nature contravene ecofeminist claims for the respect for the alterity of the environment. The prodigal Arcadia that results from these representations purposefully ignores the hardship of labour conditions, the conflicts within the social hierarchy and the role of women in the shaping of the landscape. In addition to this, the fantastic and magical dimensions of the Irish Literary Revival and of Otero Pedrayo's configuration of landscape may function as compensatory myths that provide irrational and mystifying accounts for what might otherwise be explained in terms of material conditions.

In the last thirty years both the Irish and Galician literatures have undergone a radical transformation due to the conspicuous incorporation of women writers. This salutary phenomenon may be partly explained by women's access to third level education as well as by the improvements in economic conditions and the gradual emancipation of women. Both in Ireland and Galicia, many women writers have opted for poetry as their means of expression, although this circumstance has been more striking in Galicia, where the predominance of women poets over narrative, drama or essay female writers is overwhelming. The reasons for this connection between gender and genre remain to be fully explored, but what seems to be evident is the transformation that the literary tradition has been undergoing.[25] By writing poetry, women have become the speaking subjects of their texts and not merely the objects of male recreations of femininity. With their participation in the literary system, women poets have inscribed their interests, experience and values in a predominantly male poetic tradition. The innovative charge of their peripheral perspectives has destabilized the centres of cultural power and has forced a reconsideration of former literary conventions.[26] It is in this context of challenge to longstanding

25. One possible reason for Galician women poets' major preference for poetry may be strategic, as the group consciousness is supportive of its members, it allows for organized cultural and literary planning and it contributes to the visibility and institutionalization of the writers' production. Therefore, given a female literary model like Rosalía de Castro and a small nucleus of feminist activism around literary journals, other female writers may have chosen to join their forces for the generation of new poetic models that will renovate the canon. Besides, the instability of the Galician literary system, as opposed to other more fixed and rigid ones, may favour a certain flexibility and the access to a central position of what are otherwise seen as peripheral genders and genres. See González Fernández, Helena: «Literatura galega de muller, unha visión sistémica», *Anuario de Estudios Literarios Galegos 1999*, (2001), pp. 41-67.

26. For an analysis of the effects of the accession of women to the Irish poetic tradition see the following: Bourke, Angela et al. (eds.): *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. 5, New York, New York U.P., 2002. Boyle-Haberstroth, Patricia: *Women Creating Women. Contemporary Irish Women Poets*, Syracuse, New York, Syracuse U.P., 1996. González Arias, Luz Mar: *Otra Irlanda. La estética postnacionalista de poetas y artistas irlandesas contemporáneas*, Oviedo, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Oviedo, 2000. González Arias, Luz Mar: *Cuerpo, mito y*

perceptions of poetic matters that I would like to consider the current critique of the Picturesque that is being implemented by contemporary women poets in Ireland and Galicia.

Eavan Boland, an Irish poet who enjoys a wide recognition in Ireland and has received a considerable international echo, is responsible for a stimulating debate about the position of women in the Irish poetic tradition. Interestingly enough, her objections to traditional representations of women in the poetry of her country have at one time been related to the figure of the peasant woman and the failure of most former poetry to deal with her challenging complexity. Her essay «A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition» (1989) begins with a poem that Boland writes after meeting the Achill woman:[27]

> «She pushed the hair out of her eyes with
> her free hand and put the bucket down».

The poetic persona, who identifies herself with a student at Trinity –in a straightforward autobiographical gesture– explicitly acknowledges the class and cultural difference between herself and the peasant woman. This encounter with the «other» provokes the speaker's sudden realization that the literary tradition has been blind to this woman's life and history:

> «and took down my book and opened it
> and failed to comprehend
>
> the harmonies of servitude,
> the grace music gives to flattery
> and language borrows from ambition».

I would like to suggest that the first step in the critique of the Picturesque is the observer's awareness of her estrangement from the place and the people she is representing, rather than pretending, as Yeats and Otero Pedrayo seemed to do, that there is no such gap or that this fracture is of no consequence. This apprehension of difference need not result in alienation, for there remains the possibility of being «another», of recognising the differences and the similarities in our relationship with the environment. In her essay, Eavan Boland takes issue with the Irish poetic tradition which, in its attempt to construe the nation, has turned the female figure into a sign, into a piece of rhetoric, while at the same time failing to record «the anguish and power of that woman's gesture on Achill, with its suggestive hinterland of pain».[28] In the attention she pays to the woman's poor clothes and her hands «blushing with cold»[29], Boland shows her

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teoría feminista: re/visiones de Eva en autoras irlandesas contemporáneas, Oviedo, KRK, 1997. As for the study of the incorporation of women writers in the Galician literary system, see Blanco, Carmen: *Literatura galega da muller*, Vigo, Xerais, 1991. González Fernández, Helena: «Literatura galega de muller, unha visión sistémica», op.cit.

27. Boland, Eavan: «A Kind of Scar. The Woman Poet in a National Tradition» in Eavan Boland et al.: *A Dozen Lips*, Dublin, Attic Press, 1994, pp. 72-92.
28. Ibid., p. 76.
29. Ibid., p. 73.

concern with social deprivation, while, as Stephen Copley and Peter Garside maintain, «the Picturesque translates the political and the social into the decorative».[30] As opposed to the effacement of politics and history implemented by the Picturesque, Boland proposes that poetry should engage in the analysis of defeat and loss: «The coffin ships, the soup queues, those desperate villagers at the shoreline»[31]. The literary representation of bucolic places has most often turned rural spaces into the opposite of what human life really is, with its privations and labours. Suzanne Saïd, for instance, sees the bucolic places in the Greek and Latin tradition as a «utopia» both in the sense of *ou-topos* (place of nowhere) and *eu-topos* (place of happiness).[32] For Saïd, the bucolic landscape is an artificial paradise, a sweet retreat which opposes itself not just to the city but also to the peasants' work. The only hardship she observes in classical bucolic poetry is that about the difficulties of poetic creation –and this brings into mind poems like Yeats's «The Wild Swans at Coole». As for Otero Pedrayo, his essays on Galician landscape do take into consideration the peasants' work in each season of the year, but he tends to «naturalize» this agricultural work and present it as a source of happiness and fulfilment, which is at best a partial interpretation of the rural conditions of labour.

Eavan Boland is specially critical with the figure of the «peasant poet» and makes W.B. Yeats partly responsible for the promotion of this stereotype. When discussing her encounter with Padraic Column, she regrets his failure to record the «barbaric griefs of the nineteenth century»: «All that heritage which should have been his —rage robbed of language, suffering denied its dignity— somehow eluded him»[33]. Like women, peasants had been oversimplified and falsified by the poetic tradition. Therefore, like women poets, the «peasant poet» should seize the opportunity to shift from the position of rhetorical image to that of author. They all should take advantage of the authority and power that go with authorship to challenge the traditional mystifications of femininity and peasantry. The problem with Padraic Column, according to Boland, was that:

> «He wrote Irish poetry as if he were still the object of it. He wrote with the passivity and simplification of his own reflection looking back at him from poems, plays and novels in which the so-called Irish peasant was a son of the earth, a cipher of the national cause»[34].

We may conclude that Eavan Boland's contribution to the critique of the Picturesque contains several guidelines that are of import to feminist theory and practice. To start with, she inscribes the figure of the female peasant in the

30. Copley, Stephen and Peter Garside (eds.): *The Politics of the Picturesque. Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1994, p. 6.
31. Boland, Eavan: Op. cit., p. 77.
32. Saïd, Suzanne: «Le paysage des Idylles bucoliques» in Michel Collot (dir.): *Les enjeux du paysage*, Bruxelles, OUSIA, 1997, pp. 26-27.
33. Boland, Eavan: Op. cit., p. 83.
34. Ibid., p. 84.

representation of the rural landscape, thus making her experience visible, but instead of presenting her as a coquettish shepherdess –as much bucolic poetry does– Boland's Achill woman exposes the privations of the rural world and the inequalities within the Irish society. Next, Boland turns this peasant woman into the force that provokes a critique of the former literary tradition so, instead of being a mere object of representation, this female figure becomes a challenge to the ideological interests behind much literary discourse. With her dignified –not the least folkloric– presence, the Achill woman denounces how literature as an institution has of old taken sides with other dominant discourses that oppress, manipulate and obliterate the disempowered classes. Finally, in consonance with the claims of ecofeminism, Boland establishes a parallelism between women and the peasantry with regard to the falsification that literature has made of their experience –paradoxically enough sometimes for the benefit of discourses on national liberation– and urges both groups to produce their own discourses and articulate their own experiences.[35] This insistence on experience and reality actually establishes an opposition not just with the artificiality of literary conventions but also with extreme postmodern views that reduce the world to discourse. Of course, the pursuit of a representation of reality in the literary text that is not mediated by our cultural patterns is a chimera –an illusion not unlike the pastoral conventions. This tension between standpoint claims like Boland's –her belief that members of an oppressed group can and should produce alternative discourses about their experience– and the idea that nature may be a discursive product has been aptly negotiated by critics like N. Katherine Hayles, with her notion of «constrained constructivism», a view that acknowledges the constraints that nature imposes on any epistemological effort, and by SueEllen Campbell, who suggests that we could include nature as one of those forces outside ourselves which actually construct us.[36] A considerable number of ecocritics refuse to restrict the role of nature to that of object of our attention, whether for protection or exploitation, and prefer

35. Contrary to what these conclusions may suggest, Eavan Boland is no «peasant poet» herself. In fact, she has been accused of ventriloquism for her attempt to speak for both colonizers and colonized. See Ní Fhrighil, Ríóna: «Eavan Boland and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill Revise the Landscape» in J.F. Fernández Sánchez & M.E. Jaime de Pablos (eds.): Op. cit., pp. 231-241. Besides, in her effort to articulate her own experience, Boland has limited much of her poetry to the representation of the suburban middle-class. Though these objections must be born in mind, I do not think they invalidate Boland's critique of the Picturesque. Other critics have identified a radical shift in Boland's poetry from the early pastoralism in her book *New Territory* (1967) to later reformulations of landscape from the 80s onwards that have deconstructed the romantic idea of Ireland. See Villar Argáiz, María Pilar: «The Perception of Landscape in Eavan Boland's Poetry: From a 'Romantic' Pilgrimage to a World of Constellations and Suburbs» in J.F. Fernández Sánchez & M.E. Jaime de Pablos (eds.): Op. cit., pp. 265-275.

36. Hayles, N. Katherine: «Searching for Common Ground», in Michael E. Soulé & Gary Lease (eds.): *Reinventing Nature? Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction*, Washington D.C., Island Press, 1995, pp. 98-104. Campbell, Sue Ellen: «The Land and Language of Desire: Where Deep Ecology and Poststructuralism Meet», *Western American Literature*, 24 (Nov. 1989), pp. 199-211.

to define the human and non-human relationship as one between mutually speaking subjects.[37]

Boland is not alone among contemporary Irish women poets in her interrogation of the tradition of the Picturesque. Anne Le Marquand Hartigan also focuses on the female figure to expose the unequal power relations and the sexual division of labour. In «Land», a section from her longer poem *Now is a Moveable Feast* (1991), she shows the workings of patriarchy in the rural world: «'And thou shalt be under thy husband's power'».[38] This Biblical injunction exemplifies the role of the Church in the contrivance of unjust gender relations. Hartigan problematizes the traditional simplification in the identification of woman and land for either colonialist or nationalist purposes –where the male politician is the eager suitor or the martyr son of the passive female nation– by denouncing how patriarchy views both women and land as properties to be exploited and as mirrors of male dominance:

«The land, must prove,

must know, must pass,
  from hand to hand,
from Father to Son,

    the need, in the cut of the plough,

the yearn
  for seed,
the ache
  for increase

to cleave
  penetrate
and grow,

    'And he shall have dominion over thee'»

Mary Dorcey is another Irish poet who makes the female figure the protagonist of her unsentimental description of rural life in «Woman in a Normandy Field».[39] The woman is now the worker, the one that shapes the land and is shaped by it. Dorcey does not speak of victimization here, just of hard work, discipline and tenacity, which results in a realistic dignification of the peasant woman's labour:

«Then slowly her knees bent to ground once more
and with deliberate hands
she began the season's first task.»

37. For the distinction between «object of attention» and «mutually speaking subjects» see the first two chapters in Murphy, Patrick D.: *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques*, op.cit.
38. Hartigan, Anne Le Marquand: «Land», in *Now is a Moveable Feast*, Bridge Mills, Galway, Salmon Publishing, 1991, pp. 21-30.
39. Dorcey, Mary: «Woman in a Normandy Field» (1982), in *Moving into the Space Cleared by Our Mothers*, Bridge Mills, Galway, Salmon Publishing, 1991, p. 86.

Galician women poets also elaborate on the experiential, creative and human aspects of their relationship with landscape. In fact, many of them grew up in rural areas and therefore have a first-hand acquaintance with life in the country. In many cases, their rural experience was limited to the period of childhood, while subsequent school and work drove them away to the city. Their poetic portrayal of the rural space does not seem to rise merely out of nostalgia but of the need to construe their subjectivity and to understand the role of country life in their identity. These memories of childhood do not present an Edenic garden but show a deep awareness of the satisfactions and the difficulties, the fulfilment and the privation of life and work in rural areas. The fact that their account of the rural experience is an autobiographical first-person one reduces the distance between the subject and the object of representation that we found, for instance, in writers like Eavan Boland. Nevertheless, these Galician women poets tend to acknowledge the presence of many other gulfs that affect their vision: language, access to education, abandonment of agricultural work, urban experience, etc. They problematize the epistemic privilege, i.e. the belief that their first-hand experience may provide them with the critical knowledge to understand their oppression. Their protagonists are not triumphant ecofeminist heroines and, rather than epiphanies, what they experience is the hardship in the articulation of their values. In spite of the supposed privileges that they now enjoy, these poets often attempt to challenge the logic of inferiorization that was imposed on them as children: the fact that living in the country and speaking Galician made them inferior to those who lived in cities and spoke Spanish. Much poetry by contemporary women, then, has engaged in a valorization of a previously denigrated identity.

Luz Pichel is a Galician poet who has lived in Madrid for over thirty years. She writes her poetry in Spanish and has her work published by institutions from all over Spain. Her recent collection of poems *La marca de los potros* (2004) has no toponymical references to Galician places, no clear allusions that allow us to locate the poems in the Galician landscape, but in her presentations and discussions of this book Pichel recurrently connects her poems with her rural experience as a child in a tiny Galician village. I have chosen this collection because it clearly illustrates the critique of the Picturesque that I present as the main hypothesis of this article. Pichel's poetry registers the fears, dangers, frustrations, conflicts, fantasies and satisfactions that peasants derive from their contact with nature. She is perceptive to the ways in which people shape landscapes with their fences and to the conflicts over land property that these divisions bring about:

> «Reconocer los límites de las propias tierras,
> Aceptarlos sin pelear con el vecino»[40]

40. «To recognize the limits of our own lands/ to accept them without quarrelling with the neighbour». The translations of Galician poetry into English are mine. PICHEL, Luz: *La marca de los potros*, Huelva, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Diputación de Huelva, 2004, II, p. 14. (The Roman numbers refer to those of the poems in this collection).

These fences are barriers that only boys are allowed to transgress, as the poetic persona cruelly expresses in what constitutes one of the first lessons about gender difference imparted during childhood:

> «Así te hundiré.
> Te hundiré los rizos dorados en el agua asquerosita de
> la alberca.
> [...]
> ¡Ale! Para que aprendas a no saltar vallados antes que yo,
> que soy mayor que tú y te puedo.
> Por lista»[41]

The agricultural work is easily ruined by multiple hostile forces[42] and dangerous storms put the peasant's life at risk[43]. Many are the dangers and the fears, and the temptation is strong to take refuge in discourses about the beauty of nature so as to obliterate the feelings of loss and impotence[44]. The economic relations, the material conditions of production, the peasants' commerce with their products become now dignified topics for poetry[45]; in fact, the responsible cooperation with the land, even if it is in economic terms, is one of the objectives of ecofeminism.[46] Nature can be either hostile: «la engañosa luna enredándote las piernas» [47] or vulnerable: «El nido en esa zarza lo pisarán los carros»,[48] but it is no longer a sanctuary, a metaphysical place of safety and retreat where one can transcend the pain of living. The relationship with the land is not merely through perception with an active onlooker and a passive object of the observation. Human and non-human elements have a reality of their own to communicate. Their relationship is dialogical. In fact, the land reacts to the peasants' aggression by leaving its mark on their bodies[49]. Childhood is not a time of wild freedom away from the adults' responsibilities, but a period of apprenticeship with certain obligations –many Galician women poets refer to their early experience of watching over the grazing cows–, few rewards and many punishments[50].

Galicia has shared with Ireland this agricultural economy that, at moments of crisis, has forced millions of people to emigration. Luz Pichel, like many other Galician people, expresses her gratitude to her brother because he

41. «I'll sink you like this/ I'll sink your golden locks in the foul water of / the reservoir/ [...]/ There it goes! A lesson to stop you from jumping over the fences before I do/ 'cause I am older and stronger than you/ That's what you get for being so clever!» Pichel, Luz: Op. cit., XLIII, p. 61.
42. Ibid., V, p. 17.
43. Ibid., IX, p. 21.
44. Ibid., XII, p. 24.
45. Ibid., XV, pp. 27-28.
46. Vance, Linda: «Ecofeminism and the Politics of Reality», in Greta Gaard (ed.): *Ecofeminism, Women, Animals, Nature*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1993, pp. 118-145.
47. Pichel, Luz: Op. cit., XXVI, p. 42, «The deceiving moon tangling up your legs.»
48. Ibid., XXVIII, p. 44, «The nest on that bush will be trampled on by the carts.»
49. Ibid., XXXIV, p. 51, XLIV, p. 62.
50. Ibid., LXVI, p. 85.

granted her access to education with the money he sent home from America. In her poetry, the poet relates her initiation to writing with her expectations about her brother's presents from foreign lands:

> «Hermanito,
> si cuando llegues a Las Américas
> me mandas una carta con un estuche dentro,
> te diré lo que estuve escribiendo ayer en los cristales del farol.
>
> ¿Tú no vas a llorar?»[51]

Practicioners of pastoral poetry often make use of the figure of the traveller or stranger as the poetic persona who contemplates the bucolic landscape in a clear contrast with the villagers' domesticity, since the latter do not seem to need that capacity to go wherever they please.[52] Luz Pichel, however, records in her writings the peasants' desire to escape and the fantasies about a more prosperous life elsewhere[53].

Chus Pato is a poet who uses the Galician language for her literary work –as a matter of fact, the number of women poets from this community who currently write in Galician is considerably more numerous than that of writers in Spanish– and, though the language brings her closer to the rural experience of her childhood, she is conscious about other fractures in her relationship with her ancestors. In opposition to many Picturesque representations of the countryside which are «strangely empty of human presence»,[54] Pato has her poetry inhabited by an abundance of relatives and neighbours: some still living in her family's village, others gone away as emigrants, and finally some who, though dead, have left their imprint on the land and on her memory. Her poem *A ponte das poldras* (1996) presents her people in the agricultural activities of her region: the men digging the land that will produce the cabbages and the potatoes, the women following the oxen.[55] The female figure has a special relevance for Pato, not just out of a deeply felt gender bond, but because the

51. Ibid., XXIII, p. 38, «Dear brother/ if when you arrive in the Americas/ you send me a letter with a pen case inside/ I'll tell you what I was writing yesterday on the lamp glass/ Won't you cry?».
52. Oliveira Da Silva Mcneill, Patricia: Op. cit., p. 247.
53. Pichel, Luz: Op. cit., XVI, p. 29.
54. Mutran, Munira H.: «Different Ways to Apprehend Landscape» in J.F. Fernández-Sánchez & M.E. Jaime de Pablos (eds.): Op. cit., p. 78.
55. I should avow that my choice of Irish and Galician poems has an important anthropocentric component, though not an androcentric one, as the focus of this paper is marked by a materialist approach towards the power relations and conditions of labour in the relationship between human and non-human nature. L. Buell, however, talks about an emerging ecocentric repossession of pastoral that is shifting from the «representation of nature as a theater for human events to representation in the sense of *advocacy of nature as a presence for its own sake*» (emphasis mine). Buell, Lawrence: *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*, Cambridge, MA Harvard U.P., 1995, p. 52. Ecofeminism highlights the distinction between things-in-themselves and things-for-us, since what may initially look like a good thing for us may not be so for the ecosystem.

poet links these women's work to literary creation. This way, Pato destabilizes the opposition culture/nature, which often feminizes nature and equates woman with nature, by showing women as creators of culture and exposing that culture is not radically discontinuous with nature. Nevertheless, as the poetic voice admits, the link with the female ancestors is also necessarily a manifestation of a gap:

> «Ao igual que todas as mulleres que me precederon e que encetaron o seu canto nas vendimas ou nas segas, nas luminiscentes e cegadoras senras –como cobra saltarina, como cobra– eu, a primeira entre todas elas que non sei cavar, nin segar, nin vendimar, quixera comunicar lingua, creación, praxe lingüística: ESCRITA».[56]

Lupe Gómez is another Galician poet whose work goes along the line of Eavan Boland's proposal that writers from the rural world should undo the Picturesque simplifications by replacing the stale conventions of the pastoral with new challenging perspectives. In *Fisteus era un mundo* (2001), Gómez elaborates the memoir that constitutes the basis of her poetic work with regard to her childhood in a rural village. Her account of life in the country responds to the need to valorize a supplement of experience that had been formerly denigrated and, though this valorization may imply a certain idealization of which Gómez is explicitly conscious, her memoir does not omit the privations and the oppresion that are part and parcel of rural life. Her literary production actually analyses the unrelenting process of deculturation of her birthplace, a process that has stripped peasants of the possibility to maintain their customs, language and subsistence agriculture. Gómez's work can be considered as ecofeminist for its position of resistance to dominant culture and for its insistence on the appreciation of difference.

For Lupe Gómez, the bond with the land is not merely metaphysical, as her parents' house had no concrete or tiled floor but just the earthy ground: «Aínda me acordo de cando o chan era a propia terra. Viviamos sumerxidos na terra, no campo».[57] In spite of this intimate connection, the lands where her family worked were not of their property and the frustrated longing for buying them filled the successive generations alternately with hope and dismay[58]. The animals were not decorative elements of a bucolic picture but almost members of the family. As a child, Gómez felt so close to the cows, when she watched over them, that on one occasion she even attempted to eat some earth[59]. This desire to put oneself in the place of nature, to learn what it may be like to

56. «Just like all the women who preceded me and started their song in the/ grape harvests or while reaping, in the luminescent and blinding corn fields –like a dancing cobra, / like a cobra– I, the first one among them all who cannot dig, or reap, or / harvest the grapes, I would like to communicate language, creation, lingüistic praxis: WRITING». Pato, Chus: *A ponte das poldras*, Santiago de Compostela, Noitarenga, 1996, p. 25.
57. «I still remember when the floor was the land itself. We lived submerged in the ground, in the fields». Gómez, Lupe: *Fisteus era un mundo*, Vigo, A Nosa Terra, 2001, p. 18.
58. Ibid., p. 64.
59. Ibid., p. 31.

be non-human, to see nature as a locus of knowledge, is one of the central recommendations of current ecofeminism. These cows will provide the future writer with the imagery to refer to her relation with the Galician language: «Eu sempre falei galego con naturalidade. Con naturalidade e con forza, coa forza dunha vaca parindo un becerro».[60] Also, contrary to Otero Pedrayo's defence of the leading role of the Church in preindustrial societies, Gómez makes this religious institution responsible for women's aversion to sexuality: «A igrexa rompíache o corpo».[61] In fact, the Church is seen as the apparatus behind the imbalance in the gender relations. It is actually with regard to the trap of traditional gender roles that Lupe Gómez shows her most incisive criticism of the rural world. Her memoir is thus a literary preservation of rural culture, but one that incorporates the need to change oppressive structures.

In November 2002 Galicia suffered a catastrophe of longlasting consequences for the natural environment and the local economy. The women poets also had their say in the multitudinous reaction to official incompetence and mass media manipulation during the «Prestige crisis» —the oil slick pollution that resulted from the sinking of the oil tanker Prestige. Chus Pato, María Lado, Verónica Martínez Delgado, Helena de Carlos, Xela Arias, Ana Romaní, Emma Pedreira and many others contributed with their poems to the growing awareness about the need for a social change.[62] In the face of a catastrophe like this one, the discourse of the Picturesque, with its alleged love of nature while it actually turns a blind eye on the causes of its deterioration, should be at best a residual one to be steadily replaced by the alternative and emerging discourse of ecofeminism. New struggles are being waged against the maldevelopment and environmental degradation caused by global capitalism while, simultaneously, they are waged for economic values and programmes based on subsistence and sustainability.[63]

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60. «I have always spoken Galician in a natural way. In a natural and vigorous way, with the vigour of a cow calving.» Ibid., p. 92.
61. «The church broke your body.» Ibid., p. 32. Although this paper focuses on landscape as nature, Ynestra King draws our attention to our own bodily nature and to the need for a renewed understanding of our relationship to it. See KING, Ynestra: «The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology», op.cit., p. 20. Contrary to the dualism male-mind/ female-body that constructs the body as inferior and as obstacle to the progress of culture, ecofeminism reveals the body as a locus of knowledge.
62. See the collective edition of texts *SempreMar. Cultura contra a burla negra*, Santiago de Compostela, Asociación cultural Benito Soto, 2003.
63. GAARD, Greta and Patrick D. MURPHY (eds.): «Introduction», op. cit., p. 2. Murphy thinks that it is not merely coincidental that the attacks on cultural diversity (multiculturalism, multilateral international decisions, sexual and religious diversity, etc.) should occur at the same time that Western countries postpone evironmental regulations. Certainly, the homogenization of culture suits the needs of multinational corporations. Murphy also sees an insidious effort on the part of dominant powers to efface the link between our values and their effects on the environment (p. 23). MURPHY, Patrick D.: «'The Women Are Speaking': Contemporary Literature as Theoretical Critique», in Greta Gaard & Patrick D. Murphy (eds): Op. cit., pp. 23-48.

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«'THE INNER GEOGRAPHY OF HOME': THE ECOFEMINIST ETHICS OF DAPHNE MARLATT'S *TAKEN*»[1]

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«To touch beyond the window the very texture of the place,
soak in its smells, its sounds. This happened without question.
What was questionable was the inner geography of home.»
Daphne Marlatt, *Taken*

Critics and cultural commentators would probably agree that one of the most promising areas of feminist research and study in the last twenty five years has been opened by the confluence between gender studies and geography, geology, cartography and other space-related fields. It has become widely accepted that the spatial configurations of physical territories are ideologically charged, and therefore carry cultural meanings that affect in different ways the lives of men and women[2]. Since places and spaces *are* gendered, spatial arrangements determine and reinforce gendered relations of power, as well as construct gendered subjects by means of a varied set of practices that may go from repression to violence, from complicity to identification[3]. In literature, settings, the representation of physical movement, the description of place certainly determine important parcels of knowledge and subjectivity, and can, therefore, not only reproduce (or dismantle) their implicit gendered structures,

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2. HIGONNET, Margaret R.: «New Cartographies», in Margaret R. Higonnet and Joan Templeton (eds): *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space*, Amherst, U. Of Massachussets, 1994, pp. 1-19.

3. SPAIN, Daphne: *Gendered Spaces*, Chapel Hill, U. of North Carolina P, 1992.

but also produce new ones[4]. Such a realization, in turn, has pushed feminist criticism further into interdisciplinary arenas, from which «to undertake new cartographies, to trace the ways writers inscribe gender onto the symbolic representation of space within texts, whether through images of physical confinement, of exile and exclusions, of property and territoriality, or of the body as the interface between individual and communal identities»[5].

Contemporary Canadian writing by women, both fictional and non-fictional, seems to illustrate well that paradigm shift within feminist production, showing an unfailing interest in the spatial dimension of gender constructions, and providing thoughtful analyses of the ways in which «[s]ocial relations and spatial processes are mutually reinforcing»[6]. Being the product of (post)colonial circumstances, it has always been aware of how gendered structures affect and are affected by the traditional alliance between patriarchal and imperialist discourses, and of how the issues pertaining to the body, sex and sexuality are also always related to the social perception of space and place. As Linda McDowell shows, «assumptions about the correct place for embodied women are drawn on to justify and to challenge systems of patriarchal domination in which women are excluded from the particular spatial arenas and restricted to others. In this sense, to 'know their place' has a literal as well as a metaphorical meaning for women, and sexed embodiment is deeply intertwined with geographical location»[7].

Within that general framework, and of all the recent novels that offer suggestive explorations of the ways in which gender intersects with space, Daphne Marlatt's novel *Taken* (1996) openly denounces the violence of spatial constructions of subjectivity and proposes, at the same time, alternative connections that may counteract the uneven effects of traditional alliances between identity and place. On the one hand, the novel connects the events of the 1991 Gulf War with the Japanese invasion of Malaya during World War II, identifying the similarities between the official discourses in both cases and unveiling in the process the power of language to produce and justify violence, territorial invasions, forced migrations and the physical entrapment of (female) bodies. On the other, its theoretical exploration of sexual difference is often carried out by means of an invocation of the maternal, be this real and/or symbolic, related to our real mothers and/or applied to a relational form of subjectivity based on alterity. As a result of the juxtaposition of those two strategies, we are offered what Marie Carrière calls «a feminist ethics, which may be defined as the attempt to think female and maternal alterity, and relations between and among sexes, outside the totality and assimilation

4. Humm, Maggie: «Into the Millenium: Feminist Literary Criticism,» *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 48 (2004), p. 46.
5. Higonnet, Margaret R.: Op. Cit., p. 2.
6. Mcdowell, Linda: *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*, Minneapolis, U. of Minnesota P, 1999, p. 56.
7. Ibíd.

of the self-same»[8]. In this essay I wish to examine the imprints of that feminist ethics in Marlatt's *Taken*, a text that rethinks the (female) subject's relation to territory, place and space, and puts forward a form of maternalism defined at the junction between feminism and ecology. Tracing lines of comparison and action between the two, ecofeminism could be defined as «feminism taken to its logical conclusion, because it theorizes the interrelations among self, societies, and nature»[9]. My analysis will try to elucidate some of the implications contained in Marlatt's radical proposal. Against a cartography of war, occupation, and violence, Marlatt's text offers an escape by the landscape, a geography of the female body, maternalism, and the body's fusion with the environment.

Taken's interest in renegotiating the relationship between time and space is already announced by the double narrative structure, a doubleness framed by geography (Canada/Malaya-Australia) and time (1st Gulf War/WW II), where the first framework, the geographic, is closer to the personal and the second, the temporal, is closer to the historical and the public. This basic space/time perspective determines two different approaches to language, the body, the land, and the notions of belonging and home. The North American narrative is set on an unnamed British Columbia island in the early 1990s, where Suzanne, the first-person narrator, lives trying to come to terms with the memories of her mother as well as with her separation from her lover, Lori, who at the beginning of the story leaves for the United States in order to take care of her own dying mother. Suzanne's strong identification with the land she inhabits, a continuous current throughout the novel, is initially extended to the (lesbian) female body, which is often qualified in terms of the island's natural landscape. The female body *is* nature, and nature is *home*. And that double association acts at the beginning as a counterpoint to a background of death and desolation in Iraq, as the daily news break into the quiet morning space of the house. In this way, juxtaposed to the dreadful vocabulary of war, «Tomahawk cruise missiles and Stealth fighters, plague-laden warheads, a holy war»[10], the reader finds beautiful sensual descriptions of nature on the island, whose soothing effects are, in turn, reinforced by love-making scenes figured in nature's terms: «Still in the nest we have made of our bodies in bed, burrowed into each other, i inhale the odour of your skin, deeply familiar. I want to sink beyond place, lost, in the 'o' my lips make around the smooth berry of your nipple» (8). As the narrative moves on, however, Suzanne and Lori break up, and the painful experience starts paralleling, instead of counterpointing, the ongoing violence of the Gulf War. In those circumstances, it is Suzanne's close attachment to the physical

8. Carrière, Marie: *Writing in the Feminine in French and English Canada: A Question of Ethics*, Toronto, U. of Toronto P, 2002, p. 4.

9. Birkeland, Janis: «Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice», in Greta Gaard (ed.): *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, Philadelphia, Temple UP, 1993, pp. 17-18.

10. Marlatt, Daphne: *Taken*, Concord (On.), Anansi, 1996, p. 19. Hereafter, page references to this book will be made parenthetically within the text.

space around her, the space of the island, that remains, providing the only sense of grounding for the otherwise broken experience of life.

The Asian narrative, told by Suzanne in the third person, is set in Penang, Singapore and Melbourne (and only indirectly in England, where Suzanne's grandfather lives) in the 1930s and 1940s, and offers Suzanne's own uncertain reconstruction of her mother's life during those times: «The words i've heard, the phrases i seem to remember, part of a background that shaped me, take on a glow of meaning i never sensed» (29-30). The direction of the love relationship between Suzanne's mother and father, Esme and Charles, is here inverse; that is, their separation, forced by the outbreak of World War II in Asia, is followed by their reunion at the end. Invariably described in social rather than physical or emotional terms, the nature of this heterosexual love story is also markedly different from the lesbian relationship. And so is the characters' approach to the land they live in tied to the social rituals of colonial life in the Straits Settlements and completely devoid of physical attachment. In fact, it is the complex social structure of colonial life that determines their precarious sense of belonging, and that is especially seen in the description of women's lives there, «[i]dentifying not so much with the place or its people as with a circle of friends transplanted, like them, floating tendrils through each others' lives in gossip, Residency balls, The Straits Times, curry tiffin at the Club» (25). The notion of home is inextricably complicated by the colonial contradictions and appears thus linked to fiction, desire, nostalgia for that which never was, a non-place:

> «Beach parties off Batu Ferringhi, jaunts up Penang Hill to the Crag Hotel with its stupendous sunsets, bats soaring over their heads, drives out to the freshwater pools at Titi Krawang in Freddy the Fiat, excursions to Muka Head. Names with the resonance of nostalgia throbbing in them, tiny arteries to a past that was once living. And what is nostalgia but the longing for a place the body opens to, the very taste of it on one's skin. Ah, but the Straits Settlements, about as far as one could get from England–or from Canada–as exotic a home as one could adopt, if never, never belong in, was still a colony on the fringe of the mother country's skirts.
>
> England was no mother to Esme, born in India, though she, like her parents, continually referred to it as «home.» Home that was not, misplaced home that could never be. Where did one belong?
>
> Ghosts are those who occupy a place, but not in the flesh, those who are left with only the memory-trace of it on their tongues». (7)

The wide spatial and temporal gap between the two narrative frameworks serves the narrator as ground to examine and explore a range of approaches to gender and space. The double structure provides, in the first place, the arena for the subversion of our expectations about time and space in the novel. Thus, in contrast to the traditional allocation of transcendence in the temporal, Marlatt's text shifts the emphasis to the spatial and the metonymic configurations of meaning. And, in so doing, the text engages in a process of reinvention of the traditional gendering of time as male and space as female. As Stephen Frosh writes in his analysis of Julia Kristeva's work on the subject:

> «Taken at face value, this is a conventional and familiar gendering of things: the feminine, because of the womb and the maternal function, is associated with space, both in the sense of a place from which something is produced, and one in which something is received, enclosed and held. The masculine dimension, however, is active: the male does things, creates history, writes books and speaks words that have an effect [….] Now Kristeva complicates any easy identity of masculinity with time and femininity with space–having versus holding–by arguing that it is not that women *are* space rather than time, but that their time is like space; it has space-like qualities».[11]

Taken analyses, articulates and vindicates the possibilities of that space-like time for the female subject; and it does so through its double-plot structure. In the Asian narrative, Esme's life provides a clear instance of the traditional association of the female to the passive and the spatial. Pregnant of her first child, she is forced to stay with her parents in Melbourne against her will, trying to occupy herself, «write letters, pray, eat, sleep, grow a baby as if nothing could possibly happen» (18), while Charles is away at war, doing his manly duty, *creating history*. There is an implicit connection between the strict division of gender roles and the world of the Empire, life in the colonies a repository of traditional values and a strict reproduction of the patriarchal system. That configuration, however, is gradually eroded in the narrative present, where the lesbian relationship breaks sex-gender expectations (including the tacit alliance between gender difference and heterosexuality), moving the terms of the association and smoothly entering a different, space-like time.

An important part of that negotiation of space and time is in the particular approach to language, which is often non-narrative, syntax and grammar logics fail, the frequent ellipses, the broken, unfinished sentences drawing our attention to the spatial rather than the temporal dimensions of language.[12] There are, in fact, two different types of language in the text, each associated to an equally different conception of space: there is a language close to the personal and the intimate, to the body, to the maternal, and to the earth as space to be *felt/filled*; there is also a language of war, violence and destruction, a language of territory as space to be *taken*[13]. The two languages and the two notions of space are constantly juxtaposed and confronted, often with uneven results. In that way, the cold and distant description of war cuts through the extremely personal and intimate stories of the women involved on both sides of the Pacific across half a century. In the case of Esme, the outbreak of World War II in Asia catches her in Australia, where she has gone to visit her parents, and immobilizes her there, away from Charles, who is forced to join the battle front in Malaya. The

11. Frosh, Stephen: «Time, Space and Otherness», in Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift: *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 298.
12. In her study of lesbian writing, Julie Abraham (*Are girls necessary?*, New York, Routledge, 1996, p. 15) identifies this kind of non-narrative approach in a good number of the texts analysed, a connection between sexuality and writing that could be fruitfully pursued elsewhere in the case of Marlatt's text.
13. See Marlatt, Daphne: *Net Work: Selected Writing*, Vancouver, Talonbooks, 1980, p. 97.

actual power of the war to destroy individual lives is ironically opposed to its (under)representation as a faint, indirect, detached narrative, mentioned just in the spatial terms of advances, retreats, or the occupation of territory, and reduced to the language of newspaper headlines: «JAPAN ADVANCES AGAIN IN MALAYA. EVACUATION OF IPOH»; «RETREAT FROM KUALA LAMPUR» (29). The journalistic register, telegraphic, lacking in verbs, seemingly objective, contrasts heavily with, and affects, the novel's intimate tone and its actual focus on the inner life of Suzanne's mother, «trapped in transit» in Melbourne (4), *taken*, a young pregnant wife separated from her husband by the designs of history. Similarly, in the narrative present, the distressing news of death and destruction in the 1991 Gulf War breaks into and gradually modifies Suzanne's descriptions of love scenes as/and the island landscape: «Then how could we trace our fingers over skin with its delicate opening of pores as our bodies respond, frond by frond, uncurling in the wet? How could i plant my hand around your breast […] when this continues over there, this trapped dying among those driven to war» (38). It could be argued, in that context, that the novel stages a metaphoric confrontation between «masculine» and «feminine» discourses. And, in fact, the terms--always used in a figurative sense and not necessarily attached therefore to biology, anatomy, or actual bodies–do fittingly apply, since as Birkeland asserts:

> «In Western Patriarchal culture, «masculine» constructs and values have been internalized in our minds, embodied in our institutions, and played out in power-based social relations both in our daily lives and upon the world stage. It is this «masculine» undercurrent, not human-centeredness, which is behind the irrational ideas and behavior displayed on the evening news[14]».

As we can see, the disruptive effects of war are sadly unquestionable in the two times and spaces of the novel. Yet the juxtaposition of the antagonistic discourses, as well as of the very use of a similar strategy in both cases, becomes subversive in that it dismantles the impersonal rhetorics of war, of any war, across geography and time, binding it to an erased intimacy and thus, somehow, transmuting its deadly consequences. As Marlatt herself asserts, historical events in the novel are relevant only in as much as they are seen «through the filter of women's daily lives, foregrounding the textures of those lives. Women's experiences of war–rape, famine, destruction of their families and homes–are often callously viewed as just 'collateral damage' in the grand heroic narrative of war»[15].

In order to revert the erasure of the female experience from the historical account, the text turns to the analysis of the spatial dimension of the female subject. Most specifically, it dismantles naturalized approaches to gender by appropriating, examining and re-valuing two stereotypical notions of the

14. Birkeland, Janis: Op. cit., p. 17.
15. Kossew, Sue: «History and Place: An Interview with Daphne Marlatt», *Canadian Literature*, 178 (2003), p. 54.

female body as connected to space: the female body as territory, and the female body as nature. The exploration of these two interrelated tropes seems extremely relevant, for, although they have been widely used by feminist critics, it has also become evident that they are double-edged, their strategic use for feminist purposes sometimes perpetuating present, sexist discourses of power, leaving the sex-gender system untouched. In that context, both tropes of the female body depend on a larger metonymy that has defined/reduced women in terms of/to their reproductive function, and are thus linked to an essentialist conception of the maternal space, to the exclusive articulation of the female body/subject as (m)other. And, in addressing these key issues at the heart of contemporary feminist debate, *Taken* becomes self-consciously theoretical, probing further the construct/essence quandary and spelling out the dangers posed, as well as the possibilities offered by both positions.

Once more, the duplicity of the narrative structure serves as a useful tool for the intended analysis. The validity of the first trope, that of the female body as territory or nation, is explored in the Asian narrative with uneven results. I have suggested that colonial life is portrayed as a favourite site for the reproduction of traditional gender roles. The association of the female body with territory is also connected to the Empire, this part of the text stressing «the mapping and physical measuring of empire in sexual terms[16]: both women and territories are *taken*, occupied, colonized. From that viewpoint, the fact that so many women appear to be pregnant, in the letter exchange that takes place between Esme and Charles during the war, is very ambiguous. On the one hand, the women's pregnancies could be interpreted, most obviously, as a sign of excess of life, overturning, at least partially, the deadly effects of war on the Pacific. In the more general context of the tacit complicities among imperialist, patriarchal and Cartesian approaches to subjectivity, the proliferation of pregnant bodies, with its emphasis on the spatial dimensions of the self, would certainly undermine the nature and the established boundaries of the unified, autonomous subject. «It is perhaps surprising,» McDowell comments, «that the subjectivity of pregnant women has been so little studied by the philosophers of bodily existence, as there is no clearer example of the limitations of the Cartesian assumptions of a singular unified subject»[17].

On the other hand, however, women's pregnancies constitute unsurmountable obstacles to physical movement, their bodies literally trapped, like territories and countries, by the configurations of war – as is the case of Esme herself. That provides, in turn, a clear instance of how gender structures affect the policing of borders and the mobility within and between actual spaces. It is also, most significantly, a case of interaction between the sex-gender system and what Homi Bhabha has called the performative function of nation-narration. As Sumathi Ramaswamy explains in a different context, one of the most effective

16. Higonnet, Margaret: Op. cit., p. 12.
17. Macdowell, Linda: Op. cit., p. 58.

strategies of nationalism throughout the 19th and the 20th centuries was to make demands on the bodies of citizens; that is, the material body became target of official appeals to nationalism, and women's bodies, because of their reproductive capacity, were specially vulnerable to the patriotic plea:

> «Invariably, these demands were made differently according to gender, with women being called upon, like the female icon of their nation of which they are living surrogates, to serve with their wombs. As embodiments of domestic respectability, custodians of tradition, and bearers and nurturers of future citizens, women keep 'nostalgia alive in the active world of men'»[18].

In all cases, the success of the performative function depends on a metonymic alliance between the female body and the nation. But the strategy can easily turn against itself, giving way to violence, both physical and ideological, against women. The most telling example of that undesirable reversal is found in the captive narrative that begins to infiltrate Marlatt's text midway in the novel, emerging unexpectedly and adding a completely new dimension to the Asian narrative. These fragments, marked in italics and narrated in the form of a second-person address, take the reader to the distraught experience of a group of young women caught by the Japanese and taken to a POW camp. Once more, the physicality of the language used, the extremely sensual descriptions and the stress on the purely corporeal, coexist uncomfortably with, willing to contravene, the actual violence perpetrated against these women (as well as with the intermittent bits of factual information about Japan's advances in the Pacific). The effect, as Marlatt herself states, is that of a «Greek chorus of women's voices»[19] against the sound of gun fire:

> *«It was the hand of bananas – you don't talk about these things – it was the hand of bananas that brought it home. you can't speak about it — only just ripe, and so many of them, enough to give you several bites each, the whole thing hanging so ripe, so unbearably heavy. your feet wrapped up in rags, the sight of you! pilfered sarongs, mismatched bits of clothing, haggard, no combs, carrying broken crockery like prized possessions from the house they'd let you loot. mouth still sore from hours in the sea, you can barely swallow, but the bananas – you can't speak of this so that anyone can understand – a perfect yellow, smelling dearly familiar, smelling of food in that jungle clearing they'd marched you through. smelling of some other life, not this one newly acquired, not fear, not pain, not the bayonets. all they'd given you was a little broken rice, and all you can think is waste, the lost children, dead babies who will never taste banana, and that woman shuffling beside you like a sleepwalker – you can't speak of it to her, you can't break through her pain.»* (63)[20]

18. Ramaswamy, Sumathi: «Body Language: The Somatics of Nationalism in Tamil India», in Insa Härtel and Sigrid Schade (eds.): *The Body and Representation*, Opladen, Leske + Budrich, 2002, p. 191.
19. Kossew, Sue: Op. cit., p. 50.
20. The sudden appearance of this third narrative framework, made up of «fractured but hypnotic passages» (Ball, Alan Egerton: Review of *Taken. FFWD Weekly* (January, 9th). n/p., 1997), and the effect it produces on the reader's understanding of the other two would need further analysis

As I have just suggested, the introduction of these impressive POW voices, interspersed in the novel's Part II with the account of Charles's escape by train, then foot, and finally, ship, draws the reader's attention to the actual violence potentially contained in the mentioned metonymic alliance between the female body and the nation. At the same time, it takes to the limit the ongoing critique of the sex-gender system, and specifically, of the association of men to mobility and women to stasis: while the male subject, despite much hardship, manages to escape Japanese bombs, the POW women remain immobilized, taken, as the national territory they supposedly represent, occupied, and colonized once more.

The other stereotypical association that the novel explores, this time, with more positive connotations, is that of the female body as Nature, an analogy depending once more on the larger underlying conception of both women and nature in maternal terms: Woman and/as Nature and/as Mother. As is well known, that association has pervaded the history of thought in a good number of cultures, often with negative results: «Women are seen as closer to nature, as irrational, as polluters, as sacred but as inferior because they menstruate and because of their ability to bear children»[21]. The representation of woman as nature has in fact supported, and been supported by, patriarchal ideology, providing it with a useful tool to confine women to biology, to their bodies, and thus justify gender inequalities on the basis of natural laws[22]. Feminist production, however, has returned to this strategy, reappropriating the connection between women and nature and embuing it with new, positive meanings. In the first place, the naturalization of the female body can have the reversed effect of interrogating the Cartesian approach to the body as inert matter, thus breaking the binary logics (mind/body) that supports it. Besides, a revisionist approach to the female body as nature also involves a recuperation and re-evaluation of the erased maternal trace, and a new articulation of the relationship between the maternal and subjectivity (both female and male). That approach, that some critics have called 'maternalism,' would not necessarily refer to the biological condition of motherhood, although it often includes it:

> «Maternalism connotes, of course, that which is related to the mother. But more than this, maternalism implies being *of* or *like* the mother: the first same *and* other woman, the mother not all of us are or can be, but have or have had, symbolically or in the flesh. Maternalism also refers to the psychoanalytical rendition of the mother-child bond as well as ontology: a relation of sameness and differentiation (here of female sameness and female differentiation). Finally, maternalism is a 'signifying

elsewhere (see also Jackson, Lorna: Review of *Taken*. *The Malahat Review*, 121 (1997), p. 120 and Davey, Frank: «Women's Lives, Men's Wars» Review of Taken, in *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 61 (1997), pp. 17-20).

21. Mcdowell, Linda: Op. cit., p. 44.
22. See Sydie, R. A.: *Natural Women, Cultured Men: A Feminist Perspective on Sociological Theory*, Toronto, Methuen, 1987.

space, both corporeal and mental' (Tostevin, *Gyno-Text*). And, as this signifying space, the maternal can function as a socializing space, thus as one possible model of a relational ethics».[23]

Marlatt's linguistic approach to the maternal, a constant in her poetic, narrative, and critical work, is often articulated in terms of a relational ethics. We have already seen how, in *Taken,* the search for the mother (real and imagined) constitutes the connecting thread between the two narrative frameworks. In contrast to Marlatt's previous novel *Ana Historic* (1988), where the search for the maternal parallels the narrator's attempt at historical reconstruction, often through etymological research[24], the emphasis in *Taken* is, as we have seen, on the personal, the etymological gives way to the geological, and an unfailing connection with nature runs deep through the Canadian narrative and in Suzanne's reconstruction of her mother's life.

By looking at the natural environment as origin and source of life, and thus as *mother* of all things, the novel joins therefore a rich feminist tradition that has exploited the metaphorical potential of such a connection, often with ecological undertones. As Gillian Rose asserts:

> «One continuing form of resistance against fictional identities of phallocentrism has been the effort by feminists, as daughters, to re-imagine the mother as the subject of desire, and to explore motherhood as a symbol of a non-phallocentric mode of social relation. Given the powerful interpellation of Nature as Mother in Western culture, this effort has some implications for seeing the land».[25]

The idea is to be already found in seminal feminist works such as Mary Daly'*Gyn/Ecology*: «As we feel the empowerment of our own Naming,» Daly writes, «we hear more deeply our call of the wild. Raising pairs of arms into the air we expand them into shells, sails. Splashing our legs in the water we move our oars» [26]. More recently, the notion of 'ecofeminism' has come to the fore as «a philosophy whose primary tenet is that the same patriarchal world view motivating the oppression of women and minorities motivates human oppression of nonhuman nature as well»[27]. Ecofeminism works against the colonization and occupation of both women and land/nature, builds on the belief that the juxtaposition of the objectives of feminism and ecology will be effective, and considers thus both projects of liberation as intimately connected. Accordingly, it is not a simple theory or a new form of criticism. Rather, it is

23. Carrière, Marie: Op. cit., p. 32.
24. See Jones, Marina: *That Art of Difference: Documentary-Collage and English-Canadian Writing,* Toronto, U. of Toronto P, 1993, p. 160.
25. Rose, William: *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of geographical Knowledge,* Minneapolis, U. Of Minnesota P, 1993, p. 110.
26. Dalys, Mary: *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism,* Boston, Beacon, 191 (1978), p. 423.
27. Scheweninger, Lee: «A Skin of Lakeweed: An Ecofeminist Approach to Erdrich and Silko», in Barbara Frey Waxman (ed.): *Multicultural Literature Through Feminist Poststructuralist Lenses,* U. of Tennessee P, 1993, p. 38.

«a value system, a social movement, and a practice, but it also offers a *political analysis* that explores the links between androcentrism and environmental destruction»[28]. Ecofeminism rethinks and revalues the traditional association between women and nature, often used by patriarchal ideology with negative intentions, since «the very essence of ecofeminism is its challenge to the presumed necessity of power relationships. It is about changing from a morality based on 'power over' to one based on reciprocity and responsibility ('power to'). Ecofeminists believe that we cannot end the exploitation of nature without ending human oppression, and vice versa»[29].

As has been already suggested, it is Suzanne's profound respect for the land she inhabits that will provide the way out from the paralysis produced by her suffering at the personal level (her breaking up with Lori) and at the social, political and moral level (the infamous news of the First Gulf War, the weight of complicity). The two unhappy events, the personal and the political, are joined in the striking image of an oil-covered bird struggling for survival in the Gulf:

> «Nights are the worst–i never dreamt that nights could be so bright. The image of a greased cormorant struggling to lift itself from oil-thick waters in the Gulf of Bahrain repeats and repeats. Irreversibly awake i drag a chair to the window overlooking the lake and sit in a halo of light radiating off the moon's track. You've left without saying goodbye, without even looking back, and i am left in the unthinkable space. How could the dialogue of our eyes, that deep and ecstatic look we held each other by, reading the dark places as well as the radiant ones, how could the tenderness that soaked our skin have come to this». (92)

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28. Birkeland, Janis: Op. cit., p. 18.

29. For a discussion of the different forms of ecofeminism, see Braidotti, Rosi, Ewa Charkiewicz, Sabine Häusler and Saskia Wieringa: *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesi,* London, Zed Books/Instraw, 1994, pp. 161-168. In the specific context of Canadian women's writing, Marlatt's text contributes to the «geofeminist» project of rewriting both Canadian and Western narrative traditions through a self-conscious process of feminization of the land (see Verhoeven, W. M.: «West of 'Woman,' Or, Where No man Has Gone Before: Geofeminism in Aritha Van Herk» in Herb Wyile, Christian Riegel, Karen Overbye and Don Perkins (eds.): *A Sense of Place: Re-Evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing*, Edmonton, The U. of Alberta P., 1997, pp. 61-80; also Darias-Beautell, Eva: *Graphies and Grafts: (Con)Texts and (Inter)Texts in the Fictions of Four Canadian Women Writers*, Bruselas, Peter Lang, 2001). Such a process –carried out by means of a refiguring of the land back in the maternal terms, where it becomes both a symbolic and a literal mother– owes much to the Native Canadian traditional views of nature and has clear political and social implications, for it puts forwad «the understanding that place is actually our mother, place is what nourishes us, that without this sense of place we're dead,» says Marlatt in that context; «and, of course, the whole capitalist culture, the global culture, that we're experiencing now works to erase that recognition» («History and Place: An Interview with Daphne Marlatt», By Sue Kossew, *Canadian Literature,* 178 (2003), p. 53). Further connections could be pursued in the bioregionalist movements of the West Coast (see Plant, Judith: «Searching for Common Ground: Ecofeminism and Bioregionalism», in Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (eds.): *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism,* San Francisco, Sierra Club, 1990, pp. 155-164).

Against the background of unbearable desolation represented by the cormorant's hopeless struggle for life, the image of the quiet lake under the moonlight on the island provides some kind of release from the profound sense of distress. Against the ongoing rhetorics of invasion in the TV news, the narrator's approach to the land around her is one of harmony and identification. The strategy is again two-fold. In the first place, the sharp contrast between the two scenes enhances the power of the ongoing critique against war. At the same time, the implicit equation between the dying bird's and the narrator's suffering gives a personal imprint to the reality of war, humanizing it, bringing it closer, and making it, therefore, more unacceptable. Pacifist, feminist and ecological arguments are effectively combined in the striking juxposition of images. Significantly, in an earlier scene that takes place at the ferry terminal, Suzanne, unable to cope with the prospect of separation from Lori, turns her thoughts to nature for comfort and release: «I think of the mandrake and the tiny shriek it is supposed to give when it is pulled» (19). The soothing effects of the natural environment are reinforced by other scenes which suggest the possibility of a symbiotic rapport between nature and the female subject/body: there is, for instance, the eloquent image of the sea embracing the reefs and receding again, an «amorous intent»: «To live here,» Suzanne says, «is to be invaded by such rhythms. Not invaded perhaps, but seduced, pore by pore» (86). Marlatt herself supports that interpretation when she declares:

> «I think we don't look enough at our relationship, the relationship between our bodies and everything that surrounds it. The air we take in, the very water we drink, the food we eat: all this becomes part of our own bodies, so even though we tend to think of ourselves as these isolated, self-contained creatures, we aren't. We are much more permeable than we think. I focus on the women-to-woman relationship in *Taken* in the context of woman-to-island relationship; in the woman-to-sensual environment that's almost as important a relationship for Suzanne as the relationship with Lori»[30].

As I have been arguing so far, *Taken*'s attempt at recovering and empowering an erased female experience runs parallel to the recuperation of the connection between the female (m)other and the earth (m)other, reappropiating the metaphorical association between maternalism and ecology, and advancing, in so doing, an ecofeminist ethics based on alterity and reciprocity. The novel's favourite images, for instance, those related to water, could be analysed in that ecofeminist context. So pervasive are those images in the text that Beverley Curran, using one of Marlatt's own images, qualifies it as «aquatic»: «And everywhere is the sound of water: rain dripping from the cedar boughs, torrential tropical storms; splashing pools; waves and waterfalls, the running

30. Curran, Beverley and Mitoko Hirabayashi: «Conversations with Readers: An Interview with Daphne Marlatt», *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 24.1 (1999), p. 121.

tap; dew, mist, wet skin»[31]. Still, water images are not simply exotic, poetic or decorative, but often structure both syntax and plot and have thus multiple textual functions. They trace symbolic lines of identification between the female body and the earth, but they are also endowed with specific connotations of resistance. To begin with, they act as fluid link between the reader and the text, between language and the body:

> «The reader and writer find themselves in a fluid narrative in the drifting space and time and half-light of Marlatt's latest novel. In *Taken*, as in much of Marlatt's writing, one genre interrupts another, the lesbian body swimming with the words of memory and mother against the current, but with the drift that moves language in new directions, and, thus, lives to change. Strands of gender and genre, of the real and the imagined, break and attach, tangling stories and lives with past and place»[32].

These images manage, in other words, to be aesthetically pleasurable and politically effective at the same time. On the one hand, the constant allusions to moisture and wetness draw implicit and explicit connections with the maternal, with the mother's womb, and this, in turn, with the lesbian body, the foetal posture the lovers take in bed, their bodies burrowed into each other, reminiscent of the immese comfort of life before birth –an issue to which I will return. On the other, in its suggested fluidity and constant movement, water imagery in the Canadian narrative undermines the immobility of the female characters in the Asian narrative, caught, *taken*, by the various designs of history and war. And so is the sound of a pouring rain, water dripping, and of incessant splashing, meaningfully countering the dried Iraqi desert where bombs are constantly falling in the Operation Desert Storm: «A wet morning here and the war there in the late afternoon of the desert–they coexist» (37)[33].

We have already seen how the violence produced by the discourse (and the reality) of war appears constantly suspended or questioned by a paralleled discourse centered on intimacy, on sexuality and on the female body. *Taken* not only breaks syntax and abandons grammatical conventions. The vocabulary of war is also intrinsically connected to the symbolic, to the Law of the Father,

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31. Curran, Beverley: «Swimming with the Words: Narrative Drift in Daphne Marlatt's *Taken*», *Canadian Literature*, 159 (1998), p. 56.
32. Ibíd.
33. Obviously, the exploitation of water images with their suggested notion of fluidity can hardly be taken as a specifically feminist strategy. A regionalist reading of Marlatt's work would identify, for instance, the strong presence of rain images in the literature of the West Coast (Ricou, Laurie: *The Arbutus/Madrone Files: Reading the Pacific Northwest*, Edmonton (Alberta), NeWest, 2002, pp. 59-63; also Wylie, Herb, Christian Riegel, Karen Overbye and Don Perkins: «Regionalism Revisited» in *A Sense of Place: Re-Evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing,* Edmonton, The U. of Alberta P., 1997, pp. ix-xiv). A postmodernist one would, instead, see, in the 'fluidity' suggested by water imagery, a fitting metaphor for the instability of contemporary modes of thoughts (Bauman, Zygmunt: *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity, 2000). Yet I am arguing that Marlatt's text can indeed be analysed in the context of a specifically feminist tradition (see also New, W. H: *Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing,* Toronto, U. of Toronto P., 1997, p. 168).

against which the reader is offered the language of the body, «listening for another kind of story, a story of listening way back in the body» (25). And it is precisely in the breaking of the binary oppositions between the mind/language and the body/land that the interest of the novel's proposal lies. In this sense, its recuperation of the maternal and of its connection to nature touches again upon the debate between constructionist and essentialist approaches to the female subject, confronting the well-known dangers for the materiality of feminist inscriptions to «collapse into the atextuality of that for which a representational vocabulary is lacking»[34]. *Taken* suggests a possible way out of that impasse by adopting a double perspective: on the one hand, the longing for a pre-symbolic stage as well as the overriding association between the female body and nature, the cyclical and organic definition of the (female) self, unmistakably connect the subject to a maternal space, theoretically outside the symbolic order, «an untheorisable space always threatening to turn into engulfment»[35]. On the other, the text makes it clear that there is no way out of the symbolic, and the attempted recuperation of the semiotic dimension of subjectivity can only be attained through the breaking of the opposition between both fields of experience. Significantly, when Suzanne wakes up in the early morning sensing a pre-symbolic connection to the maternal, she feels the urgent need to get up and write it down, aware that language, paradoxically, is the only possibility of expressing the wordless experience:

> «Mother and child. That nameless interbeing we began with. Anxiety pushes me out of bed in the dark, to write her, reach her, bring her bodily out of nothing, which is not nothing because she is there, leaning against me on the other side of a thin membrane that separates, so thin we communicate, but not in words. I reach toward her with these half-truths, half-light fading into ordinary time and space». (21)

This dilemma is constanly and self-consciously addressed in Suzanne's very narration, invariably structured as a tension between the linguistic and the non-linguistic, the symbolic and the semiotic, the text's driving towards the natural, the physical, and the corporeal never renouncing the production of meaning:

> «Do words keep us branching here rather than there where the dreams are? Wordless in another landscape, other bodies' lives, bodies that skim the air above foreign gardens, bodies that swim under water, breathing there. And i come surfacing into my own, with only the faintest memory, intact in my skin, these words that want to register being here. As if now, in the long moment before dawn, i sense what is not to be». (21)

The very thematization of the conflict, then, seems to undermine, or, at least, balance, the essentialist drive, strong in the text, towards the semiotic and the pre– or non-linguistic. The text *becomes* the language of the body; it *is* the body speaking. «My body is words,» writes Madeleine Gagnon in a

34. Higonnet, Margaret: Op. cit., p. 13.
35. Frosh, Stephen: Op. cit., p. 300.

similar context[36]. We are offered an alternative form of textuality which is not necessarily against symbolic language or the configuration of narrative plot (an impossible project), but in which neither the symbolic nor the plot is the exclusive repository of meaning. As Judith Butler has argued, the subversion of naturalized approaches to gender cannot take place «through strategies that figure an utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place»[37]. The possibility of criticizing and dismantling the system is, in other words, contained within.

From that viewpoint, Marlatt's contribution to a larger feminist project that locates representational power in the (language of the) female subject/body seems unquestionable. As Eugenia Sojka argues, in her analysis of Betsy Warland's texts: «The very fact of foregrounding the female body as a centre of identity, a body which encompasses a mind, is a strategic form of resistance to a culture privileging rationality and spirit»[38]. In Marlatt's text, resistance is clearly marked female. And that option firmly places the novel within the «writing-in-the feminine» project in Canada, a kind of writing that draws on the spatiality of language to construct «a feminist gaze toward the symbolic»[39], and often combines formal innovations with a political and social analysis of gender relations:

> «Writings in the feminine use theory in their practices of a specific, self-conscious poetics that often draws attention to its own ways of viewing and revewing the world. They seek to mesh, with their theoretical contemplations, the practices of poetry and fiction, the creation of images and metaphors. More generally, no literary text can be immune to its intersections with the discourses surrounding it (politics, philosophy, aesthetics). And it is the self-consciousness of this intersection that characterizes these texts, as well as their feminist orientation, their examination of the materiality of language, and their awareness of what has shaped and been shaped by language»[40].

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36. Gagnon, Madeleine: «My Body in Writing», in Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn (eds.): *Feminism in Canada: From Pressure to Politics*, Montréal, Black Rose, 1982, p. 273.
37. Butler, Judith: *Gender Trouble*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 34.
38. Sojka, Eugenia: «Language and Subjectivity in the Postmodern Texts of Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-Québecois Writers», *Canadian Review of Contemporary Literature* (September, 1994), p. 359.
39. Knutson, Susan: *Narrative in the Feminine: Daphne Marlatt and Nicole Brossard*, Waterloo (On.), Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2000, p. 197.
40. Carrière, Marie: Op. cit., pp. 29-30. «Writing in the feminine/écriture au féminin» is a Québec-Canadian feminist literary project began in the early eighties by critics and writers such as Nicole Brossard or Louky Bersianik in Québec and Daphne Marlatt, Erin Mouré or Lola Lemire Tostevin in English Canada. The term, that has been used since that date in several Canadian Women's Conferences and critical collections, was originally meant as a material, ethical alternative to the notion of a «feminine writing,» problematic in its very definition because of its essentialist drive. In this type of writing, the political crusade for equality is inseparable from the exploration of the linguistic, social and theoretical edges of sexual difference. Drawing on the deconstructive positions articulated by the French feminists Luce Irigaray and Hélène

Taken both stresses the physical texture of language and textualizes, at the same time, the female body and the purely physical, locating alternative, non-symbolic forms of communication in the world of nature and lesbian sexuality, which appear, as we have seen, intimately connected: «I think of your sapsuckers mining for nectar in the woody skin of trees, your delight in them, and i envy beings without words» (35). And «[i]t is this non-thinking,» argues Curran paraphrasing the above quotation,

> «the envy of beings without words, that lets a narrative drift to find itself, not in the story line, or the rigid constraints of a particular genre, but in a flow of words which lets the body go, a narrative that is feeling its way through what is not known: the aquatic narrative dives and surfaces, replaying the past, surprised by the new in what has been before, letting the ear hear what the eye cannot see, and changing the rhythm of writing into a process at least as sensual as it is cerebral»[41].

The novel manages, in this way, to reconnect the female body to the mother/land without falling into the trap of viewing that move as the possibility of a «return» to a semiotic limbo. At times, its proposal looks close to Michelle Cliff's image of the garden as «a new terrain, a new location, in feminist poetics. Not a room of one's own, not a fully public or collective self, not a domestic realm–it is a space in the imagination which allows for the inside, the outside, and the liminal elements inbetween»[42]. Marlatt's text seems indeed in consonance with that feminist poetics, specially in its proposed liminality, in its definition of a garden as an in-between landscape of harmony, no longer a room but open space, in its revision and rearticulation of previous feminist models for creativity. Yet I would argue that the creative force of the metaphorical garden does not succeed in undercutting the destructive force of the parallel masculinist discourse. Towards the end of the novel, Suzanne compares her love story with the act of gardening, in which her planting the tiny lettuce seeds becomes an intimate form of love, a gift of life. But that very delicate gesture, juxtaposed in the sentence to death, suffering and destruction in the Gulf, does not seem powerful enough to resist, suppress or suspend

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Cixous, writings in the feminine produce a kind of text that blend poetry, prose and theory, and whose self-conscious focus on the female generic is not necessarily linked to identity, biology or content.

41. Curran, Beverley: Op. cit., p. 65.

42. Kaplan, Caren: «Deterritorizations: The Rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse», *Cultural Critique*, 6 (Spring 1987), p. 197. This idea of the garden seems to have provided a rich trope for women to express their relation to the land throughout colonial histories. As A. Kolodny (*The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860,* Chapel Hill (NC), U. of North Carolina P, 1984) has stated, white middle-class North American frontier women's desire to transform the wilderness around them was different from their men's desire to control or dominate it. Rather they saw the wilderness as the perfect space for gardens, «a place where a landscape of harmony between soil and weather and plants and people was possible, a place in which relations among people would reflect the tenderness of caring for the land» (Rose, Gillian: *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge,* Minneapolis, U. of Minnesota P., 1993, p. 111).

the poisonous reality of war, the planting spaces and the promise of new life turned, by the twist of the sentence, into deadly trenches:

> «Perhaps i haven't given you enough space, i think, my hands in the earth sprinkling tiny lettuce seeds that, once covered, will begin to sprout in the damp weather. I try to separate the tiny flecks of dormant energy, ranking them with my finger to give each one enough growing room. Already i can imagine green rosettes appearing, the struggle with slugs, and then, if we're lucky, the pleasure of pulling leaves unfurled and crisp for the salads you love.
>
> [....] I push the wet soil into the shallow trench thinking of death again, of burned bodies in the desert sand». (109)

In one sense, it is true that despite the disturbing effect of the war vocabulary, the reader is offered some kind of repose in the depiction of that garden. Yet the text's proposal goes further than that, suggesting the need for a complete fusion of the female body as/in space, the space of the island, the earth, the maternal space. The novel has explored different approaches to the spatial dimension of subjectivity, trying to articulate what the narrator calls «the inner geography of home» (98), in the territorial terms of the Asian narrative and in the emotional terms of the Canadian one. Neither of these, however, gives the narrator a sense of continuity, of belonging. Instead, it is her connection to the land that provides the only sense of grounding, and this argument becomes stronger as the novel reaches its end, and by means of the intersection of the two narrative frameworks; that is, by means of the articulation of the maternal space. Home is nowhere but in (mother) nature: «I find no words for this threshold, though the sense of being suspended here is exquisite. Present in your absence, my love, loves echoing. It's still dark, the gulls are crying. Against the greying bowl of sky i can see their shapes swerve out over the lake and it gives me a sense of relief, of space» (115-116).

The novel's articulation of this sense of grounding becomes an ethical choice inasmuch as it runs counter to an analysis of the territorial rhetoric of war and to an unambiguous rejection of violence and the abuse of power across space and time. Its exploration of an alternative form of belonging based on the fusion with the land and on a recuperation of the maternal becomes an ecofeminist ethical proposal, for it not only suggests a possible model for social relations (between women and between women and men), but also advances the need to reconsider our own relation to the land we inhabit. The project is obviously an ambitious one, and the broken sentences may be read in that sense as «the marks of an unfinished project, of deeply entreched problems, and what are still today unresolved questions»[43]. The validity of this utopian proposal, however, should not be discarded, specially now, after we have lived the shame and the obscenity of a second Gulf War, the possibility of yet more brutality uncanningly, and unknowingly, foreshadowed by *Taken*'s

43. Carrière, Marie: Op. cit., p. 6.

very last words: «The stories we invent and refuse to invent ourselves by, all unfinished…»(130).

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RESÚMENES

Imagined Space: Interiors in the Work of L. M. Montgomery
Marilyn Casto

L.M. Montgomery, autora canadiense conocida sobre todo por su popular serie *Anne of Green Gables*, publicó otros veintidós libros y numerosos relatos cortos. Este artículo analiza el carácter simbólico del espacio doméstico en su obra, especialmente la forma en que Montgomery se sirve de imágenes arquitectónicas para articular opiniones y actitudes veladamente subversivas, que la autora no hubiera podido expresar lingüísticamente en la puritana sociedad canadiense de finales del siglo diecinueve. En su obra narrativa y autobiográfica las estructuras arquitectónicas y el diseño de interiores funcionan como poderosas metáforas de identidad. Entre sus temas más recurrentes se encuentran la regeneración a manos de mujeres de habitáculos abandonados, la forma en que las casas traducen valores morales y sociales, la relación simbiótica entre espacio doméstico y la persona que lo ocupa (especialmente evidente si se trata de una mujer) y en general los modos en que el espacio interior adquiere un carácter antropomorfo, adquiriendo las connotaciones de un ser humano.

Palabras clave: L. M. Montgomery, arquitectura, decoración de interiores, sociedad victoriana, autobiografía literaria.

«Public Women, Private Stage?»: The Debate on «Separate Spheres» in Victorian Women's «Actress Novels»
Corinne Francois Deneve

A finales del siglo diecinueve un nuevo tipo de novela empezó a florecer en toda Europa: el de la «novela de actriz». Considerada como una variante del *Künstlerroman*, la «novela de actriz» surgió como un sub-género asociado a la inmensa fama que alcanzaron las actrices del momento. Aunque en Europa hubo bastantes escritores que publicaron «novelas de actriz», en Inglaterra fueron sobre todo las mujeres quienes cultivaron este género, siendo Florence Marryat y Gertrude Warden dos de las más conocidas. Sus obras recogen las

contradicciones que suscitó la ideología de «la separación de las esferas», pues la figura de la actriz era antitética a la del «ángel del hogar». Sus protagonistas a menudo se encuentran divididas entre su deseo de establecerse en un espacio concreto (un teatro, una casa) y la necesidad de moverse de un sitio a otro (de un papel a otro, de una compañía a otra, de una ciudad a otra); en suma, son viajeras impenitentes que sueñan con un hogar. De esta forma, la «novela de actriz» articula lo problemático de reconciliar la identidad pública con los deseos íntimos. Al final uno se pregunta si estas novelas se pueden considerar «feministas». Lo que emerge al espacio público es sobre todo el deseo de estas heroínas-actrices de alcanzar la felicidad en la esfera privada.

Palabras clave: «novelas de actriz», fin de siglo, «el ángel del hogar», esfera pública y privada, Florence Marryat, Gertrude Warden.

The Invasion of Fleet Street: Women and Journalism in England 1880-1950

Loretta Stec

En torno a 1880 un gran número de mujeres accedieron al campo del periodismo en Gran Bretaña. La figura de la periodista que invade el «santuario» masculino de Fleet Street marcó un cambio significativo en la participación femenina en dos frentes: en primer lugar, el espacio público de la modernidad, poblado a partir de ese momento por reporteras que recorren la ciudad para obtener una noticia; y en segundo lugar, la esfera pública del debate que caracteriza a toda sociedad democrática moderna, tal como la define Habermas. El artículo analiza la cambiante representación literaria de la mujer periodista, desde las postrimerías del victorianismo hasta la primera mitad del siglo veinte. Entre los autores abordados se encuentran Robert Barr, Rose Macaulay y Rebecca West. Todos ellos hacen explícita la íntima conexión existente entre la construcción social del espacio público, su masculinización y su lenta apertura a las mujeres, y la correspondiente capacidad limitada de las mujeres periodistas de intervenir en los debates de la esfera pública.

Palabras clave**:** periodismo, reporteras, esfera pública, representación literaria de la mujer periodista, páginas femeninas.

Negotiating Boundaries: The Economics of Space and Gender in Mina Loy's Early Poems

Laura Scuriatti

Este ensayo estudia los poemas tempranos de Mina Loy *Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots* (1915) y *The Effectual Marriage* (1914 ca.) a la luz de las teorías más recientes que analizan e interpretan el espacio construido como fruto y

productor de las relaciones de poder. En estos poemas, la representación de la claustrofóbica división binaria entre espacio público y privado se configura como resultado, y al mismo tiempo como agente, de una concepción de la identidad sexual igualmente simplista. Es más, estos poemas revelan que los tropos literarios de la domesticidad, el amor constante y la feminidad dócil no son sino productos de una economía de intercambio brutal entre los sexos, de la que forma parte indisoluble los espacios arquitectónicos en los que transcurre la vida diaria. El control de la experiencia visual plasmada en estos textos en imágenes de espacios liminales es parte de una «tecnología de poder», mediante la cual se refuerza la identidad de género. Sin embargo, los poemas de Loy, al exponer los mecanismos de este paradigma, logran desbaratar y vaciar de sentido su poder normativo.

Palabras clave: Mina Loy, género, feminismo, espacio doméstico, Futurismo, vanguardias, virginidad, economía sexual.

Walking the Imperial Metropolis: **Janet Frame's *The Envoy from Mirror City***

Lourdes López Ropero

Este ensayo analiza el tercer volumen de la trilogía autobiográfica de Janet Frame (1924-2004), una de las figuras más representativas de la literatura neocelandesa. Publicado por primera vez en Gran Bretaña por la Feminist Press, *The Envoy from Mirror City* (1984) narra la lucha de la autora por adquirir reconocimiento internacional en el mundo literario londinense de los años 1950. El análisis se centra en la apropiación por parte de la autora de los espacios públicos de la metrópolis, un poder imperial decadente y meca de la emigración colonial en la época. El ensayo argumenta que la condición colonial de Frame, su liminalidad como neocelandesa, le proporciona la libertad y movilidad necesarias para llevar a cabo el papel de artista-flaneur, una actividad característica del artista masculino. Así mismo, el trabajo analiza el impacto que la condición colonial de Frame tiene en su percepción de la metrópolis, especialmente, su especial sensibilidad hacia la construcción cultural de la diferencia.

Palabras clave: postcolonial, Janet Frame, espacio urbano, *flânery*, Londres, imperialismo.

Finestra endins i enfora: sobre algunes protagonistes de Montserrat Roig

Maria Àngels Francés Díez

De la escritora y periodista Montserrat Roig se ha dicho que su obra excava capas de silencio que esconden historias nunca escritas. Profundamente

arraigada en la ciudad de Barcelona, dibuja personajes femeninos que también sienten por la ciudad una gran atracción, y que establecen con ella una relación conflictiva; conflictiva porque les es vedada. Este ensayo analiza formas de interacción entre las tres generaciones de mujeres protagonistas de la novela *Ramona, adiós* (1972) y los espacios que habitan. En particular se centra en el proceso de identificación de sus tres protagonistas con las calles de la ciudad, que se intensifica a medida que nos acercamos a la más joven. Mundeta Jover, a principios de siglo XX, vive recluida en el interior de su piso del Ensanche, y ejerce su particular forma de subversión –la única que le permiten– a través de su diario; Mundeta Ventura recorre Barcelona en tiempos de guerra, pero es vencida, también, por la moral represora del franquismo. No es hasta la década de los sesenta y setenta, dentro de una sociedad en proceso de cambio hacia la democracia y hacia un nuevo sistema de valores, cuando hallamos en Mundeta Claret lo que Deborah Parsons denomina una versión alternativa del *flâneur*, una metáfora –precaria, todavía– de la paseante y observadora urbana. El ensayo argumenta que la rebelión de Mundeta, aunque dolorosa, rompe el círculo genealógico que confinaba a las mujeres de la familia al hogar, y representa el primer paso hacia el proceso de emancipación que completarán sus protagonistas posteriores.

Palabras clave: género, espacio privado, espacio público, *flâneuse*, Montserrat Roig, *Ramona, adéu*.

Re-Inhabiting Private Space: Carmen Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás*
Carmiña Palerm

Ente ensayo analiza la configuración del espacio privado en *El cuarto de atrás*, de Carmen Martín Gaite, especialmente la forma en que Martín Gaite reviste la esfera doméstica de una cierta significación pública. En esta novela su protagonista opta por rescatar el pasado a través del acto y el arte de la narración, en una época –la transición española– en la que la gente ha decidido olvidar. Recupera su pasado en el espacio privado de su hogar, en sus rincones más marginales, demostrándonos que el espacio privado y doméstico, aunque sea «el cuarto de atrás, también puede habitarse de una manera fructífera, políticamente significativa y personalmente liberadora.

Palabras clave: Espacio privado, esfera pública, memoria, olvido, dictadura Franquista, interiores, domesticidad, escritoras españolas contemporáneas, la novela del pos-franquismo.

Homeward Bound: Domestic Space, Identity and Political Agency in Maya Angelou's Autobiography.
Amaya Fernández Menicucci

El presente artículo tiene como propósito analizar la representación del espacio doméstico en los seis volúmenes que componen la autobiografía de Maya Angelou. Toma como hipótesis de partida la existencia de una relación directa entre la percepción y configuración del espacio doméstico por parte de la narradora, y el proceso de definición de una identidad tanto individual como colectiva. En concreto, pretende demostrar que la construcción de espacios domésticos en los textos en cuestión no se fundamenta en la simplista oposición entre espacio privado y público. Más bien, y teniendo en cuenta la experiencia nómada de la narradora y su participación en el proceso de redefinición de la identidad y visibilidad política afro-americanas, su representación del hábitat doméstico adquiere los rasgos de un espacio en constante evolución, y que desempeña, al menos, tres funciones fundamentales: la afirmación de la identidad individual, la identificación con una comunidad de pertenencia y el activismo político.

Palabras clave: Maya Angelou, autobiografía, espacio doméstico, identidad, comunidad afroamericana, activismo político.

How Green Was My Valley: The Critique of the Picturesque by Irish and Galician Women Poets
Manuela Palacios González

Este ensayo analiza la apropiación crítica del espacio «natural» y pastoril que un grupo de mujeres poetas de Irlanda y Galicia ha llevado a cabo en los últimos treinta años con el fin de desmontar las convenciones de lo pintoresco en la representación literaria del paisaje. A partir del estudio de poemas de Eavan Boland, Anne Le Marquand Hartigan, Mary Dorcey, Luz Pichel, Chus Pato y Lupe Gómez, el ensayo resalta las estrategias retóricas que estas autoras utilizan para inscribir las relaciones de poder y las diferencias de género y clase social en el tropo poético del paisaje. De esta forma su obra supone una re-lectura y modificación de las convenciones del canon pastoral, que ha representado la naturaleza básicamente como un espacio idílico de ocio. El trabajo se enmarca dentro de los debates actuales del ecofeminismo, que tan significativamente contribuyen a esta crítica de la representación pintoresca con su noción de la diferencia relativa de la naturaleza.

Palabras clave: Irlanda, Galicia, mujeres poetas, lo pintoresco, paisaje, ecofeminismo.

'The Inner Geography of Home': The Ecofeminist Ethics of Daphne Marlatt's *Taken*

Eva Darias-Beautell

En este ensayo, me propongo analizar las señas de una ética feminista en la novela *Taken* de Daphne Marlatt, texto que, basándose en la materialidad/maternalidad del lenguaje, reconsidera la relación del sujeto (femenino) con el territorio, el lugar y el espacio, a la vez que propone una forma de maternalismo situada en la intersección entre feminismo y ecología. Mi lectura intentará elucidar la importancia de esta propuesta. Frente a una cartografía bélica, de ocupación y de violencia, el texto de Marlatt nos ofrece una vía de escape a través del paisaje, una geografía del cuerpo femenino basada en el maternalismo y en la fusión del cuerpo con el medio ambiente.

Palabras clave: Daphne Marlatt, literatura canadiense, ética feminista, ecofeminismo, maternalismo, cuerpo femenino.

ABSTRACTS

Imagined Space: Interiors in the Work of L. M. Montgomery
Marilyn Casto

L. M. Montgomery, best known for *Anne of Green Gables,* published 22 other books and hundreds of short stories. This essay examines the manner in which she used interiors to embody opinions and attitudes she could not openly express and the manner in which her commentary relates to the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century cultural and social ambiance. She made extensive use of interior architectural images and metaphors. Persistent themes include the regeneration of abandoned dwellings by women, the permanent impression of past events and personalities on houses (particularly psychologically haunted spaces), moral messages delivered through comparison of plain and fancy interiors, interiors deriving meaning from human presence (particularly female occupants), and much anthropomorphizing of houses.

Keywords: L.M. Montgomery, architecture, interior design, Victorian society, autobiography.

«Public Women, Private Stage?»: The Debate on «Separate Spheres» in Victorian Women's «Actress Novels»
Corinne Francois Deneve

In the late nineteenth century, in England, many women writers tried their hands at a fashionable genre, the «actress novel». These women forced the door to a public space, often considered as masculine, that of literature. They also chose to devote a whole book to a «public woman» who obviously challenged the Victorian ideal of the «cult of domesticity» and of the «angel of the house». By publishing «actress novels», which were often hugely popular, women writers thus added their voices to the debate on boundaries and «separate spheres». The actress novel, a gendered variation of the *Künstlerroman,* thus raises the question of the problematic reconciliation between public fame and private happiness: how can a public woman still be a woman in private? One

can finally wonder whether these women's actress novels are «feminist». What is made public in these novels is rather the reassertion of the place of women within the private sphere.

Keywords: actress novel, fin de siècle, women writers, angel of the house, separate spheres, Florence Marryat, Gertrude Warden

The Invasion of Fleet Street: Women and Journalism in England 1880-1950

Loretta Stec

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, women entered the public sphere of journalism in England in droves. The figure of the female journalist invading the «sanctity» of Fleet Street signalled a shift in the participation of women in 1) the public space of modernity—reporters needed to move through any number of spaces, urban and otherwise, to obtain their 'copy'—and 2) the public sphere of debate that underpins modern democratic societies. Changing representations of female journalists in literature were in dialectical relation with women's real professional possibilities. In examining a number of such representations, this essay demonstrates the interrelation between women's spatial access and their ability to make contributions to the political debates of the day, about gender roles, war, sexuality, good and evil, and many other topics.

Keywords: Journalism, literary images of female reporters, public sphere, women's pages.

Negotiating Boundaries: The Economics of Space and Gender in Mina Loy's Early Poems

Laura Scuriatti

This paper investigates Mina Loy's early poems *Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots* (1915) and *The Effectual Marriage* (1914 ca.) in the light of recent theories which read social and built space as a container for, a product and producer of power relations and their representations, including gender identity. In these poems the representation of the claustrophobic binary division of public and private space, both at the level of content and form, is shown to be product and agent of a similarly binaristic conception of gendered identity. Moreover, the literary tropes of domesticity, faithful love and docile femininity are exposed as the product of a ruthless economic system of exchange, of which the architectural spaces of daily life are part. The control of visual experience effected in these texts through the agency and experience of the liminal spaces is shown to be part of a «technology of power», which reinforces gender

identity. Loy's poems, however, by exposing the dialectic mechanisms of this paradigm, manage to deconstruct it and to empty out its normative power.

Keywords: Mina Loy, gender, feminism, domestic spaces, Futurism, early modernism, economics, virginity.

Walking the Imperial Metropolis: **Janet Frame's *The Envoy from Mirror City***
Lourdes López Ropero

This paper focuses on the third volume of Janet Frame's autobiographic trilogy, *The Envoy from Mirror City* (1984), first published in Great Britain by The Women's Press. In this volume, Frame (1924-2004), a titanic figure of New Zealand literature, recounts the beginning of her career as an internationally known writer in mid-1950s and early 1960s London. The essay charts Frame's narrative of her appropriation of the public spaces of the metropolis, claiming her as a flaneur-artist, an activity generally carried out by male artists. An important part of my argument has been to highlight Frame's colonial condition, and its impact on her perception of the city. Her un-Englishness grants her a marginal status in metropolitan society, which results in a high degree of detachment and freedom to move. Her cultural background provides her with a special awareness of the construction of difference, as well as a critical vision of London, a declining imperial power in the post-war period, and its urban landscape.

Keywords: postcolonial, Janet Frame, women and urban space, *flânery*, London, imperialism.

Finestra endins i enfora: sobre algunes protagonistes de Montserrat Roig
Maria Àngels Francés Díez

Critics have pointed out Montserrat Roig's tendency to excavate, through layers of silence, concealed stories that have never been written. Deeply attached to the city of Barcelona, she depicts female characters that also feel strongly attracted to the city, with which they have a conflictive relationship —conflictive because, for them, it is forbidden. This paper analyzes the ways in which the three generations of women in *Ramona, adéu* (1972) perceive and respond to the space they inhabit. In particular, it focuses on their gradual process of identification with the streets of the city, which gets more vivid when the novel centers on the youngest one. Mundeta Jover, at the beginnings of the 20th century, lives confined in her flat at the Eixample, and exerts her particular way of subversion —the only one she is allowed— through her

diary; Mundeta Ventura walks across Barcelona during the war but she is defeated, too, by Franco's repressive morality. It is not until the sixties and seventies, when the Spanish society starts its way towards democracy and new moral values, that we find in Mundeta Claret what Deborah Parsons calls an alternative, albeit precarious, version of Baudelaire's *flâneur*. I will argue that Mundeta's rebellion, no matter how painful it may be, breaks the genealogical circle of the novel that confines women to their homes, and represents the first step in the process of emancipation that other female characters will complete in Roig's later novels.

Keywords: gender, private and public space, *flâneuse*, Montserrat Roig, *Ramona, adéu*.

Re-Inhabiting Private Space: Carmen Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás*
Carmiña Palerm

In this paper I analyse Carmen Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás* as an attempt to rethink the significance of private space and suggest that a kind of publicness is available even within the domestic sphere. In this novel the protagonist chooses to actively «work through the past» during a time (the Spanish transición to democracy) when people have opted to forget through the art of storytelling. She recuperates her past in the private space of her home, what she calls her «backroom», and proves to us that a private space can be inhabited by a woman in a fruitful and liberating manner.

Keywords: private space, public space, public sphere, memory, remembrance, oblivion, Franco's dictatorship, interiors, publicness, domesticity, Cotemporary Spanish Women Writers, Post-Franco novel.

Homeward Bound: Domestic Space, Identity and Political Agency in Maya Angelou's Autobiography
Amaya Fernández Menicucci

This article aims at exploring the representation of domestic space in Maya Angelou's six-volume autobiography. It will attempt to prove the existence of a direct relationship between the narrator's appropriations and negotiations of domestic space, and the ongoing definition of both her individual and collective identity. We shall argue that the construction of domestic spaces along the texts is not based on the traditional (and simplistic) opposition between public and private space. Rather, and considering the narrator's nomadic experience and her active participation in the redefinition of Afro-American identity and political visibility, her configuration of domestic space evolves incessantly and

performs, at least, three fundamental functions: it is a site of self-assertion, belongingness to a collective identity, and political agency.

Keywords: Angelou's autobiography, domestic space, identity, political agency, Afro-American community, space representation.

How Green Was My Valley: The Critique of the Picturesque by Irish and Galician Women Poets
Manuela Palacios González

The present paper explores how contemporary women poets in Ireland and Galicia have engaged, for the last thirty years, in a critique of the Picturesque representations of landscape. Irish poets like Eavan Boland, Anne Le Marquand Hartigan or Mary Dorcey, and Galician ones like Luz Pichel, Chus Pato and Lupe Gómez draw our attention to the strategies through which power relations, as well as political and economic interests, shape space. These female poets also expose the ways in which gender difference affects our experience of landscape. A materialist approach helps us see the conditions of labour that are inscribed in those landscapes that much of the pastoral canon has represented as idyllic spaces for leisure. Besides, current ecofeminist debates contribute to this critique of the picturesque with their conception of the relative difference of nature.

Keywords: Ireland, Galicia, women poets, the Picturesque, landscape, ecofeminism.

'The Inner Geography of Home': The Ecofeminist Ethics of Daphne Marlatt's *Taken*
Eva Darias-Beautell

This essay examines the imprints of a feminist ethics in Daphne Marlatt's novel *Taken*, a text that, drawing on the materiality/maternality of language, rethinks the (female) subject's relation to territory, place and space, and puts forward a form of maternalism defined at the junction between feminism and ecology. Tracing lines of comparison and action between the two, ecofeminism could be defined as «feminism taken to its logical conclusion, because it theorizes the interrelations among self, societies, and nature» (Birkeland 1993, 17-18). My analysis will try to elucidate some of the implications contained in Marlatt's radical proposal. Against a cartography of war, occupation, and violence, Marlatt's text offers an escape by the landscape, a geography of the female body, maternalism, and the body's fusion with the environment.

Keywords: Daphne Marlatt, Canadian literature, feminist ethics, ecofeminism, maternalism, female body.

RESEÑA BIO-BIBLIOFRÁFICA DE LAS COLABORADORAS DEL VOLUMEN

Marilyn Casto

Es profesora de diseño de interiores en la Escuela de Arquitectura y Diseño de la Universidad de Virginia Tech, donde imparte docencia sobre la historia del diseño. Ha presidido la Sociedad del Sudeste de Historiadores de la Arquitectura y actualmente es editora de la revista *Foro para la Arquitectura Vernácula*. Su libro *Historic Theaters of Kentucky* fue galardonado con un importante premio en 2000. Actualmente se encuentra preparando un libro sobre historia del diseño profesional y un volumen sobre la representación de la naturaleza en los interiores domésticos del siglo diecinueve. Este último proyecto está siendo financiado por una Beca Winterthur.

Eva Darias-Beautell

Es profesora titular de Literaturas Canadiense y Estadounidense en la Universidad de La Laguna (Tenerife). Ha sido profesora visitante en las universidades de Toronto, Ottawa y British Columbia, y ha recibido varios premios de investigación del Gobierno de Canadá. Es la autora de los siguientes libros: *Division Language and Doubleness in the Writings of Joy Kogawa* (Universidad de La Laguna, 1998), *Shifting Sands: Literary Theory and Contemporary Canadian Fiction* (Mellen, 2000), and *Graphies and Grafts: (Con)Texts and (Inter)Texts in the Fictions of Four Canadian Women Writers* (Peter Lang, 2001). Darias-Beautell es actualmente la investigadora principal de un proyecto de investigación de tres años sobre las literaturas y las culturas norteamericanas del ultimo cuarto del siglo XX.

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Cursó sus estudios en la Universidad de la Sorbona en París. Es profesora adjunta de lenguas y literaturas modernas y Laureada por la Fundación Thiers. Realizó su tesis doctoral en el campo de la literatura comparada sobre el tema de la «novela de actriz» en las literaturas inglesa, francesa y alemana escritas entre 1880 y 1916. Ha sido profesora de lenguas modernas en la Universidad de Estocolmo y en el King's College de la Universidad de Cambridge. También ha sido profesora ayudante en los departamentos de literatura comparada de

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Es becaria de investigación en el Departamento de Filología Inglesa de la Universidad de Alicante. Su tesis doctoral, en la que trabaja actualmente, se enmarca en el campo de la crítica literaria poscolonial y analiza obras de escritoras británicas contemporáneas de origen indo-paquistaní. Desde el año 2003 forma parte de un proyecto I+D+I en el que estudia la construcción y representación de la maternidad en contextos poscoloniales y diaspóricos.

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Es Licenciada con Grado en Filología Catalana y Licenciada en Filología Inglesa. Es profesora ayudante en el Departamento de Filología Catalana de la Universidad de Alicante, donde imparte docencia en literatura catalana contemporánea y literatura comparada. Actualmente prepara una tesis doctoral sobre la obra narrativa de Montserrat Roig y colabora con un grupo de investigación sobre literatura autobiográfica, materia sobre la que ha editado varios volúmenes. Sus trabajos sobre literatura catalana contemporánea han aparecido en revistas como *Catalan Review*, *New Readings* y *The Journal of Catalan Studies*.

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Es profesora ayudante en el Departamento de Filología Inglesa de la Universidad de Alicante. Ha realizado un Máster en Estudios Ingleses de la Universidad de Kansas (Estados Unidos) y es doctora por la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela. La versión revisada de su tesis doctoral acaba de ser publicada por la Universidad de Alicante con el título *The Anglo-Caribbean Migration Novel: Writing from the Diaspora* (2004). Ha publicado diversos artículos sobre escritores de la diáspora caribeña tales como Paula Marshall, Caryl Phillips, Austin Clarke y Fred D'Aguiar en revistas y editoriales nacionales e internacionales (*World Literature Written in English*, *Atlantis*, *Miscelanea*, New York Press, Universitatsverlag C. Winter, Lexington Books).

Manuela Palacios González

Es profesora titular de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela. Tiene múltiples publicaciones sobre los estudios de la mujer que van desde *Virginia Woolf y la pintura* (1992) hasta su reciente edición y traducción al gallego de una colección de poetas irlandesas, *Pluriversos: Seis poetas irlandesas de hoxe* (2003). Otras traducciones y ediciones incluyen la obra de Virginia Woolf y la poesía europea contemporánea. Sus artículos sobre los lazos culturales entre Galicia e Irlanda analizan cuestiones como el nacionalismo, el género, el discurso religioso y la recepción de la literatura irlandesa en Galicia a través de la traducción.

Carmiña Palerm

Es investigadora post-doctoral en el Programa de Humanidades de la Universidad de Stanford (Estados Unidos). Actualmente prepara un libro con título *Fiction as Counter-History: Memory, Space and Resistance in Roig and the Post-Franco Novel*. Además de trabajar en el campo de la novela catalana y española de la época de la transición, le interesan la representación de la ciudad (sobre todo Madrid y Barcelona) en el cine y la literatura actual, y la interrelación entre memoria y trauma en la literatura testimonial post-franquista.

Laura Scuriatti

Es profesora titular de literatura en la Facultad de Humanidades de Berlín (Alemania). Es Licenciada con Grado por la Universidad de Milán y Doctora en Filología Inglesa por la Universidad de Reading (Reino Unido), donde realizó un Master en Literatura y Artes Visuales. Su tesis versó sobre la construcción del espacio y el género en la obra de Virginia Woolf y Mina Loy. Ha publicado ensayos sobre H. G. Wells, Ford Madox Ford y Mina Loy, y editado una antología de textos de literatura alemana contemporánea. Entre sus intereses investigadores figuran las escritoras feministas de las vanguardias, la cuestión de la identidad nacional y urbana en Berlín, y la representación del Mediterráneo en el modernismo británico.

Loretta Stec

Es profesora adjunta del Departamento de Inglés de la Universidad de San Francisco (Estados Unidos), donde imparte docencia desde 1993. Sus áreas de especialización incluyen la literatura del siglo XX de Gran Bretaña, Estados Unidos, Sudáfrica y la India. Ha publicado artículos sobre Virginia Woolf, Rebecca West, Katharine Burdekin, Bessie Head, D.H. Lawrence y Vera Brittain, entre otros autores, en revistas como *American Journalism*, *Etudes Lawrenciennes*, *Peace Review*, y en diversas colecciones de ensayos. En la actualidad se encuentra ultimando un libro con título *Applied Writing': British Women's Journalism and Fiction of the Liberal Feminist Era.*

La revista *Feminismo/s* se publica semestralmente. Está abierta a los aportes del personal investigador que compone el Centro de Estudios sobre la Mujer de la Universidad de Alicante, así como a toda la comunidad académica. La organización editorial se realiza a través de números monográficos, estando prevista también la publicación de algunos números en los que se presente una miscelánea de artículos. El carácter de la publicación, al igual que la del Centro de Estudios sobre la Mujer, es multidisciplinar.

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    O'CONNOR, Patricia: «Mujeres sobre mujeres: teatro breve español», *Anales de Literatura Española Contemporánea*, 25 (2003), pp. 45-76.

    BENTOVIM, Arnold: «Therapeutic systems and settings in the treatment of child abuse», en A.W. Franklin (comp.): *The challenge of child abuse,* New York, Academic Press, 2001, pp. 249-259.

11) Si una obra ya ha sido citada con anterioridad, en la referencia bibliográfica se omitirá el título y se citará de la siguiente manera:

    [2] MANERO, José: Op. cit., p. 345.

    Si se citan a lo largo del trabajo diferentes obras de un/a mismo/a autor/a, se identificará el título del trabajo al que se hace referencia en cada ocasión:

    [6] MANERO, José: *Los elementos químicos...*, op. cit., p. 345.

    Si se cita varias veces seguidas la misma obra, se omitirán el título y el nombre del autor o autora y se seguirá el siguiente modelo de citación:

    [6] MANERO, José: *Los elementos químicos...*, op. cit., p. 345.
    [7] Ibíd., p. 22.
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   Welldon, Estela V. : *Madre, virgen, puta. Idealización y denigración de la maternidad*, Madrid, Siglo xxi, 1993.

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    O'connor, Patricia: «Mujeres sobre mujeres: teatro breve español», *Anales de Literatura Española Contemporánea*, 25 (2003), pp. 45-76.

    Bentovim, Arnold: «Therapeutic systems and settings in the treatment of child abuse», dins A.W. Franklin (comp.): *The challenge of child abuse,* Nova York, Academic Press, 2001, pp. 249-259.

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    [2] Manero, José: Op. cit., p. 345.

    Si se citen al llarg del treball diferents obres d'un mateix autor o autora, cal identificar el títol del treball al qual es fa referència en cada ocasió:

    [6] Manero, José: *Los elementos químicos...*, op. cit., p. 345.

    Si se cita diverses vegades la mateixa obra, cal ometre el títol i el nom de l'autor o autora i seguir el model de citació següent:

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10) Articles and chapters of books should be cited as in the following example:

    O'CONNOR, Patricia: «Mujeres sobre mujeres: teatro breve español», *Anales de Literatura Española Contemporánea*, 25 (2003), pp. 45-76.

    BENTOVIM, Arnold: «Therapeutic systems and settings in the treatment of child abuse», in A.W. Franklin (comp.): *The challenge of child abuse,* New York, Academic Press, 2001, pp. 249-259.

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    [6] MANERO, José: *Los elementos químicos...*, op. cit., p. 345.

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