

## Reviews

**Gibert Maceda, Teresa y Laura Alba Juez. Coord. 2008. *Estudios de Filología Inglesa. Homenaje a la Dra. Asunción Alba Pelayo*. UNED: Varia.**

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The sizeable volume entitled *Estudios de Filología Inglesa. Homenaje a la Dra. Asunción Alba Pelayo* (“Studies in English Philology. A tribute to Dr. Asunción Alba Pelayo”) is, as the title suggests, the result of the wish of many of Dr. Alba’s colleagues and friends to pay her a well-deserved tribute for her prolonged professional work, on the occasion of her retirement. Thus, this extensive publication (615 pages long), edited and coordinated by Teresa Gibert Maceda and Laura Alba Juez, contains the contributions by a numerous group of lecturers and researchers from English departments at several Spanish universities, especially those Dr. Alba has been teaching at along her extensive professional career. All these colleagues have contributed their papers or had their names included in the *Tabula gratulatoria* as a tribute to her work. The product is a generous work which will no doubt be of great interest for all those working in the field of English Studies, be it in the field of linguistics, literature, translation, or even history and culture of English-speaking countries.

The general structure of the book consists of seven sections: three of them, the prologue, the biographical notes and the “letter to a friend”, precede the four sections of papers (devoted to English linguistics and language teaching, English literature, translation, and history and culture of English-speaking countries), with a *tabula gratulatoria* at the end. One might have also expected a final section with a summary of the contents, and of course, some final dedication to Dr. Alba, although the reader’s expectations in this respect might have been fulfilled with the initial sections.

The book starts with the “Prologue”, written by the editors, Dr. Laura Alba Juez and Dr. Teresa Gibert Maceda, who introduce Dr. Alba to the reader. They emphasize, amongst her many virtues, not only her academic relevance and her devotion to teaching, but also her enthusiasm and creativity, especially in the academic sphere, considering her participation in the creation or foundation of a number of Departments of English Studies in Spanish Universities, in addition to her human quality and her humanitarian work. Then, the “Biographical notes”, by the late Dr. Enrique Alcaraz, help the reader to better understand Dr. Alba, where he points out three of her main virtues and qualifies Dr. Alba as a warm, active and learned woman. These two sections are followed by a “Letter to a friend: a personal impression about *Unamuno y Greene. Un Estudio Comparativo*” by Dr. Rafael Páez, which, through a fictional epistolary conversation between the author and Dr. Alba, acts as both an introduction and a summary of one of the most famous and widely cited works by Dr Alba, *Unamuno y Greene (Un estudio comparativo)*, published in 1989, with a second edition in 2002. In this section, Páez praises the study, and pays special attention to Dr Alba’s exquisite language, her clarity, the purity of her style, and to her “dosis de pasión personal .. fruto de .. un interés humano por acercar(te) a un problema ...” (p. 29) [“dose of “personal passion [...] born of [...] a human interest to make the reader approach a problem”; our translation].

These short introductory sections, which show, describe, and to a certain degree bring home to the reader the importance of this book (given the human and professional qualities of the person it is a tribute to), are followed by four large parts, which make up the bulk of the

book. These four parts, which vary in length, are devoted to four great areas within English studies, precisely the “four great areas of study Dr. Alba worked on” (p. 23): (I) English linguistics and language teaching, (II) Literature in English, (III) Translation, and (IV) History and culture of English-speaking countries. Given the large number of papers in these sections, we shall concentrate here only on the first and last contribution in each of them, and shall list the other studies, so that the reader can become acquainted with the contents of the book.

The first part, “English linguistics and language teaching”, consists of seventeen papers. The first of them, “The Construction of Identity through Small Talk in Media Interviews”, written by Dr. Laura Alba Juez, is a fascinating study of strategies and functions of small talk in TV and radio interviews, based on twenty interviews conducted in British and American English; the last one is an interesting paper by Dr. Verónica Vivanco entitled “Discourse Patterns and Progression in Aeronautical Texts”, where after exploring the pragmatic features typical of advertising messages in aeronautics, she concludes that the dual or contrastive pattern does not always appear in this type of text, which rather follow a single pattern. In between these two papers, there are other attractive studies on various topics related to linguistics and language teaching by experts in the field: “Las palabras pequeñas: el lenguaje en la sociedad global”, by Dr. Román Álvarez Rodríguez and Dr. M<sup>a</sup> del Carmen África Vidal Claramente; “Explorando herramientas para el aprendizaje online”, by Dr. Pablo Cancelo; “The Role of Context in the Interpretation of Academic and Professional Communication”, by Dr. Pilar Durán Escribano and Dr. Ana M<sup>a</sup> Roldán Riejos; “Hacia una orientación lingüística de la traducción: léxico y aspecto verbal”, by Dr. Linda Escobar; “Modelling Final Declarative Intonation in English and Spanish”, by Dr. Eva Estebas Vilaplana; “Language and Ideology in the Knowledge Society: A Corpus-Based View of ‘Person’ in Business English”, by Dr. Pedro Fuertes Olivera; “A Focus-on-Form Approach in Language Pedagogy: Research in an EFL Context”, by Dr. María Pilar García Mayo; “La percepción sensorial y el léxico de la comida y la bebida en inglés y español”, by Dr. Margarita Goded Rambaud; “Dinámicas discursivas en la conceptualización del tiempo: efectos de la perspectivización en inglés antiguo”, by Dr. María del Carmen Guarddon Anelo; “Reconciling Language with Culture and Cognition in Politeness Theory”, by Dr. Victoria Guillén Nieto; “Internal and External Constraints in Meaning Construction: The Lexicon-Grammar Continuum”, by Dr. Ricardo Mairal Usón and Dr. Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez; “*TH*-Clefts in English: Form and Function”, by Dr. Elena Martínez Caro; “The Paradoxical Nature of the English Word *Down*. The Case of *Downtown*”, by Dr. Ana Pinto Muñoz; “Variaciones grafemáticas de los anglicismos en los medios de comunicación: tendencias y factores condicionantes”, by Dr. Félix Rodríguez González; “Early and Late Northumbrian: the Case of the Ruthwel Cross Runic Inscription”, by Dr. Inmaculada Senra Silva.

The second part, “Literature in English”, is made up of sixteen papers devoted to literary works greatly heterogeneous in nature. The section starts with the revealing essay by Dr. José Antonio Álvarez Amorós, entitled “A Reappraisal of Henry James’s Ideas on Theatre and Drama”, where he studies the strange love-hate relationship between Henry James and the dramatic genre, with a thorough interpretation and distinction between the notions of “theatre” and “drama”, following James himself. This paper is followed by “¿Autobiografía o puro cuento? (Re)construcción de la identidad chicana en *Caramelo*, de Sandra Cisneros”, by Dra. María Antonia Álvarez; “Aventuras y respuestas: las pequeñas revistas americanas de poesía: 1970-2000”, by Dr. Manuel Brito; “Roman Shakespeare and the Elizabethan View of the Roman Empire”, by Dr. Marta Cerezo Moreno; “*The Old Manor House* and *A Simple Story*”:

A Harsh Lesson on Women's Defencelessness", by Dr. Aída Díaz Bild; "From Physical to Personal Frontiers: Catharine Parr Traill's 'Pioneer Woman' Redefined in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*", by Dr. Gretchen Dobrott; "Elegías y anti-elegías: el caso de Death de John Clare, o una expectativa frustrada", by Dr. Fernando Galván; "Subverting the Master Narrative of Heroic Conquest: Thomas King's A Coyote Columbus Story (1992)", by Dr. Teresa Gibert; "Miguel de Unamuno y Graham Greene: coincidencia en torno a los cuidados de la fe", by Dr. Santiago J. Henríquez Jiménez; "El teatro de Hugo Whitemore: un naturalismo innecesario", by Dr. José Mateo Martínez; "'Softened by Tenderness?': sentimiento y ambigüedad en la obra de Frances Sheridan y Mary Wollstonecraft", by Dr. Isabel Medrano Vicario; "'The Castalian Liquor': goce y mitificación del vino canario en la literatura inglesa", by Dr. Tomás Monterrey; "La España decimonónica vista por un inglés", by Dr. Catalina Montes; "Vínculos y ausencias del padre en la literatura postcolonial angloindia", by Dr. Juan Ignacio Oliva; and "Times of War and Peace: Sequels and Phobias in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*", by Dr. Lina Sierra Ayala. The section ends with the enthralling "124 Is Haunted. The Ghost Story as 'Ghost Text' in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", by Dr. Justine Tally, who explores Toni Morrison's *Beloved* within the context of Afro-american folklore, Freud's theories, the philosophical, spiritual and scientific ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the stylistic figures used by writers of the same generation of the great age of ghost stories, especially Mary Wilkins Freeman.

Unlike the two lengthy initial sections, the two that follow are visibly brief, with only three papers each. The first of them, the third section in body of the book, is devoted to "Translation", and starts with a paper by Dr. Francisco Fernández and Dr. Ana B. Fernández Guerra, entitled "Protocolos de pensamiento en voz alta y traducción: la elección adecuada del léxico". The authors deal with an innovative topic, since their analysis, following the most recent studies in Psycholinguistics, is based on the idea that approaching translation as a product does not really help towards understanding the mental processes translators follow as they work. This is followed by a paper by Dr. Juan J. Lanero on a religious topic, entitled "Las traducciones bíblicas de Coverdale: finalidad religiosa y proceso editor". The section finishes with a hot topic nowadays, with which Dr. Isabel Soto deals in her "Englishing the Spanish, or Fleeing the Mother Tongue". Dr. Soto approaches translation as an activity bringing together two linguistic and cultural systems, and includes the English and Spanish versions of two short stories by Vicente Soto.

The fourth section, "History and Culture of English-Speaking countries", also contains three papers: the first one, by Dr. Luz Arroyo Vázquez, offers an account of the important contribution by two women, Frances Perkins and Hillary Clinton, in two different ages, to social affairs, to healthcare, and thus to the reform of social laws in the United States, in a paper aptly entitled "Frances Perkins y Hillary Rodham Clinton: su contribución a la mejora de la legislación social estadounidense". A similar topic, that of women in politics, is approached by Dr. Antonia Sagrado Santos in her "An Excepcional First Lady and her Role in Politics in the 20th Century: Eleanor Roosevelt". Finally, the last paper in this section, in clear contrast with the two previous studies, is "The Land of Saints and Scholars", by Dr. Patricia Trainor de la Cruz, who explains why Ireland is known under such name, and attributes it to the role it played in the preservation of Christianity after the fall of the Roman Empire in the 5th century.

The book closes with a *Tabula gratulatoria*, which shows again the esteem and respect towards Dr. Alba felt by many of her colleagues who have not been able to participate in this volume, but have wished to pay a small tribute by having their names included at the end.

In general, it appears difficult to make any suggestion which might have contributed to improving this work, especially given the content of the contributions, all of them of a great quality. However, we feel it important to make a few remarks which we have mentioned above. For instance, this volume contains papers in English and in Spanish in a fairly random way, perhaps because this has been left at the author's choice. In our opinion, this gives the book a slightly disorganized appearance. It might seem that, within the sphere of English studies, it might be better if the papers had been published in the language which is not only the object of study, but also the lingua franca *par excellence*, which might also contribute to a greater dissemination of the work abroad. Also, a greater coherence might have been reached by a similar number of papers of each of the four sections, or perhaps through a reorganization under different headings allowing for more similar numbers. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that in a volume of this nature, where each author pays tribute to a person by contributing a paper on their specialized field of study, it is not easy to find parallelisms between the sections. It is, therefore, a volume one might describe as plural and heterogeneous, but also a coherent one, since all the papers are related to English studies, the field where Dr. Alba worked, and hence its *raison d'être* and its consistency as a whole.

Finally, it must be said that the work shows the esteem and warm feelings which Dr Alba has aroused in numerous academics and colleagues during her prolonged academic career. Therefore, this book seems to us a fair sign of recognition in order to pay tribute to a person who has devoted her whole life and work to English studies.

**Gerardo Rodríguez Salas. 2009. *Katherine Mansfield: el posmodernismo incipiente de una modernista renegada*. Madrid: Editorial Verbum. 280pp.**

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Criticism on Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and James Joyce has swayed between modernism and postmodernism. Monographs on Woolf's and James' postmodernism abound, yet no such book on Mansfield has ever been published despite the large number of articles and book chapters devoted to the topic. Following in the footsteps of Pamela L. Caughie's *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism: literature in quest and question of itself* (1991), Rodríguez-Salas fills part of a scholarly gap by discussing Mansfield's work in light of seminal concepts in postmodern theory such as "the split subject", "intertextuality", "irony", "parody" and "pastiche."

The book is divided into four main chapters and a substantial introduction on modernism and postmodernism which sets the theoretical background for Rodríguez-Salas' analysis. There is a chronology at the beginning of the introduction which locates Mansfield's writing within the modernism/postmodernism debates. Then, the four chapters are organized by theoretical concepts and combine in-depth research, wide reading and grasp on contemporary theory both on postmodernism and on Mansfield criticism. The internal structure of the chapters demonstrates coherent methodology and thematic development. First, the author

provides an insight into the various definitions of the concept under discussion. Then, the term is considered under Mansfield's lens and finally, case studies of Mansfield's works are provided to demonstrate Rodríguez-Salas' theses. The author quotes extensively from Mansfield and deals with a variety of materials from different sources.

The chapter "El sujeto escindido" develops upon Ihab Hassan's idea of "indeterminance" and the ongoing ontological debate on the identity of the individual as applied to the postmodern subject. Rodríguez-Salas examines the concept of the split subject first in Mansfield's autobiographical writings (letters, diaries...) and then in four main short stories: "The Daughters of the Late Colonel", "The Garden Party", "Je Ne Parle Pas Français" and "A Married Man's Story". Contrary to the Cartesian duality mind-body, the subject in these stories is examined under the perspective of fragmentation, "como una ficción y la idea de performatividad, puesto que tanto la autora como sus personajes construyen constantemente sus personalidades como si estuviesen actuando en una obra de teatro." (29).

Next considered are the ideas of "language", "dogmatism" and "subversive strategies". Silence and paraliterarity intertwine to understand the three concepts under the paradigms of postmodernism. In chapter two, Rodríguez-Salas focuses his analysis on seven short stories: "Weak Heart", "The Doll's House", "The Daughters of the Late Colonel", "The Garden Party", "Je Ne Parle Pas Français", "Miss Brill" and "A Married Man's Story". Language and Silence are active subjects in the creation of reality. The two entities are examined by Rodríguez-Salas as tools, in Audre Lorde's words to "dismantle the master's house"; to dismantle a dictatorial and patriarchal system which conceals its individuals.

The book's third chapter centres on intertextuality. Mansfield's intertextuality is analysed in "A Fairy Tale", "In Summer" "The Green Tree: A Fairy Tale", "His Ideal", "Les Deux Étrangères", "Sun and Moon", "A Suburban Fairy Tale" "The Juniper Tree" and "The Tiredness of Rosabel". Anticipating contemporary works on the reception of fairy tales and classical mythology by women writers such as Carol Ann Duffy, for example, Mansfield rests on fairy tales to subvert orthodox models. The author shows acuity and insight as he discusses and understands the various sources—from Heraclitus to Mark Twain—for each story. Hutcheon, Genette and Bajtin among others provide the theoretical background for this chapter although the book is lacking in contemporary criticism on the reception of the classics, such as the recent *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (2008) by Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray.

Subversion is again the centre of chapter four. "Irony", "Parody" and "Pastiche" are the headings under which the following works are examined: "Taking the Veil", "Violet", "Pictures". Together with language and silence, the three concepts discussed throughout become the third essential tool for Mansfield to rewrite Western literature under a feminine lens. Finally, in his summing-up chapter, Rodríguez-Salas argues how marginality is culled as the vertical thread which strengthens the intertexture of horizontal threads that are the postmodern concepts examined throughout the book. Marginality is the evidence for locating Mansfield's writing within the strong and oppositional postmodernism defined by Patricia Waugh, Stephen Best and Douglas Kellner.

Deep knowledge of documentary evidence abounds in Rodríguez-Salas' research yet a conclusion section to clarify and summarize the arguments is missing at the end of each chapter. The book is excellently researched and well written. Detailed evidence for each chapter provides an indispensable, well-informed guide to interpreting and contextualising the work of Katherine Mansfield within postmodernism, while providing a valuable

contribution to the debate in their own right. Scholars and students of English Literature and Theory will find this book to be an illuminating guide to understanding the complex writing of Katherine Mansfield in light of postmodernism.

**Coetzee, J.M (2007). *Diary of a Bad Year*. London. Harvill Secker. 231 pp.**

Reviewed by José Celestino Nóbrega Correia

2007 sees two new books on the market by 2003's Nobel Prize winner, J.M Coetzee. First to appear was *Inner Workings. Essays 2000 – 2005*, followed shortly after by *Diary of a Bad year*. While the former contains a collection of twenty-one critical essays on works by a wide range of internationally acclaimed authors which evidence Coetzee's personal penchant in reading matter, the latter is his second clear break with South Africa as theme and backdrop to his prose fiction. *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) may well have initiated this rupture with the turmoil of post-apartheid South Africa, showing unequivocal signs that the author was veering off an old beaten track to follow a new one. However, and even assuming he had already uprooted from his home country to seek new horizons in yet another country, albeit with a colonial past but less turbulent present than South Africa, *Elizabeth Costello* maintains strong ties with Africa. The severance with South Africa was definitive and a salient feature of *Slow Man* (2005) which opens with Paul Rayment's biking accident in the environs of Adelaide. All the same, the facetious fictional author, Elizabeth Costello, makes a perturbing appearance here too, unexpected and unannounced to the reader and the protagonist whose life she will disrupt.

*Diary of a Bad Year* is divided into two parts, the first made up of thirty-one Strong Opinions corresponding to a period between 12 September 2005 – 31 May 2006, while the second part, equally made up of opinions, though of a somewhat softer and more personal nature, goes by the name of Second Diary. In fact, the way the plot is structured, the entire two hundred and thirteen pages serve as a display window for Mr. C, Coetzee's new *alter ego*'s, opinions as well as those of an attractive Filipina neighbour turned personal typist, and Allan, her unscrupulous boyfriend. The spacing of each page is therefore carefully distributed so as to allow for the three characters to opine. Mr C's strong opinions occupy the first section and bulk of the space; for these are the content of the manuscript which he, as fictional an author as Elizabeth Costello, has hired the attractive, jobless Anya to type for him. It will consequently undergo translation and publication in Germany. Mr C overcomes Anya's initial reluctance to undertake the task by offering her rates per hour she could hardly turn down. In the second section of the page Mr C gives the reader a first person running commentary of his meetings with Anya, starting on the morning he first set eyes on her in the laundry room of the condominium towers where both reside, till she breaks off with Alan and relocates to another town. Finally a third section, again a first person account, offers Anya's side of the story concerning Mr C, who becomes a catalyst in the deterioration of her relationship with Alan, especially after he announces his plans to use Mr C's money to enrich himself. Mr C, whose attraction for her she has not been blind to from the outset, grows on her, but Alan resents her holding down a part-time job that he views as a lecherous old man's ruse to maintain her within his grasp, fuelling the erotic fantasies his decrepit body will never fulfil physically. In this third section, at times, Alan's point of view asserts itself over Anya's.

Each reader will have to decide on the most appropriate reading process to apply to these three discrete but closely interlinked narrative strips separated by lines. One may prefer to read Mr. C's strong opinions till the end of the chapter, return to the beginning to read the second section made up of Mr. C's thoughts till the end of the chapter, and repeat the process with Anya's thought and comments. On the other hand, all the strong opinions could be read individually and at random. The other two sections compile a flimsy narrative which would barely fill a booklet were they to be printed separately from the opinions. This narrative is meant to be read in chronological order, but occasionally contains references to one or other of the opinions that precede them above. *Diary of a Bad Year* does not abide by the traditional structure of a modern-day novel. It champions a wider freedom in the definition of the genre. The strong opinions are, after all, brief essays in disguise which speak of the ills of the real world, attached to a fictional narrative whose characters show no signs of concerning themselves with events beyond the confines of their claustrophobic lives. On two occasions Mr C ventures outside of the residential grounds to sit in a park, where he once coincides with Anya. Otherwise, Mr C and Anya's lives remain confined to the space they inhabit. The narrative deals with the intimate minutiae of life within the private space, whereas the opinions display an array of major issues in the world out there, deliberately kept out.

What is served as a structural novelty is only so in Coetzee's work; but not in that of Spanish language writers such as Carlos Fuentes or Julio Cortázar to whom this novel, unsuitable as the term may seem, might be considered a personal tribute. In *Diary of a Bad Year* the references to literature in Spanish are abundant: the Latin-Americans, Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges, as well as Javier Marías, a Spaniard Coetzee is reported to have publicly expressed admiration for. One cannot help observing the Spanish flavour of the nickname Anya makes up for Mr. C, Señor C, later cruelly revealed to Mr C by Anya's boyfriend, Alan, to stand for Senior Citizen. Coetzee may have been tempted to use *Don* instead of *Señor*, in allusion to *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, which he claims to have read at least twice. Mr C, whose first name could be John, is also referred to as Juan, perhaps Don Juan to Anya's Doña Inés.

Coetzee affords Mr C, and vicariously himself, the opportunity to air his views about the woes that afflict and shape the world today: the war in Irak, terrorism, the degradation of left-wing politics, the Guantanamo Bay prisoners, paedophilia, the disastrous consequences on scholarship of universities turned business concerns, and even avian influenza. The gruelling passage of cattle through the abattoir before ending up as the fare on our dinner plates is a Coetzee favourite and a topic he dealt with more extensively in *The Lives of Animals* (1999). The cold precision with which he juxtaposes human and animal flesh followed by a relation of the unnecessary stress and suffering to which cattle are submitted is not for the squeamish reader. Such is his power to wield words and evoke unsurfaced horror that even the convictions of the most hardened meat-eater will be unsettled.

From the outset of his novelistic career and throughout his fictional output Coetzee has portrayed sex consistently as a dry affair in which often two fleshless semblances of the human figure interlock in the prurient but pleasureless fulfilment of the biological imperative. In his third-person autobiographical *Youth* (2002) it seems logical for the protagonist to continue to make advances at a cousin's friend simply because "she does not seem to mind being kissed" (128); however there are no joyous recollections of the erotic encounter, which is marred by blood-stained sheets and towels produced by the loss of girl's virginity, a state that completely escaped his notice and that she had proffered no warning about. Shortly after

making love to Bev Shaw in *Disgrace* (1999), David Lurie reflects that “of their congress he can say at least say that he does his duty. Without passion but without distaste either”. Where does Bev, the woman, stand in relation to David, the man, in this act of mutually consented intercourse? “He, David Lurie, has been succoured, as a man is succoured by a woman”. (150) In *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee shows two sides of himself hitherto undisclosed: in the first place, a re-conciliation with sex, which explains the lightness of the sexual overtones he imbues Mr. C’s reveries about Anya with. Hers is a much more down-to-earth attitude which won’t allow her to lose sleep about the fact that Mr C has in all probability taken a pair of her panties. Despite there being nothing amiss with Alan’s sex-drive, Anya admits to deliberate, playful flirtations with Mr C. Her descriptions of her sex life with Alan, her explanation of why she’s not averse to cricket — “It’s nice to see white pants stretched tight across a young male bum” (27) — and the outrageous efforts at editing Mr. C’s opinions when to her mind they lack spiciness make for subtle comedy. Secondly, Coetzee reveals a facet of his talent invariably absent hitherto in an ever burgeoning list of titles: a sense of humour. Anya’s typed improvements of Mr. C’s original handwritten text provide an unwonted hilarity in Coetzee’s writing, for Anya cannot quite comprehend Mr C’s insistence on the flawless spelling of words in a text that will eventually end up being translated into and printed in German, not English. When Mr C checks up on her work, he encounters delightful distortions of his words: “According to Daniel Defoe, I read, the true-born Englishman hates “papers and papery”” or Brezhnev’s generals who sit “somewhere in the urinals” (25). As though seeking to poke fun at his notorious seriousness he has Anya putting him in his place, accusing his opinions of possessing a know-it-all tone.

In *Elizabeth Costello*, via the fictional author and alter ego, Coetzee imparted lessons. Calling a chapter a lesson, aside from an interesting literary game, implies that the author holds himself up as a master of sorts, a self-appointed guru, someone who holds the key to life’s dilemmas which he will share with his followers. Anya questions Mr C’s opinions because she deals with him *vis-à-vis*. More often than not these queries of hers take place in her mind and not in a direct confrontation. However, the relationship between the author and the reader is defined by the existence of the book itself. Once on paper and enclosed within two covers these views turn intractable and monolithic; their rigidity accepts no modification. An author shielding behind an *alter ego* cannot have an egregious error pointed out to him, or be hauled over the coals for affirmations some may view as little short of heresy. In *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee has once again availed himself of someone, Mr. C, to bear the brunt of critique should it be forthcoming. Neither query nor invalidation is possible when we lack someone to address as the genuine holder of these views. Knowing this, Coetzee permits Anya to dissent, play the devil’s advocate, but his condescension, softened by his sexual interest in her within the restrictions of the platonic, is as obvious as her philistinism. Unfortunately, Anya’s own opinions are neither quite as overwhelming nor do they embrace the candescent issues that interest intellectuals. In short, she is no match for him. She is unperturbed by Mr C’s ideas, written, she believes, by a literary eminence for politicians, and naturally, far removed from the concerns that determine her own life. As “students” at the receiving end of Elizabeth Costello’s master lectures, her “lessons”, we were not given a chance to lift a finger in order to ask a question. The process is repeated with Mr C’s strong written opinions, one-way utterances of personal and subjective conclusions that we can absorb in silent reading without having anyone to present our objections to. Anya can do what the reader cannot: act as interlocutor and debunk the inflexible conclusions of Mr.C’s reflections. What originally

comes across as an exploitative and intellectually unbalanced relationship between Mr C and Anya, is evened out by Anya's capacity to remain unintimidated by the intellectual chasm that separates them. Echoing the reader's own reticence, she asks herself, and the reader sides with her: "Who listens to my opinions?" Coetzee cleverly takes this into account and, before the reader can grow too exasperated, takes digs at himself, making him aware that the author, anticipating some objections, does not allow himself to be lionized beyond critique. Through Anya he shows us his awareness of the negative reaction the reader may be having to this one-sided affair: "Señor C has opinions about God, the universe and everything else. "He records his opinions (drone drone) which I dutifully type out (click click) and somewhere down the line the Germans buy his book and pore over it (ja ja)" (101)

Coetzee has endowed his Mr C — first initial J— with a biography closely resembling his own. Born in interior Cape Province, South Africa, but relocated to Cape Town, emigrated to Australia, the successful novelist and critic has hanging in his bedroom what Anya describes as "a framed scroll in some foreign language with his name in fancy lettering with lots of curlicues and a big red wax seal in the corner" (47) which we assume was picked up in Stockholm in 2003. One may be forgiven this assumption when Mr C lays claim to the authorship of novels bearing the same names as Coetzee's. But just when the most plausible next step is for the reader to be deceived by the similarities into justifying the autobiographical fallacy, Coetzee supplies the necessary differences to deter him from reaching hasty conclusions. Mr C is older, childless and lives alone. And so, while author and protagonist coincide in details like having undergone their schooling at the Marists, Mr C differs from Coetzee in that it was a sister he once had and not a brother. Curiously enough, Coetzee's female *alter ego*, Elizabeth Costello, too had a sister. The encounter of the two women on African soil, one worldly, the other spiritual and altruistic, makes for one of the more fascinating "lessons" in the eponymous novel. Should the strange language Anya sees on the scroll in the bedroom not be Swedish instead of Latin, or is it merely another of the author's many artifices in the cat-and-mouse games he plays with the reader? Games involving his family name and history were incorporated into his fiction in *Dusklands*; Paul Rayment the protagonist of *Slow Man* (2005) living in a suburb of Adelaide with a penchant for biking rings true of the author. Nonetheless the *alter egos* are growing so close to their creator that one wonders whether his next literary game will consist of creating one so identical to his own persona that we will no longer be able to distinguish his fictional work from the two autobiographical episodes he has already produced, namely, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* and *Youth*.

Judging by the essays to which Coetzee has turned his critical eye in *Inner Workings. Essays 2000 – 2005*, his choice of literature is very catholic. Among these essays is one on García Márquez's *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* and another on Philip Roth's *The Plot against America*. Mr C's relationship with Anya brings to mind a number of the world's top authors who portray in recent works the nostalgia for bygone days of greater sexual prowess. García Márquez's ninety-year old hero spends sleepless nights lying beside a fourteen-year-old virgin whose deflowering he is physically incapable of undertaking. Roth's protagonist of *Everyman* passes from a carefree, overactive sex life to one in which age and heart disease put a damper on any antics his still febrile imagination can conjure up at the sight of a young girl jogging by. A compatriot and ex-colleague of Coetzee's, André Brink, has, in *The Rights of Desire*, a disconcerted Ruben Oliver bemoaning the indignities imposed on a willing mind by a body in the rapid process of defunction: the ever-burning presence of desire never to

attain fulfilment! Brink makes a second attempt at the tandem of the older man with a waning libido and the desirable young woman in *Before I Forget*. In an effort to make up for his failure to possess Rachel, Chris Minaar makes us accompany him through his own personal, nostalgic journey to the past of women galore and an ever reliable member. In *Slow Man*, Paul Rayment's infatuation with his Croatian day nurse foreshadows the relationship between Anya and Mr C. Rayment's accident forces him into a situation of physical dependency which develops into emotional dependency. Mr C's contracting Anya's services is a deliberate act that springs from the desire she provokes in him, her presence too taking the guise of an obsession. Unlike Brink's Chris Minaar, Mr C does not regale us with a Don Juan-like account of his conquests. In fact, we learn surprisingly little of the erotic cavorting of his younger days. But Mr C reveals to us like none of the other protagonists of the fore-mentioned works the frustration of feeling the stirrings of youth in one's blood stymied by the failings of a decrepit body. "I seem to have grown obsessed, to the extent that a man can be called obsessed when the sexual urge has dwindled and there is only a hovering uncertainty about what he is actually after, what he actually expects the object of his infatuation to supply" (89).

A wordmonger of Coetzee's stature dispels any doubts that may prevail among those who cannot conceive of verbal fineries produced in what they persist in viewing as the backwater of the metropolis: the ex-colonies. He continues to whittle his sentences down to the most essential combination of subject predicate, discarding cumbersome modifiers. Having shed all excessive fat, the bone of Coetzee's prose has only the choicest lean adhering to it. He always produces the sensation that concepts acquire a more profound import thanks to the aptness of the words with which they have been posited. Similarly with Coetzee's strong opinions! Regardless of whether we, like Anaya, hesitate to agree with them, we are sucked into his train of thought by the preciseness and clarity of his exposition. Could anything less be expected from a literary master and Nobel Prize winner? The excellence of the prose, especially that employed in the opinions section, inclines the reader to conclude that *Diary of a Bad Year* is more than just yet another novel about an elderly gentleman fantasizing about a younger woman.

***Orígenes del feminismo: Textos ingleses de los siglos XVI al XVIII.* Ed. Lidia Taillefer De Haya Madrid: Narcea, 2008. 256 pp.**

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*Orígenes del feminismo* is a ground-breaking volume which compiles not only feminist names but also social and historical contexts that back up women's (re)actions throughout history. Focusing on the period that goes from the sixteenth up to the eighteenth century, its novelty lies on its intimate narrative tone, and on its bringing to scene original texts mostly unknown for the Spanish speaking public.

Once more, Lidia Taillefer offers us new insights into the world of Gender Studies; in this case, these are related to the origins of feminist thinking through the presentation of almost unknown documents written five hundreds years ago. This complete and reader-friendly volume collects texts written by women who were pioneers in the world of Linguistics and Education, and who vindicated their democratic rights by using their written force. Their

writings can be divided into two groups: those published in response to sexist pamphlets and to discriminating pieces included in some literary works of the time; and, on the other hand, fragments dealing with the description of daily routines in the authors' lives, which also illustrate the working and familial situation of those women. These collected writings are within each author's personal and professional spheres, what results in a more intimate and revealing work regarding the situation in which the protagonists lived at that time. The book satisfies the objectives initially set by the editor in her Introduction: these pages help to understand both the origin and the evolution of feminism as a liberating movement and as a way of living, particularly in seventeenth-century England.

Only a few years ago, Valle Ferrer (2006) and Fields (2003) also made public the most private and unknown side in the lives of some pioneering feminists with publications on outstanding women figures (*The Story of Luisa Capetillo, a Pioneer Puerto Rican Feminist* and *Katherine Dexter McCormick: pioneer for women's rights*, respectively). Their common focus on American social movements contrasts with that of Mabel Dove (2004), whose ground-breaking findings on West African feminism have been edited recently by Newell and Gadzekpo in an influential volume that sheds light on this research field not very much studied so far, and which is entitled *Selected Writings of a Pioneer West African Feminist*. Interestingly, these three volumes share the same intimate tone that is also present in Taillefer's. Suffragists and female rule-breakers had been previously presented as political figures, leading names at the beginnings of the twentieth century that laid the foundations of gender equality and freedom; in this case, the latest publications on the gender arena bring to light the most human and familiar face of those women, making their stories and principles closer to the reader and thus easier to be shared and understood.

However, in opposition to other works, Taillefer's publication offers not only new literary material but also the fact that all characters in the book are British feminists. Both in the United Kingdom and in the United States, and due to the existence of Women's Studies Departments since the second half of the twentieth century, the publications of writings in defense of women throughout history have been prolific. Nevertheless, former titles published in those countries mix writings of female authors from different nationalities and when they focus on English-speaking names, they tackle both English and American writers indistinctively. Dr. Taillefer's work presents, for the first time, a remarkable study that is specifically focused on British female authors.

A precise and readable manual like this offers wide margins, clarity in the printing, a manageable layout and covers that make the reading process very pleasant. As a visual support for a better understanding of the historical context, *Orígenes del feminismo* starts with a chronological chart that goes from 1558 up to 1799. This graph is a detailed collection of the main events that have influenced the feminist evolution in Europe, with special attention to France, England and Italy. Previous works on the field normally take us back no more than three centuries in time, being Mary Wollstonecraft always their starting point. In this case, we find fifteen other names (mind there are two authors in Chapter 3), most of them unknown for the Spanish public, who date back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The historical revision of this book begins in 1558, when Queen Elizabeth came to throne, being the following years a flourishing period regarding culture; she was into the world of translation and linguistics, and Taillefer, always interested in women's duties in the academic scene, brings into play this ancient figure as one of the first promoters of women's scholarly careers (for more information on pioneering female linguists in England see Taillefer's "Pioneras de

la lingüística inglesa: traductoras, educadoras y lingüistas” (2007b)). Some time later, as shown in the chart, Margaret T. Tyler published a preface of elegant feminist spirit in one of her translations focused on chivalry novels. Her example was followed by many other men and women in the subsequent years, establishing solid bases for powerful feminist trends in the future. Among them, the publication of political brochures stand out because of their demands in favour of women’s rights as an active answer to other misogynic leaflets published before; a relevant instance of this feminist reaction is Rachel Speght’s reply to the famous *The Arraignment of Women*, published by Joseph Swetnam in 1615.

On a more sociological basis, this chronological table also includes the dates of the wars that were fought at that time, and that deeply affected the course of history. The First and the Second English Civil Wars led the country into a decade of uncertainty and fear where there was little room and less political strength for the female fields of letters. During the Stuart monarchical restoration and in an atmosphere of increasing stability, some women’s publications fell into the hands of privileged high-class readers. The diffident tone of those texts (i.e. Margaret L. Cavendish *Female Orations*) bravely turned into a more confident voice claiming her rightful place in society (e.g. Mary Astell’s *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies Wherein a Method is offer’d for the Improvement of their Minds*). Taillefer’s historical route opens up to other European societies such as France, where the so-called *Cahiers de doléances* echoed the feminist contentions at the dawn of the French Revolution. Finally, this sequence of past events ends up with Mary Hays’s and Perdita’s writings in defense of the intellectual faculties of women, and for that purpose they make a general call to all men in Great Britain.

Each chapter is devoted to one of these women and to their writings, following a chronological order. All sections are headed by a historical introduction and a bibliography of each author; then, this contextualization is followed up by a translation of their writings, where they want to divulge their demands. The first to open this pioneering feminist saga is Margaret Tyrrell Tyler, a rather unknown character for the Spanish speaking reader in the history of feminism that Taillefer rescues from oblivion. Actually, Margaret Tyler carried out the first translation from Spanish of a chivalry romance, a literary genre that was considered frivolous and immoral by the Anglo-Saxon religious canons of the time. Tyler is followed by Rachel Speght, a contemporary poet who dared to publish texts with a religious and moralising intention, previously reserved to male hands.

In the same way, Priscilla Cotton and Mary Cole continued the moralistic aim of their predecessors, using in this case satiric texts with a strong sense of feminism and vindication. Their writings were addressed to both religious and laical men, being brave enough to even suggest a new interpretation of the Biblical word *woman*. Cotton and Cole belonged to the extremist religious sect of the Quakers, famous for encouraging the academic formation of women at the time. This religious denomination took in many other dames, whose names and works have been now brought to the feminist scene for the first time in Spain. Margaret Askew Fell Fox is another instance of feminine defense through a deep Quaker ideology, whose efforts and achievements were always veiled by those of her husband, George Fox, who was one of the founders of Quakerism. Augustus C. Bickley (2008: 1) analyses in depth the ideological grounds of this organisation in his recent book *George Fox and the Early Quakers*, where he defines this religious sect as a powerful “social movement”. In this case, Lidia Taillefer goes beyond Bickley’s historical appreciation of the issue and she offers the not

less important educating task of these religious congregations by introducing Margaret A. Fell's modern religious theories.

This female collection of seventeenth-century religious figures is balanced with outstanding personalities in the fields of Arts and Education. However, despite their innovative contributions to the learning of foreign languages and to other academic disciplines, most of historical studies have not given them the recognition they deserve. Margaret Lucas Cavendish —Duchess of Newcastle— and Bathsua Reynolds Makin are relevant instances of educated women who were into the world of Linguistics and Translation. Cavendish's aristocratic circles drove her into the learning of typical feminine accomplishments, something that aroused her instinct of equality between genders. On the other hand, Bathsua Reynolds enjoyed a profound scholarly atmosphere at home thanks to her father's professional position; Reynolds exchanged letters with the famous Dutch intellectual Anna von Schurman, also interested in educating women and in providing means to do so. It is in these personal letters included in this volume where we can find another innovative point of this publication: while former collections present different literary genres, preferably poetry, this work focuses on genres traditionally considered less canonical (letters, diaries, memoirs and essays), therefore exploring the topic of women rights in a more explicit and intimate way.

Surprisingly, the private tone found in these women's personal letters is so carefully dealt with that readers feel as part of that feminist struggle. In the second half of the book, we come up with Mary Astell, one of the touchstones in the history of English feminism. She strongly vindicated the fact that God had created all human beings equal, and her focus is not only religious but it also includes a groundbreaking humanistic point of view. Taillefer's voice, as well as the feminist vindication itself, turns more intimate with her and also with Elizabeth Carter and Lady Mary Montagu. In these cases, their feminine campaign was carried out in a more domestic sphere, and this is what these authors present: a collection of personal and familial letters which have been translated into Spanish for the first time. This priceless compilation immerses the reader in the female life of the eighteenth century in England, while its inward mood evidences once more the novelty of this book.

Spanish readers did not have access to the most popular feminist texts since the publication of Amalia Martín-Gamero's *Antología del feminismo*, issued back in 1975. However, and picking up the innovative character of the volume mentioned above, Taillefer treats many more new British authors from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whose writings are for the most part essays. On the other hand, in the field of literature in the English language, Clare Brant (2006) plunged us into the world of personal correspondence in her book *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture*. The volume *Orígenes del feminismo* comes then to combine a well-documented feminist research together with a pioneering lens to look closer at women at that time through their personal writings, what gives an engaging tone to the whole publication. Moreover, it brings to the reader's mind the unprecedented information offered in Taillefer's "Aportaciones de las mujeres a la lengua inglesa" (2007a), this time extended and contextualised in other historical fields, not only the linguistic one.

Some of the names that Taillefer presents in her publication belonged to the social feminist circle known as the Bluestockings, a group of middle-class and high-class women who openly vindicated their rights. In opposition to that personal attitude found in their correspondence, members of the circle and authors of great standing such as Catherine

Graham, Ann Radcliffe and Mary Wollstonecraft dared to go into political, historical and metaphysical issues, always viewed as male fields. This literary panorama completes the one depicted by Sylvia H. Myers in 1990, in her book *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England*. Only a few references of this feminist club have been published in Spain, and the most recent are also to be found in a volume published by Taillefer in 2007c, *Avanzando hacia la igualdad en las humanidades*.

*Orígenes del feminismo* assembles a significant amount of female names that made a living on their novels, poetry and essays, something unusual for women at that time. Ann Radcliffe, Mary Hays and Maria Edgeworth, among others, are some of the ones who achieved acknowledgement for their writings, either receiving a positive or a negative appraisal. Other feminine colleagues worked and published several translations of literary and political pieces from different European languages into English, something already explored by this author back in 1995 in her article “Traductoras inglesas del Renacimiento”, and that now seems to be the prelude to this book which starts in the sixteenth century. These representatives of the weaker sex bore out their intellectual superiority while challenging the patriarchal system of the age. In this new travel through the beginnings of feminism, Lidia Taillefer brilliantly offers sufficient evidence of the birth and growth of this sociological movement. Her data are supported by outstanding names and works in the field, such as the preface to the translation of Diego Ortúñez de Calahorra’s *Espejos de príncipes y caballeros*, and —closing this magnificent recollection— the famous letter written by Mary Darby Robinson (‘Perdita’) in 1799, preventing all English women from feminine mental subordination.

At the end of this manual, the author has included a detailed bibliography split up into two sections: primary sources on the one hand, and secondary references on the other. In other words, there we can find the citations of the original texts written in English together with secondary sources that have provided the necessary information to dash off the theoretical and historical parts that frame this feminist work; the general introduction at the beginning of the book and the authors’ individual presentations in each chapter guide the reader along this chronologically structured way through the rise of feminism.

This volume is definitely necessary for researchers concerned with Women’s Studies, since it shows some of the seeds that triggered the growth of the main British feminist movements that would spread throughout Europe. Most relevantly of all, this work is highly recommended for all those interested in this topic from any other perspective, paying attention to the most intimate side of the writings or to the public rebellions of women, with their pens as the main weapon. After reading this new and warm approach to the studies of gender, one wonders if we could enjoy a sequel with new feminist texts and disclosures from the last two centuries, offering again a refreshing view of the feminist tradition.

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