



Journal of Literary Education

n° 3 2020



Feminism and Gender in Literary Education



Journal of Literary Education

Issue 3 - 2020

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Editorial

- Editorial: Feminism and Gender in Literary Education 1-9
Tzina Kalogirou, Xavier Mínguez-López, Catalina Millán-Scheiding

Monograph

- Portraying Trans People in Children's and Young Adult Literature: Problems and Challenges 10-24
Catherine Butler
- Queerizando las Facultades de Educación: una escuela inclusiva es posible 25-43
Guillermo Soler
- Chasing Remarkable Lives: a Problematization of Empowerment Stories for Girls 44-61
Macarena Garcia-Gonzalez
- Breaking female stereotypes: Bianca Pitzorno's girls and the power of literature on gender socialization 62-79
Dalila Forni
- De bosques, sueños, galaxias y mares: poemas y narrativas para niños y adolescentes 80-92
Amarilis Hidalgo de Jesús
- Gender in Literature. Woman's Position from traditional to modern society 93-111
Theodora Menti, Christina Sideri
- La mujer y el personaje femenino en cuentos jordano-palestinos de tradición oral 112-136
Margarita Isabel Asensio Pastor

Miscellaneous

- Socio-cultural Positioning of Age Identities in Picturebooks 137-159
Johari Murray
- L'abito immaginato. Abbigliamento e identità nell'albo illustrato moderno 160-175
Claudia Pazzini
- Psychometric evaluation of recall and recognition tasks for the measurement of young spectators' theatrical memory 176-196
Alexia Papakosta, Konstantinos Mastrothanasis, Aphrodite Andreou, Ioanna Blouti



Journal of Literary Education

Editorial

Feminism and Gender in Literary Education

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One is not born a woman; one becomes one
Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949)

The starting point for the making of this current issue were some fundamental questions about the intersection of Feminist Criticism and Gender Theory with Education: What might it mean to read and teach literature through the prism of feminist criticism and/or gender theory? In which texts, ways and methods can we integrate a balanced gender approach into literary didactics? How and in which teaching approaches can we produce some powerful feminist readings of the literary texts, whether they are texts long established by tradition, or contemporary and multimodal ones, belonging to popular culture? And how can these concerns about feminism and gender be adequately addressed and embedded into the literature classroom? Although we knew that all the previous questions could not be effectively addressed in one single issue, we still envisaged a publication with insightful contributions to the overall theme of Feminism and Gender in Literary Education.

1. Teaching Literature with the lens of Feminist Criticism

According to Webster's New World Dictionary "in most Indo-European languages gender is not necessarily correlated with sex", that is to say, that "biological sex does not directly or even at

all generate the characteristics conventionally associated with it. Culture, society, history define gender, not nature” (Jehlen, 1995, p.263). In other words, the concept of gender has helped to highlight the fact that sexed identities can be a product of the socialisation process in any society. Not only does this mean that a child, from the moment they are born, has to learn how to fit into gender preconceptions about how males and females should be raised in societies, it also means that the people charged with the task of raising an infant already possess a set of preconceived ideas, expectations, and cultural preferences about how to raise that child in line with their biological gender and according to how boys and girls are supposed to be raised to fit in the society to which they belong. The successful socialization of every person usually comes with the respective development of certain masculine and feminine traits, characteristics that are used as a norm against which people are measured.

Feminist and post-feminist theories have had a crucial contribution to the articulation of gender identities from the perspective of women, and thus have also highlighted the overwhelmingly cultural character of gender and how ‘women’ and ‘femininity’ are not stable, easily defined categories. In fact, definitions of femininity have always been very much fragmented by age, class, and context in the past and throughout the centuries. Into early modern English for instance, as Higginbotham has shown (2013) the very word ‘girl’ was a gender-neutral term applied to both male and female children. In a similar vein, in contemporary Greek and more particularly in the Cretan dialect (spoken by the majority of the Cretan Greeks on the island of Crete) the word for the young boy is “kopélli” which literally means “girl”.

The interrogation of patriarchy and of patriarchal gender roles is one of the basic tenets of feminist criticism. Classic feminist studies, like Kate Millet’s (1970) or Luce Irigaray’s (1977), emphasized that women are phallically marked by men, their fathers, husbands, procurers, who, under the law of patriarchy have operated societies and dominated women, bearing various systems of oppression upon them. The ideologies that perpetuate or justify men’s position of power in societies can adequately be challenged through literature that invites readers to reject patriarchal ideology or to confront the stereotypes and prejudices about gender roles and the social position of women.

Another concept that feminists confronted was the “beauty myth” and the so-called temptation of woman to be “a beautiful object” (Steiner, 2001, p. xv). Martha Nausbaum has offered a systematic study on the objectification of women (1999), a complex notion however, that refers roughly to the practice of treating persons like objects and not as independent human beings with agency and their own needs and desires. The relation this myth has to the widely discussed

western concept of “beauty,” linked to metaphysical attributes and kindness (Tatarkiewicz, 2001, p. 153-178) illustrates many of the descriptions and depictions of female characters in traditional oral tales and general folklore.

According to Nussbaum, there are seven features involved in the idea of objectification: instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership, and denial of subjectivity. It might be for instance, a fruitful idea for fostering critical dialogue in the classroom to invite students to think of a heroine like Hamlet’s Ophelia as an objectified female character who is actually undergoing all the seven aspects of objectification throughout the play. Moreover, teachers can encourage students to be more vigilant every time they confront images of female bodies in films, advertisements and in the popular culture and to resist them since in these products female bodies are usually alienated from reality and have succumbed to the male gaze (Mulvey, 1989). We do not advocate to censor texts, especially the classic ones, but to help students understand the underlying values found in these texts, which can be part of a societal belief that is very much alive. On the other hand, besides highlighting the passivity projected by many princesses in fairy tales, it is also important to recover and disseminate alternative fairy tales with active female protagonists. Both views are important, the one that emphasises the traditional role of women and the other one, that emphasises the *forgotten* relevance of women: authors, protagonists, specific roles, etc. The point is students to become more adept at viewing texts, contexts and the world from different perspectives and to expand their repertoire of knowledge about how literature and culture have chosen to represent women and sexed individuals over the centuries. It is important for them to interrogate the roles that have been assigned to women, to challenge and to unsettle the sexual stereotypes, and to think critically about how the sexed bodies are represented and substantiated by literary language.

In the literary classroom context, feminist and gender-orientated criticisms have proved to be useful as an analytical tool for both students and teachers. They offer an interpretative angle for students to read and respond to literature, and to exercise their critical consciousness on matters not only related to gender and sexuality but also to closely related subjects such as power, oppression, privilege, exclusion, and freedom. It is important to point out the contribution of intersectionality (Davis 2008), showing that we cannot attend a single aspect of texts (such as gender) and neglect other important aspects (such as race, age, etc). For example, the following poems, which are very different from each other yet equally celebrated, can stimulate rich discussion in the classroom, prompting students to address issues of female subjectivity, women’s confinement and/or patriarchal oppression and the untamed expression of female imagination through embroidery, which is nevertheless a traditional female domestic

art, endowed in the poems with a startling emancipative power. The first one is Federico García Lorca's "La Monja Gitana" from *Romancero Gitano* (1928), the second is "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" (1951), a famous feminist poem by the poet and feminist advocator Adrienne Rich. By reading and discussing the poems, students can begin to feel and understand the subtleties of the poetic language and how it is used by poets to connote complex clusters of ideas around women and their suppression inside oppressive institutions like church and marriage. They can also brainstorm a list of the binary oppositions¹ embodied in the poems' imagery and create a nuanced representation of the female protagonist. An astonishing variety of binary opposed notions can be found and then scrutinized during the discussion.

*La Monja Gitana*²

Silencio de cal y mirto.
Malvas en las hierbas finas.
La monja borda alhelíes
sobre una tela pajiza.
Vuelan en la araña gris,
siete pájaros del prisma.
La iglesia gruñe a lo lejos
como un oso panza arriba.
¡Qué bien borda! ¡Con qué gracia!
Sobre la tela pajiza,
ella quisiera bordar
flores de su fantasía.
¡Qué girasol! ¡Qué magnolia
de lentejuelas y cintas!
¡Qué azafranes y qué lunas,
en el mantel de la misa!
Cinco toronjas se endulzan
en la cercana cocina.
Las cinco llagas de Cristo
cortadas en Almería.
Por los ojos de la monja
galopan dos caballistas.

¹ Binary opposition is a fundamental concept of Structuralism (Barry, 2002). Therefore, we may consider this activity for the classroom Structuralist in its justification.

² You can read an English translation in <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/la-monja-gitana-gypsy-nun.html>

Un rumor último y sordo
le despega la camisa,
y al mirar nubes y montes
en las yertas lejanías,
se quiebra su corazón
de azúcar y yerbaluisa.
¡Oh!, qué llanura empinada
con veinte soles arriba.
¡Qué ríos puestos de pie
vislumbra su fantasía!
Pero sigue con sus flores,
mientras que de pie, en la brisa,
la luz juega el ajedrez
alto de la celosía. (Lorca,2009², p.112).

Aunt Jennifer's Tigers

Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty.

Aunt Jennifer's finger fluttering through her wool
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand.

When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid.(Rich, 2016, p. 4)

2. Gender in Literature Classroom

Gender theory constitutes a major and multifarious area within the field of literary and cultural studies. According to Catharine R. Stimpson “simply speaking, gender is a way of classifying living things and languages, of sorting them into groups: feminine and masculine. However, no system of classification is ever simple” (1986, p.1). In fact, the perspective of gender resists the binary

conception of identity (male vs female) and embraces the destabilization of it, emphasizing the ‘trans-sectional’ and ‘transcultural’ (Jamison Green, Ashley Hoskin et al., 2019, p.44-45) nature of identities and challenging cisnormativity. According to Scott (cited by Aughterson and Grant-Ferguson, 2020, p.3):

‘Gender’ opened a whole set of analytic questions about how and under what conditions different roles and functions had been defined for each sex; how the very meanings of the categories ‘man’ and ‘woman’ varied according to time, context, and place; how regulatory norms of sexual department were created and enforced; how issues of power and rights played into definitions of masculinity and femininity; how symbolic structures affected the lives and practices of ordinary people; how sexual identities were forged within and against social prescriptions. Gender provided a way of investigating the specific forms taken by the social organization of sexual difference;[...].

In a similar perspective, Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990) famously declared that gender is a socially and culturally constructed category, and that gender identity is rather the product of performance, not a natural quality, essentially divided into binary categories. It is, after all, a culturally specific concept inherently “inflected by bodily, cultural, sexual and racial discourses and experiences” (Aughterson and Grant-Ferguson, 2020, p. 5). She criticised the traditional feminism since it represented, from her perspective, this reductionist binary position based in a heterosexuality that put aside the “sexual dissidences”. Her contributions introduced the queer theory into the debate.

As mentioned, gender is inextricably involved with power, culture, language, and with themes and debates of key interest for the contemporary literature classroom. The ways we chose, read and teach texts in the classroom, the policies and the conventions within which we operate, the acts of reading and interpretation we perform, the point of views we adopt in order to deal with our students’ emerging sexuality, are all issues inevitably related to gender. Nevertheless, contemporary critical practices have kept putting into question and interrogating the sexual rhetoric we use in literary analysis (consider, for instance, when we describe certain rhymes as ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’), or the gendered position within which we ascribe certain qualities to texts (e.g. books that are labelled as appealing to boys or girls). In today’s classroom, the discussion about gender is more relevant than ever. The advancement of the LGBTQ+ and the #MeToo movement, the ongoing discussion on queer performativity, the increase in publication of children’s books with queer characters, the international appeal of drag-queens television shows, are some of the factors that have contributed to an increasing awareness of gender

identities, especially among young people. Adolescents and young individuals are more conscious today of the complexity to define their identity and more open to negotiate a multiplicity of identities that can be connected to a variety of contexts and situations.

We live on a planet that has been undergoing an unprecedented identity crisis with a unique potential for (re)construction. The fight for equality, inclusion and tolerance is open and ongoing and it is undoubtedly true that there are many more battles that have not been won yet, in societies and in education. However, literature has always proved –and we humbly believe still is– a *via regia* for fostering tolerance among people and for celebrating the diverse, multicultural and multilingual character of our societies. By embracing more critical discourses on gender, feminism, and sexuality inclusively in the literature classroom, students have more chances to become critical readers and responsible citizens, as well as to welcome other people into their lives regardless of their gender, the colour of their skin, or who the persons they choose to love and cherish might be.

3. This issue

In this issue, we have tried to offer a selection of texts dealing with these different sides of gender and literary education.

We open the volume with Catherine Butler’s reflection on trans literature for children and young people. She highlights in her article “Portraying Trans People in Children’s and Young Adult Literature: Problems and Challenges” the increase of books with trans contents but also the contradictions and misleadings of authors when dealing with this subject.

Guillermo Soler’s contribution “Queerizando las Facultades de Educación: hacia una escuela inclusiva” (Queering Education Faculties, towards an inclusive school) offers research about the inclusion of a queer perspective in the classroom. He analyses the potential and the issues teachers can find trying to address queer theory with students.

Macarena García-González reviews the issues that a new phenomenon, such as the proliferation of books about prominent women in history, can entail. “Chasing Remarkable Lives: a Problematization of Empowerment Stories for Girls” develops a criticism for the reading of publications like *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* or books focused on gender issues.

“Breaking female stereotypes: Bianca Pitzorno’s girls and the power of literature on gender socialization”, written by Dalila Forni, delves deep into the works of famous Italian writer Bianca Pitzorno. Her books very often inquire into the very primal concept of gender by putting characters in paradoxical positions.

Amarilis Hidalgo de Jesús' "De bosques, sueños, galaxias y mares: poemas y narrativas para niños y adolescentes" (Of Forests, Dreams, Galaxies, and Seas: Poems and Narratives for Children and Adolescents) analyses some works written by Latin American women. Gender identity is connected to national or ethnic identities which are displayed through the writing process.

The article by Theodora Menti and Christina Sideri "Gender in Literature. Woman's Position from traditional to modern society" includes some suggestions for dealing with the position of women through history. Some classic and contemporary texts are analysed, enlightening their uses in the classroom.

"La mujer y el personaje femenino en cuentos jordano-palestinos de tradición oral" (Women and female characters in Jordan-Palestinian tales from the oral tradition), by Margarita Isabel Asensio Pastor, also offers research about women's position but, in this case, in the context of Jordan-Palestinian traditional tales. This ethnographic investigation sheds light on some stereotypes about Muslim cultures that can be very useful for teachers.

In the miscellaneous section, we can find Johari Murray's "Socio-cultural Positioning of Age Identities in Picturebooks," which offers research about the representation of age in two picturebooks with African American main characters. The intersection between age and identity produces an interesting field to be explored.

Claudia Pazzini's essay "L'abito immaginato. Abbigliamento e identità nell'albo illustrato moderno" (The imaginary dress. Clothing and identity in modern children's picture books) analyses a set of picturebooks where dresses are especially relevant since they help to study the construction of different identities.

Finally, "Psychometric evaluation of recall and recognition tasks for the measurement of young spectators' theatrical memory", written by Alexia Papakosta, Konstantinos Mastrothanasis, Aphrodite Andreou and Ioanna Blouti presents a quantitative research about young audiences' memory in theatre plays.

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How to cite this paper:

Kalogirou, T., Mínguez-López, X. & Millan, C. (2020). Editorial: Feminism and Gender in Literary Education. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 1-9. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.19203

The Portrayal of Trans People in Books for Children and Young Adults

La representación de las personas trans en libros para la infancia
y juventud

La representació de les persones trans en llibres per a infants i
joves

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Abstract

The last twenty years have seen a proliferation of books for young people dealing with trans experience and issues. This paper charts the emergence of transgender fiction for children and young adults, and its development during that period. It will address several questions arising from this phenomenon. How does the representation of trans experience differ when presented for a child readership rather than adults, and for younger children rather than adolescents? How are the representations of gender identity, gender expression and sexuality affected by considerations of audience? What are the tropes (or clichés) of trans fiction, and how have they changed? Whose points of view do the stories represent? Does it matter whether their authors are themselves trans? Is it more possible today than twenty years ago to assume some knowledge in child readers, or must every story “start from scratch”?

There is no single answer to any of these questions, but the article will note some of the trends discernible over a range of texts published in English since the start of the century, and describe some of the challenges in writing texts about trans* experience in the future.

Keywords: Children’s and Youth Literature, Trans Literature, LGTBI Literature

Resumen

Durante los últimos veinte años se ha podido observar una proliferación de libros para jóvenes que tratan la experiencia trans i sus problemas. Este artículo muestra la aparición de la ficción transgénero para un público infantil y juvenil y su desarrollo durante este periodo. Aborda diferentes cuestiones que surgen en este fenómeno. ¿En qué se diferencia la representación de la experiencia trans cuando se presenta para un lector infantil más que para adultos, y para lectores y lectoras más jóvenes que los y las adolescentes? ¿De qué manera afecta a las representaciones de identidad de género, expresión de género y sexualidad respecto a las consideraciones sobre la audiencia? ¿Cuáles son los tropos (o clichés) de la ficción trans y cómo han cambiado? ¿Qué puntos de vista representan las historias? ¿Cuánto importa el hecho de que los autores o autoras sean también trans? ¿Es más posible que se asuman algunos conocimientos en lectores infantiles que hace veinte años o cada historia empieza desde cero?

No hay una única respuesta a cada una de estas preguntas, pero el artículo apuntará algunas de las tendencias que se pueden discernir sobre una gama de textos publicados en inglés desde principio de siglo y describirá algunos de los retos de escribir textos sobre la experiencia trans en el futuro.

Palabras clave: Literatura infantil, literature trans, literatura LGTBI

Resum

Durant els darrers vint anys s'ha vist una proliferació de llibres per a joves que tracten l'experiència trans i els seus problemes. Aquest article mostra l'aparició de la ficció transgènere per a infants i joves i el seu desenvolupament durant aquest període. Aborda diferents qüestions que sorgeixen d'aquest fenomen. Com divergeix la representació de l'experiència trans quan es presenta per a un lector infant més que per a adults, i per a lectors i lectores més joves que els i les adolescents? De quina manera afecta les representacions d'identitat de gènere, expressió de gènere i sexualitat respecte de les consideracions sobre l'audiència? Quins són els trops (o clixés) de la ficció trans i com han canviat? Quins punts de vista representen les històries? Quant importa el fet que els autors o autores siguin també trans? És més possible que avui dia s'assumisquen alguns coneixements en lectors infants que fa vint anys o cada història comença des de zero?

No hi ha una resposta única a cadascuna d'aquestes qüestions, però l'article apuntarà algunes de les tendències discernibles sobre un gama de textos publicats en anglés des del començament de segle i descriurà alguns dels reptes d'escriure textos sobre l'experiència trans en el futur.

Paraules clau: Literatura infantil i juvenil, literatura Trans, Literatura LGTBI

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is simple – to acknowledge the emergence of transgender fiction for children and young adults in the last fifteen years, and to give a brief description of its features and development, in the context of changing attitudes to trans people and trans experience. A chronological list of some of these books is presented in Table 1. Not long ago it would have been feasible to make a complete list, but the proliferation of books on this subject means that this is no longer the case. I will provide an overview of this emerging genre, but will discuss in rather more detail four of the examples: David Walliams' *The Boy in the Dress* (2008), Lisa Williamson's *The Art of Being Normal* (2015) John Boyne's *My Brother's Name is Jessica* (2019), and Jessica Love's *Julián is a Mermaid* (2018). Although all these are Anglophone texts, the last, in particular, offers an opportunity to consider the ways in which themes linguistic, racial and gender diversity can be combined in a Hispanic context.

Most of these books feature children or teens who either transition before the book begins, or contemplate doing so over the course of the story. However, language in this area is always shifting, and the umbrella term “trans” is also – rightly or wrongly – sometimes used to refer to people who are genderqueer or non-binary, to crossdressers, to drag kings and queens, and to intersex people, amongst others, and I have included a few such titles on the table above (they are shaded), in part to highlight the issue of definition. For example, Alyssa Brugman’s *Alex as Well* (2013) is narrated by an intersex girl whose parents decided to raise her as a boy. Intersex people sometimes worry that their identities tend to be conflated in the public mind with trans ones, but there is certainly a degree of overlap in experience in Alex’s wish to be accepted as the girl she knows herself to be and her parents’ attempts to force her to be male. Many trans books describe the difficulty of acquiring hormones to aid physical transition, but in Alex’s case it is her parents who are secretly dosing her with testosterone in order to force her into the shape and gender they have decreed.

[...] language in this area is always shifting, and the umbrella term “trans” is also – rightly or wrongly – sometimes used to refer to people who are genderqueer or non-binary, to crossdressers, to drag kings and queens, and to intersex people, amongst others, and I have included a few such titles on the table above [...], in part to highlight the issue of definition

David Levithan’s 2003 novel, *Boy Meets Boy*, is ambiguous in a different way. This book, set in an American town where queerness of various kinds is widely accepted, features a character known as Infinite Darlene, who dresses flamboyantly and uses female pronouns but who is also the quarterback on the school football team. Infinite Darlene is referred to by the novel’s gay narrator as a drag queen, but appears to have undergone a full social transition:

I don’t know when Infinite Darlene and I first became friends. Perhaps it was back when she was still Daryl Heisenberg, but that’s not very likely. Few of us can remember what Daryl Heisenberg was like, since Infinite Darlene consumed him so completely (Levithan, 2003, p. 26).

As someone who adopts the style choices and mannerisms of a drag queen but lives the life of a transitioned trans girl, Infinite Darlene remains an undefined figure – which may or may not have been Levithan’s intention.

More problematic is David Walliams’ middle-grade novel, *The Boy in the Dress* (2008). Walliams’s protagonist, Dennis, loves female fashion and enjoys dressing (and passing) as a girl, but is clear that he is nevertheless a boy. Dennis’s male gender identity is repeatedly stressed (it

is after all *The Boy in the Dress*), and he is delighted when his rather neglectful father finally scoops him onto his shoulders in triumph after the big match, crying “This is my son! This is my boy!” (Walliams, 2008, p. 200). In the book’s final pages Dennis explains his interest in crossdressing simply as “fun” and a kind of “playing,” comparing it to dressing up as Spiderman (pp. 223, 224). When his Sikh friend, Darvesh, lets him try on his turban, he remarks: “On you it’s just a hat. It’s just dressing up, innit?” (p. 93). The parallel with Dennis’s cross-dressing and what that says – or does not say – about his gender, is plain: he does not consider female presentation a fundamental part of his identity. Moreover, at the story’s conclusion almost every male character dresses in female clothes, from Dennis’s football teammates, who do so to express solidarity with him, to his uptight teacher (a secret crossdresser (p. 216)), to the local shopkeeper, who borrows his wife’s sari in order to “fool” Dennis as Dennis had fooled him (p. 225). This is crossdressing as carnivalesque rather than as an expression of gender identity.

Walliams, a lifelong crossdresser, is of course free to write about the experience of a cross-dressing boy, but I find two things troubling here. The first is the book’s inconsistency of tone. Walliams has described the novel as “a wish fulfilment fantasy” (Walliams, 2014); when Dennis sees himself dressed as a girl, the narrator comments: “He felt so happy he wanted to dance. Sometimes you feel things so deeply that words aren’t enough” (pp. 102-103). This and similar passages imply a far more profound engagement than trying on a Spiderman costume as a game, and it makes the novel’s adoption of the language of play and of deception seem inadequate. It is a tension that the book never acknowledges, let alone resolves.

The second problem concerns the experience of the trans children who read Walliams’ book. And read it they will: although *The Boy in the Dress* was a first novel, Walliams was already a television celebrity, known especially as one of the co-stars of the sketch show, *Little Britain* (from 2003). His book was illustrated by long-term Roald Dahl collaborator and former Children’s Laureate Quentin Blake, and launched to some fanfare. Since its publication Walliams has become one of the bestselling children’s writers in the United Kingdom. Indeed, in 2014 a TV version of *The Boy in the Dress* was broadcast on BBC1, the BBC’s main channel, the day after Christmas. For any trans viewers hoping to see their experience represented positively, the book’s promise is sadly undercut by its conclusion, in which Dennis’s crossdressing is presented as no more than a temporary holiday from maleness – or even as an attempt to fool others into thinking he is something he is not. Cisgender (that is, non-trans) readers with no direct experience of trans issues are likely to use this well-known book as a template for understanding transgender children they may encounter. As the teenage trans girl in Lisa Williamson’s *The Art of Being Normal* (2015) confesses nervously: “I’m still a boy in a dress to most people; David

Piper in drag” (Williamson, 2015, p. 337). The popularity of a book called *The Boy in the Dress* is unlikely to help that situation.

In this respect, Walliams’s book provides a strong contrast with Marcus Ewert and Rex Ray’s

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picturebook *10,000 Dresses* (2009). This too is a story of a child who wants to wear dresses and is interested in fashion, who is told sternly by parents and brother that dresses aren’t for boys, and who (like Dennis) eventually finds an encouraging and enabling older girl. However, Ewert and Ray’s story uses female pronouns throughout for young Bailey, does not feel the need to excuse or explain her behaviour, and certainly does not dismiss it as deception or play. This is Walliams’ story done right – at least for a transgender child readership. Jessica Walton’s *Introducing Teddy* (2016) is another successful

example, aimed at younger children, which uses the device of making the trans character a teddy bear. This allows questions of anatomy to be bracketed – who gets to decide on the sex of a teddy bear, after all? – and gender identity to be placed centre-stage.

Julián, the young Afro-Latinx protagonist in Jessica Love’s *Julián is a Mermaid* (2018), is another ambiguous figure. Julián is not identified as a trans child, but his love of mermaids is shared by many trans girls (perhaps because mermaids’ lack of obvious genitalia makes fantasising about them a non-dysphoric experience), to the extent that the United Kingdom’s best-known charity for young trans people and their families is named Mermaids. Travelling on the subway with his *abuela*, Julián is excited to see three women in mermaid costumes on the same train. He fantasises about a mermaid existence, and later declares himself to be a mermaid too, constructing a costume from fronds, flowers and a net curtain, and putting on lipstick. Rather than reprove Julián, his *abuela* offers one of her own necklaces to complete the look, and encourages him to participate in the local mermaid parade (the setting is not identified, but appears to be New York’s Coney Island).

Julián is a Mermaid was widely praised on publication, not only because of its positive portrayal of gender self-expression and exploration, but for its unmarked Afro-Latinx setting. Julián and his *abuela* use Spanish words, but these are not marked as “exotic” by being italicised; like Julián himself, they are simply accepted as part of the rich variety of the city’s life. It is a pity, then, that the British edition of the book entirely erases its Latin context. In Britain, Julián loses his

diacritic to become Julian, while his *abuela* changes to Nana. Instead of addressing him as *mijo* (Love, 2018a, n.p.) she calls him “honey” (Love, 2018b, n.p.) – a choice suggesting that the British publisher has implicitly retained the American setting of the book (“honey” is not a common endearment in the United Kingdom), and has chosen to excise only its Latin elements. Such changes would be disappointing in any context, but are especially so in a book clearly intended as a celebration of diversity of all kinds, whether in gender, race or language.

Author	Title	Date	Country of Publication	Age	Narrator	Genre
David Levithan	<i>Boy Meets Boy</i>	2003	USA	YA	1(C)	Novel
Julie Anne Peters	<i>Luna</i>	2004	USA	YA	1(C)	Novel
Ellen Wittlinger	<i>Parrotfish</i>	2007	USA	YA	1(T)	Novel
David Walliams	<i>The Boy in the Dress</i>	2008	UK	MG	3	Novel
Brian Katcher	<i>Almost Perfect</i>	2009	USA	YA	1(C)	Novel
Marcus Ewert and Rex Ray	<i>10,000 Dresses</i>	2009	USA	ER	3	Picture book
Cris Beam	<i>I am J</i>	2011	USA	YA	3	Novel
Kirstin Cronn-Mills	<i>Beautiful Music for Ugly Children</i>	2012	USA	YA	1(T)	Novel
Rachel Gold	<i>Being Emily</i>	2012	USA	YA	1(T)	Novel
Alyssa Brugman	<i>Alex as Well</i>	2013	Australia	YA	1(T/Inters ex)	Novel
David Levithan	<i>Two Boys Kissing</i>	2013	USA	YA	1(C)	Novel
Ami Polonsky	<i>Gracefully Grayson</i>	2014	USA	MG	1(T)	Novel
Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings	<i>I am Jazz</i>	2014	USA	ER	1(T)	Picture book
Katie Rain Hill	<i>Rethinking Normal</i>	2014	USA	YA	1(T)	Memoi r
Arin Andrews	<i>Some Assembly Required</i>	2014	USA	YA	1(T)	Memoi r
Simon Packham	<i>Only We Know</i>	2015	UK	YA	1(T)	Novel
Lisa Williamson	<i>The Art of Being Normal</i>	2015	UK	YA	1(T)	Novel
Alex Gino	<i>George</i>	2015	USA	MG	3	Novel
Jessica Walton	<i>Introducing Teddy</i>	2016	UK/USA	ER	3	Picture Book
Jessica Love	<i>Julián is a Mermaid</i>	2018	USA	ER	3	Picture book
John Boyne	<i>My Brother's Name is Jessica</i>	2019	UK	MG	1(C)	Novel

Key:
Age: YA= young adult, MG= middle grade, ER=Early Reader
Narrator: 1(T) = first-person trans narrator, 1 (C) = first-person cisgender narrator, 3 = third-person narrator.

Table 1. Children’s and Young Adult Books with Trans Content

2. Readership

Who are the readers of these books? There is no one answer: rather, these books address several overlapping groups. One consists of trans children and teens seeking representation of people like themselves. Isolation is a huge problem for trans children, especially if they live in a family or town where the dominant attitude towards trans people is hostile. The internet has been transformative in terms of providing access to both community and information, and in large cities there may be some face-to-face support, but it can be very helpful for trans children to know that they are not alone. Books can help provide this reassurance.

This group of readers intersects with others. One comprises trans children and teens seeking factual information. Many of these books include, either in the narratives themselves or in author's notes, information about resources, helplines, medical protocols, hormones, surgical interventions and so on. Since there is a lot of misinformation on these matters, not least on the internet, it is important to make reliable information available. Also relevant are trans children and teens seeking reassurance about their own futures. For people contemplating a difficult course of action – transition, or coming out to others or themselves – literature can be both a useful resource and a powerful way of imagining a possible future.

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For such readers, literature has a difficult line to tread. The challenges involved in being trans need to be acknowledged, but people also need reassurance that things can get better, and a vision of what a better life might actually look like. Consequently, most of these books end on a relatively positive note. Imagining a positive future can also be a first step to making it happen. As David Levithan wrote in connection with *Boy Meets Boy* (2003), a book set in a town where the existence of a sizable gay and queer population is simply an accepted fact:

You don't have to write a book in order to reflect reality. You can also write a book to create reality. Most teen readers, I found, understood this, because they were living their lives to create reality, not merely reflect it. (Levithan, 2013a)

In addition to trans readers, books may be sought out by cisgender friends, relations, and socially concerned people in general, seeking to understand the nature of trans experience. Numerically, indeed, this is likely to be the largest group, and for a commercial publisher it cannot be ignored. This does mean that to an extent every book has to start from first principles, and can take no

knowledge or experience for granted. Every trans book is a “teaching moment” – and while this may be a valuable function, it does make it hard to move trans narratives on from the tropes of coming out, disclosure to cisgender characters, and so on. As understanding of trans issues increases over time, it is to be hoped that this will change, but meanwhile the educative function of such literature for cisgender readers is in partial tension with its usefulness to trans readers, and perhaps also with its potential literary quality – because, of course, the final group of readers consists of anyone who wishes to read a good book. Trans literature is, in fact, literature – and all the aesthetic canons concerning plot, dialogue, style, and so on, apply to it as much as to any other kind.

3. The Development of the Genre

Even in the short span of this genre’s life, the dominant trans narrative tropes have been evolving. In order to understand the trajectory of this development, an analogy with fiction and film about gay characters seems relevant. Stories featuring gay characters can be said to have gone through three overlapping stages:

1. The gay character is a tragic figure (not usually the protagonist). Sometimes the tragedy of the gay character will teach the straight protagonists important lessons about life and tolerance that they can take forward into their future.
2. A gay protagonist wins happiness after overcoming prejudice and other difficulties
3. One or more characters happen to be gay – but their sexuality is not the crux of the story

It should be stressed that the numbers one to three are developmental rather than chronological: it is possible for narratives of all three kinds

The narrative may be more or less sympathetic to the trans character, but that character’s ultimate function is to facilitate the emotional growth of a cisgender protagonist, and very often [...] their death conveniently clears the way for the protagonist to move on with their life.

to be published at the same time. With that proviso, I suggest that this trajectory transfers very well to trans narratives. Stage One trans narratives are still abundant in fiction, whether for children or adults. In adult fiction and film, the Stage One trans character’s story usually terminates in death. An example is Banana Yoshimoto’s breakout novella of 1988, *Kitchen*, or the 2015 film *The Danish Girl*, based on David Ebershoff’s 2000 novel of the same name. The narrative may be more or less sympathetic to the trans character, but that character’s ultimate

function is to facilitate the emotional growth of a cisgender protagonist, and very often (as,

notably, in *The Danish Girl*) their death conveniently clears the way for the protagonist to move on with their life.

Young adult and children's fiction have so far refrained from killing off major trans characters, but this trajectory is nonetheless familiar in a more attenuated form. An example is the American writer Julie Anne Peters's 2004 novel, *Luna*, the first unambiguously trans novel for young people. The story is narrated by the younger, cisgender sister of Luna, a trans girl. It is a broadly sympathetic narrative, but at the conclusion of the novel, Luna is forced from the family home to start a new life with a new identity in a different city. This is, in effect, a symbolic death – although it was once also the path once recommended by psychiatrists in the USA to people transitioning, the assumption being that society would never tolerate a person known to be trans.

Luna stands at the beginning of the trans YA genre, but Brian Katcher's 2009 *Almost Perfect* is still a Stage One book, which ends with the transgender character hospitalized by a transphobic attack, then moving to a new city without any kind of support, and even deciding to detransition. More recently still, John Boyne's problematically titled children's book, *My Brother's Name is Jessica*, published in 2019, presents a very similar trajectory. The story is told by Jessica's younger brother, who is unable to accept that his adored elder brother Jason has transitioned. Their politician parents are still more unaccepting, and Jessica leaves home to stay with a more tolerant relative. In the book's climactic scene, when their mother's political ambitions seem likely to be ruined by the scandal of having (and then rejecting) a trans child, Jessica turns up at a press conference dressed as Jason, with several day's growth of beard. Effectively, she detransitions, albeit temporarily, to spare the blushes of her family.

One can only speculate as to whether Boyne, who is gay, would have written a book in which the central gay character decides to be straight at the end, and turns up with a girl on his arm; or whether a book in which a gay character decides to become straight would have won a Stonewall Book Award from the American Library Association, as Katcher's did. That books such as these are still being written, published and sometimes acclaimed as supportive of trans people, is some measure of how far literature in this area still has to go.

Stage One books are still very much with us. Stage Three books, in which a major character's being trans is just part of the landscape of the fiction, have yet to make a significant appearance. Even characters whose experience is relatively optimal, such as Jazz in *I am Jazz* (2014) and Avery in *Two Boys Kissing* (2013), who enjoy parental support and access to medical care, still have to cope with difficult issues that are presented as central to the story. Jazz Jennings, for example,

was for a time banned from playing soccer and forced to use the boys' toilet; Avery too worries about using public toilets and is concerned how his romantic partner will react to being told of his trans status.

Most trans-related books fall squarely into Stage Two. They do not end in tragedy, but much of their action centres on the practical and mental challenges involved in being trans. These include body dysphoria; access to medical care; the practicalities of hormones, surgery, binders, prosthetics, and so on; secrecy and coming out; rejection and/or acceptance by family, partners, friends, school; prejudice and bullying; accessing sex-specific facilities (such as toilets) and organizations (refuges, sports teams); and self-harm and suicidal thoughts. These are the standard fare of Stage Two novels, the plots of which typically chart the negotiation of such obstacles in the context of a life otherwise presented as relatively mundane.

Lisa Williamson's *The Art of Being Normal* can stand as a representative example of Stage Two fiction. It has two first-person narrators: David (later Kate), and Leo. Williamson creates a plausible school setting and story, but the book feels fairly schematic. David and Leo between them are clearly designed to cover as many of the issues I have listed as possible. One is a trans girl, the other a trans boy; one is just beginning to contemplate coming out, the other has already transitioned. Over the course of the book both work to overcome their own fears and the resistance of those around them, and the conclusion combines optimism with realistic restraint. Readers will pick up much information about puberty blockers, binders and the requirement for two years' "real life experience" which is part of the medical gatekeeping regime for trans people in the United Kingdom. The book navigates this terrain quite realistically, and is clearly well researched: in short, it is a book that potentially fulfils many of the functions of trans literature identified earlier in this article. To judge (as one rough metric) by the many positive reviews on Amazon and GoodReads, it has clearly found an audience, too.

The Art of Being Normal has some problematic aspects, however – neither by any means unique to this book. One relates to the way the trans characters are positioned as "other" by the plot structure. When mentioning that Leo was a trans boy, I might have added "Spoiler alert!" because this fact is not revealed until almost 200 pages in, well over halfway through the novel. In fact, it is revealed twice: first when he tells the girl he likes – much to her shock – and then again when he takes off his shirt in front of David, revealing a binder across his chest – much to David's shock. In both cases, the moment signals the climactic end of the chapter.

Plot twists are an intoxicating narrative device, but in a book such as this they can also be a way of subjecting trans people to an othering cis gaze. The moment of cognitive dissonance when the physical reality of a trans body and cisnormative expectations about what bodies *should* be clash is both objectifying and dangerous. The *locus classicus* is the scene in Neil Jordan's 1992 film, *The Crying Game*, in which the hero becomes intimate with the beautiful Dil. The camera follows his lustful gaze slowly down her body, only to stop short at a penis. The producer of *The Crying Game*, Stephen Woolley, has emphasised the importance of this shock moment to the film's success. Speaking on BBC Radio 4's *The Film Programme* in February 2017, he recalled:

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We started the campaign [not to reveal the "twist"] in the UK. I wrote a personal note to all the film critics when the film was released, and I think 99.9% of them kept it quiet... That twist became part of the reason the Americans flocked to see the film. At the height of its popularity in New York I used to slip into the back of cinemas, just for the moment, just for the revealing moment, because the audience would go crazy. ... Obviously, it did work as a sort of hook for the film. (*The Film Programme*, 2017)

In *The Crying Game*, that revealing moment is the trigger for violence and extended vomiting on the part of the cisgender main character. Vomit is also the reaction of the boy who narrates Katcher's *Almost Perfect* when he learns that the girl he made out with is trans: "On my hands and knees, I vomited all over the rubberized surface of the track" (102). Sam Waver, the narrator of *My Brother's Name is Jessica*, has a similar reaction to the discovery that Jessica's secret has got out: "I charged out of the room, leaving the sound of laughter behind me, racing towards the boys' toilets, where I flung myself inside a cubicle, locking the door just in time before I threw up the entire contents of my breakfast into the bowl" (50). Even Brian Griffin, the dog from the US cartoon, *Family Guy*, vomits for a full thirty seconds on discovering that he has slept with a trans woman (MacFarlane, 2010). Such scenes are toxic combinations of transphobia and homophobia: not only are trans women not seen as women, but the realization that they are "really" men, and that the heterosexual protagonist has therefore experienced same-sex attraction, is seen as a natural cue for extended vomiting.

The Art of Being Normal is nothing like that extreme. David's reaction on finding that Leo is trans is to say in a dazed voice: "You're a girl?". In real life it has often been the cue for assault and even murder (Bettcher, 2007). Nor is the law always the trans person's friend here. In recent years, several young British trans men have served time in jail and been put on the Sex Offenders Register because they did not disclose their trans status to their consensual partners (Sharpe, 2015). The violence seen in *The Crying Game* has often been replicated in real life, and the so-called "trans panic" defence has been seriously extended as mitigation for the murder of trans women (Woods et al., 2016).

Naturally, this is a sensitive issue for many trans people, and its transformation into an exoticizing narrative revelation calculated to shock and thrill cisgender readers is in my view hard to justify, no matter how effective a "twist" it provides. Williamson's novel is far from being the worst offender in this respect, however: it is, for example, far less exploitative than Simon

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Packham's *Only We Know* (2015), published the same year, which drops hints about a dark and perhaps criminal secret in the protagonist Lauren's past throughout the story, only to reveal the fact that she has transitioned and is trying to start a new life in a new school on page 220 of a 230-page book. If such a scene could be managed so as to shockingly expose, not the trans character's "real" sex, but rather the cisnormative prejudices and assumptions in play (rather like the revelation of Tyke Tiler's sex in Gene Kemp's 1977 classic, *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler*), it might have value. I have yet to see it written in that way.

My other main reservation about Williamson's novel concerns a question of omission, or perhaps of narrowness. *The Art of Being Normal's* transgender protagonists are both straight and gender-typical, which may lead a reader to identify gender identity with an adherence to conventional gender and sexual roles, perpetuating an unfortunate myth and doing scant justice to the variety of transgender experience. Contrast the character Avery in Levithan's *Two Boys Kissing*, a gay trans boy who likes to dye his hair pink:

I know, strange color choice, right? For a boy born as a girl who wants to be seen as a boy. But think about it—it just shows how arbitrary gender is. ... If you free yourself from all the stupid arbitrary shit that society controls us with, you feel more free, and if you feel more free, you can be happier. (Levithan, 2013b, pp. 65-66)

Williamson's book really is about the art of being normal – a normality pictured in very conventional terms. However, no one book can do everything, and there is beginning to be a rich enough ecosystem of books in this genre that it no longer needs to.

4. The Question of Authorship

Of the writers on the list at the beginning of this article, several fall outside heterosexual and cissexual norms – Alex Gino is genderqueer, Williams is a crossdresser, David Levithan and John Boyne are gay – but none of the fiction writers has actually transitioned. Only the three teenage authors, Jazz Jennings, Arin Andrews and Katie Rain Hill, are transsexual, and their books are all personal memoirs, the genre through which trans authors have traditionally presented their take on trans experience, when they have written at all.

Does the absence of transgender authors of transgender children's fiction matter? Some of the

There are of course dangers in cisgender authors writing about trans lives and ventriloquizing trans voices. The biggest is that of fetishizing trans people and appropriating their experience, something that the ubiquity of transphobic tropes in public discourse makes it hard to avoid.

authors listed in the table at the beginning of this article have a professional interest in the subject. Cris Beam was the author of an academic book on trans children (Beam, 2007) before she wrote *I am J*, and Lisa Williamson worked as an administrator at the Tavistock Clinic, which specializes in treating young trans people, before she wrote *The Art of Being Normal*. Most, though, are writers by profession. For them, part of the attraction of writing about trans experience no doubt lies in the framework it offers through which to explore questions about one's embodied and gendered condition, about the relationship between self-

perception and the perception of others, and about the various kinds of gender performance in which all of us are perpetually engaged. This in itself is unobjectionable, in my view. Empathy, imagination, and other kinds of experience can all be brought to the task by cisgender authors.

There are of course dangers in cisgender authors writing about trans lives and ventriloquizing trans voices. The biggest is that of fetishizing trans people and appropriating their experience, something that the ubiquity of transphobic tropes in public discourse makes it hard to avoid. It is remarkable, too, how few of these books make a sustained attempt to tackle what is perhaps most interesting and elusive aspect of being a gendered being: gender identity itself. We know that Lisa Williamson's David, for example, "feels like a girl," but not what this means, nor how it differs from or goes beyond body dysphoria and a preference for traditionally feminine activities and clothing. That, however, is a subject which may indeed require an author who has

experienced the dissonance of finding themselves embedded, and embodied, in the system of cultural, social and physical gender in a way that feels wrong – indeed unbearable – at the most fundamental level.

5. Conclusion

Even the partial list of novels, picturebooks and memoirs that I have mentioned in this article should be sufficient to give some indication of the increasing breadth and depth of literature on this topic available for children of every age group. I have been critical of various individual texts: misleading or partial information and objectifying plot tropes are all too common, and there continues to be a sense that, in order to be published in a world where general awareness of trans issues is still relatively minimal, every new venture requires a reinvention of the wheel. However, while the picture is not one of unimpeded progress, the general trajectory of books for and about trans children has been upwards, borne in large part on a gradually increasing tide of public understanding of trans issues in general. None of this progress is secure or uncontested, however, and the need for literature that creates, rather than merely reflecting, reality, as Levithan puts it, remains pressing.

Most of all, I would like to see trans authors to find a way to write about trans experience in fiction, in a way that is authentic without being narrowly confessional – that breaks beyond being an “issues”-driven book, into the third of the three stages I identified earlier; and speaks to trans experience from the inside. For all their various strengths, none of the books I have discussed here is that novel; but then, that novel has yet to be written.

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How to cite this paper:

Butler, C. (2020). The Portrayal of Trans People in Books for Children and Young Adults. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 11-24. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.15992

Queerizando las Facultades de Educación: una escuela inclusiva es posible

Queering Education Faculties: an inclusive school is possible

Queeritzant les Facultats d'Educació: una escola inclusiva és possible

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Extended abstract

This paper presents research that revolves around queer pedagogical methodologies, especially regarding language and literature teaching. It addresses the engagement with queer teaching methods implemented by Education Faculties both in the Anglo-Saxon world and in the Spanish context.

Following the premise that literature is able to transmit particular values, these analyses have experimented with proposals that include the use of LGBTQ literature, especially picture books. Using a qualitative design, the purpose of the study was to introduce children's literature that portrays LGBTQ characters and families to explore the perceptions of future teachers in the elementary classroom regarding queer culture, and the possibility of reading these picture books as instruments to interrupt heteronormativity and to tackle homophobia. It should be noted that this kind of interruption at the elementary level is often avoided, as it addresses sexual identity and it could be considered by some to be inappropriate for the elementary curriculum. The reality, however, is that sexual identity is included in early classrooms as heterosexuality: a single story of family and sexuality. Given the absence of inclusive and diversity practices that should have accompanied social policies, schools have in fact perpetuated the hostile and homophobic territory experienced by people who do not meet gender or sexuality expectations. Subsequently, a new model of queer pedagogy has emerged, demanding new proposals from schools at all levels: from curricular organisation to the types of readings pupils have access to.

Preservice teachers' personal beliefs appear to influence their avoidance of gender and sexuality topics in the classroom. These beliefs are often shaped by their own school and life experiences, personal beliefs, and societal attitudes. In the training of future teachers in the United States, the inclusion of affective-sexual orientation issues begins to emerge in the university plans for their preparation at the beginning of the new millennium. After the descriptive analysis of teacher training programs carried out by Todd Jennings and Gary Sherwin (2008), the results indicate that only 55.6% of the programs include these topics within the official curriculum and, when they appear, the topics remain isolated, with little support material and no professional practice. In their conclusions, they suggest that Primary Education Faculties programs can work to sustain homophobic and

heterosexist school cultures through the omission of affective-sexual orientation issues, despite the apparent commitment to prepare teachers in this sense. In some states of the USA some teachers have been fired because of controversies stemmed from introducing children's literature with LGBTQ themes in the classroom. These situations illustrate the potential of complicated school environments and present need for conversations in Primary Education Faculties in order to broach how and why teachers might select texts with controversial themes for classroom instruction.

Some teachers applied picture books including LGTBQ characters to build classrooms that were more respectful towards difference. They started with a simple premise: introducing the fact that same-sex people can love each other makes it possible to destabilise both heteronormative family notions, and the presumption that heteronormativity constitutes the organising principle of every society. Queer pedagogy through different investigations carried out in schools of education around the world (Blackburn and Carn, 2011; Cumming-Potvin and Martino, 2014; Kelly, 2015; Martino and Cumming-Potvin, 2011, 2014, 2016; Paiz, 2019; Steck, and Perry, 2017) presents some common points of view. First: the student body welcomes reading proposals that refer to sexualities or gender issues. Second: the faculty displays a greater degree of rejection towards these proposals. Third: some proposals indicate that the inclusion of readings in the daily practice does not seem sufficient, that additional intervention is necessary. In the Spanish academic environment in the last decade, different work has appeared on affective-sexual and gender diversity and education. Melani Penna Tosso (2012) completed a PhD where the absence of concrete aspects on the questions of sexualities and genders in teacher training is portrayed. In 2016, Stefano Barozzi published a thesis in which he presented an experience with teachers who take training courses at the university to expand their knowledge of LGBTQ issues. From the perspective of students, Ramírez's (2012) thesis has focused on addressing adolescent voices that deviate from the norm and Renovell (2017) analyses the attitudes of secondary school students towards affective-sexual and gender diversity.

In one of the most recent investigations, Buchanan, Tschida, Bellows and Shear (2019) used picture books displaying family diversity with future primary school teachers. In initial surveys, the participants showed an open predisposition to include LGTBQ families in their teaching practice. However, there was a change in attitude when the preservice teachers began to work directly with texts. Through the discussion groups and the final written responses, it was observed that a large majority was against including these albums in their classes. They outlined three main arguments: religious beliefs, personal beliefs and, finally, a fear of conflict.

The sample of the research presented in this article included students of the subject Didactics of Reading and Writing, within the Education Faculty of Alicante University during the fall semester (between September and October, 2018). A different text was read in the classroom per week, and this text would then be incorporated into discussion groups. Students analysed the texts' content, paying special attention to the representation of the LGBTQ community, but they also discussed the possible use of these texts in primary courses. The aim was firstly to critically assess and analyse illustrated albums with an LGTBQ presence and, secondly, to establish spaces for dialogue and discussion to raise awareness about the importance of working with these readings in Primary classrooms. Participants reported a range of positive responses to the texts presented. However, some of the participants anticipated conflict with their use in the classroom, due to religious beliefs or problems with families. A discussion of the findings also includes teachers' intentions to persevere in their future teaching activities related to LGBTQ topics by using children's literature. Language, sexuality and norms are recognized to be rooted in discourse and found in the daily life of primary school students, for this reason, this type of reading facilitates the questioning of the heteronormative model and allows to stop assuming that this model is the only valid one. The findings reflect the following: to build a school where all people feel included, respected and accepted, it is necessary to renew the readings in the classroom. One of the most innovative contributions around the debate on queer reading in class was the importance of having received

critical training when choosing these readings, an issue which numerous participants highlighted and which was one of the main objectives of this research.

As teacher educators, our proposal offers a significant space for preservice teachers to begin thinking about the new materials they can select to teach social studies content. However, we recognize the pervasive problem of LGBTQ issues as being largely absent in teacher education courses (Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010), especially at the elementary level and, specifically, in elementary social studies. If affective-sexual and gender diversity were explicitly included in the official curriculum from the first year of the degree in a transversal way -that is, if we queer the Faculty of Education-, we anticipate this rejection would decrease progressively in each course. We suggest transforming the priorities in the programs of the Faculties of Education to train faculty so that they are able to generate spaces where preservice teachers explore their beliefs, investigate teaching materials and understand the need to address controversial issues in the classroom. Course experiences like the ones described here are essential to creating elementary classroom spaces that recognize gender, affective or sexual differences and work to generate schools where our youth can recognize themselves and feel protected and safe. These objectives cannot be relocated to single class sessions or short activities in a separate course. The need to foster an environment in which teachers are recognized as allies of the LGBTQ community in public school classrooms cannot be ignored. The goal is to train the teachers of the future with tools to teach that diversity enriches all of us, it favours the lives of LGBTQ students and, in short, it contributes to building an inclusive school, a queer school.

Keywords: Queer pedagogy, LGBTQ, education, inclusive school

Resumen

El siguiente trabajo ofrece una revisión en torno a las prácticas pedagógicas especialmente en el área de lengua y literatura. Un recorrido sobre las propuestas llevadas a cabo en diferentes facultades de educación tanto en el ámbito anglosajón como en el contexto español. Bajo la premisa de que la literatura puede transmitir unos determinados valores, estas investigaciones han experimentado con propuestas de lecturas de temática LGBTQ. A continuación, muestra una investigación llevada a cabo en la Facultad de Educación de Alicante, en la asignatura de Didáctica de la Lectura y de la Escritura, cuyo propósito principal consistía en incluir estas lecturas diversas con el fin de concienciar a los y las futuras maestras de la importancia de abordar estos temas en el aula de primaria, valorando y analizando una serie de álbumes ilustrados y favoreciendo grupos de discusión en torno a estas obras y a su posible uso. En las conclusiones se puede observar cómo, a pesar de que todavía se manifiestan algunas voces en contra, la mayoría del alumnado muestra su receptividad a incluir en sus clases estos temas; además se muestra predispuesto a desarrollar un pensamiento crítico en torno a las obras y a la representación de la diversidad afectivo-sexual y de género en los textos.

Palabras clave: Pedagogía queer, LGBTQ, educación, escuela inclusiva

Resum

El següent treball ofereix una revisió al voltant de les pràctiques pedagògiques *queer*, especialment dins de l'àmbit de llengua i la literatura. Un recorregut sobre les propostes que s'han fet en diverses facultats d'educació tant en l'àmbit anglosaxó com en el context espanyol. Partint que la literatura pot transmetre uns valors determinants, aquestes investigacions han experimentat amb propostes de lectures de temàtica LGBTQ. A continuació, es mostra una investigació realitzada en la Facultat d'Educació d'Alacant, en l'assignatura de Didàctica de la Lectura i de l'Espectura, amb el propòsit principal d'incloure aquestes lectures diverses amb la finalitat de conscienciar als i les futures mestres de la importància d'afrontar aquests temes a l'aula de Primària, valorant i analitzant una sèrie d'àlbums il·lustrats i afavorint grups de discussió en torn a les obres i un hipotètic us. Les

conclusions assenyalen que, malgrat que encara es manifesten algunes veus en contra, la majoria de l'alumnat es mostra receptiu a incloure en la seua pràctica docent futura estos temes; a més, es mostra predisposat a desenvolupar un pensament crític al voltant de les obres i la representació de la diversitat afectiva, sexual i de gènere dels textos.

Paraules clau: Pedagogia queer, LGTBQ, educació, escola inclusiva

1. Introducció

A pesar de que vivimos en uno de los países más avanzados legalmente en los temas de derechos civiles para la gente LGTBQ, lo cierto es que estos avances legislativos no han ido acompañados de propuestas educativas que permitan ir educando a las próximas generaciones dentro de un marco de respeto e igualdad por las diferencias en torno a las sexualidades y los géneros. En las facultades de Educación resultan necesarias nuevas propuestas que permitan introducir en el aula temas con contenido LGTBQ. En este marco, desde el área de Lengua y literatura, se plantea la posibilidad de introducir textos que se alejen de la representación de la normatividad y del patriarcado, con el fin de propiciar en el alumnado la reflexión sobre el silencio en las escuelas ante este tema, así como facilitar el conocimiento de unos álbumes ilustrados que favorezcan el desarrollo de una práctica pedagógica queer. ¿A qué hace referencia este término anglosajón? La teoría queer traducida al castellano sin mucho éxito como torcida o marica, supone ejercer una mirada crítica en constante oposición a la normatividad: Queer frente a normal siempre, en palabras de una de sus más relevantes teóricas Judith Butler “normalizing the queer would be, after all, its sad finish” (1994, p.21). Una teoría que pretende demostrar la inexistencia de una sexualidad natural, cuestionando incluso el concepto de hombre y de mujer (Jagose, 1996). Por tanto, llevado a la pedagogía, o pedagogías en plural, como prefiere Mercedes Sánchez (2019), pretende enfrentarse a la dualidad normalidad/anormalidad, concienciar de las presiones que se ejercen sobre la diferencia en las aulas por no tener un determinado físico, por un color de

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piel, por cuestiones de clase y, sobre estas marginalidades aquellas personas que por cuestiones de género o de identidad sexual pueden incluso quedar doblemente rechazadas. Ese estigma denominado homofobia que implica el trato hostil generalizado, a nivel psicológico y social para aquellas personas que son percibidas como gais, lesbianas y bisexuales, también a aquellas que no mantienen el comportamiento que se espera a su sexo asignado por nacimiento (Bordillo, 2001).

Desde finales de los noventa, la mirada *queer* ha sido llevada a la educación, especialmente ha puesto su foco de atención en la formación de los docentes. Sin duda, uno de los lugares comunes para desarrollar esta nueva manera de entender la pedagogía ha sido desarrollada en las clases de lengua y literatura. Ya en 1997, Linda Eyre plantea a su alumnado de la Facultad de Educación una serie de lecturas críticas con el heterosexismo con el fin de empezar a concienciar a los futuros docentes de la importancia de este tema, unas lecturas adultas útiles para el alumnado universitario, no tanto para los niveles educativos inferiores. Centrándose en la formación del nuevo profesorado, entre 1993 y 1998, Arthur Lipkin (2002) impartió en la facultad de Educación de Harvard módulos para trabajar contenido gay y lésbico a través de textos. Por su parte, Janine Schall (Schall y Kauffmann, 2003) realizó una investigación con su alumnado, su trabajo consistía en realizar una búsqueda de información sobre la presencia de la diversidad afectivo-sexual y de género en las aulas, estas futuras y futuros docentes manifestaron dudas bien justificándose con la idea de que la infancia es una etapa demasiado temprana para hablar de educación, bien se excusaban en motivos religiosos para cuestionar estas prácticas...

Bien por el temor al conocimiento o bien por la falta de formación sobre cómo manejar las ideas, bien porque el currículum lo permite, el profesorado no produce acercamiento alguno a cuestiones LGBTQ en las aulas. Por tanto, se consolida un discurso heteronormativo a través prácticas escolares, tales como la selección de textos con un predominio absoluto de conductas heteronormativas, el planteamiento de un único modelo de familia, la enseñanza de la sexualidad con fines reproductivos, etc. (Meyer, 2007). Estas prácticas favorecen que las escuelas se conviertan en espacios que rechazan comportamientos o actitudes no normativas. "For homophobia in schools to lessen, teacher education programs must interrogate homophobia and the naturalization of heterosexuality. I have found the children's literature classroom to be a place where discussion of these issues can reach prospective elementary teachers" (Swartz, 2013, p. 52). Swartz (2003) plantea la opción de introducir las obras de literatura infantil de temática LGTB como ya se venía reclamando desde los primeros textos sobre pedagogía *queer* (Britzman, 1995; Jennings, 1994; Lynch, 2000; Sears, 1993; Sumara y

Davis, 1998), además de la literatura, incluye el visionado del documental *It's elementary talking about gay issues in school* (Cohen y Chasnoff, 1997).

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Estudiantes y docentes en ciernes reflexionaron a través de la escritura sobre la falta de oportunidades en las otras clases de examinar aspectos controvertidos, y se sintieron bien al conocerse exploradores de nuevas maneras de vivir y trabajar en las aulas. No faltaron voces que favorecieron la discusión sobre conceptos difíciles en torno a la sexualidad y el género, así como alrededor de la cultura heteronormativa impuesta. Como parte de la discusión se habló también del sistema binarista y la naturalización de la heterosexualidad. Con el trabajo de los textos, se llegó a la conclusión de que las clases de literatura pueden ser el lugar ideal para luchar contra los prejuicios sociales, incluyendo el heterosexismo y la homofobia. Unos prejuicios que permiten según Spurlin (2000) dar forma al poder, construir vectores de dominación que

oscurecen, hasta hacer desaparecer el deseo por el mismo sexo como eje significativo de la investigación pedagógica.

Denunciaba Rita M. Kissen (2002) que se han desarrollado programas de formación para maestros sobre racismo, sexismo, clasismo, etc. en cambio, se ha trabajado muy poco en implementar e integrar la diversidad afectivo-sexual y de género en los planes de estudio en la formación docente. Cuando no cabe duda de cuán necesaria resulta la formación del profesorado en este sentido (Miller, 1999, Penna Tosso 2012). En 2003, Moje y MuQaribu, publican "Literacy and sexual identity" donde se posicionan claramente a favor de un currículum *queer*. Más allá de ver textos o autores LGTBQ, defienden las interconexiones entre sexualidad, identidad y literatura. En este sentido, Blackburn y Buckley (2005), Killoran y Pendlton Jiménez (2007) y Nieto y Bode (2012) apuestan por un currículum *queer* que asuma la sexualidad como necesidad primaria que acompañe a todo el conocimiento, especialmente en el área de Lengua y Literatura pues permite a las y los estudiantes experimentar la otredad, su propio otro identitario, como el otro social.

Straut y Sapon-Shevin (2002) señalan que el profesorado debe conocer, como mínimo, el significado de algunos términos básicos como lesbiana, gay, bisexual o trans. En realidad, tres

ejes fundamentales deben ser atendidos si se pretende mejorar el sistema educativo: conocimiento, coraje y habilidades. El conocimiento con el que el profesorado debe contar consiste en manejar cierta información básica sobre el modo de vida de la gente LGTBQ en su propio entorno, sobre las familias homoparentales de su centro, así como cierta información sobre la importancia de la visibilidad del colectivo. Las y los docentes deben manifestar el coraje suficiente no solo para luchar contra la homofobia, sino también para responder ante posibles preguntas con claridad y naturalidad. Aunque parte del profesorado no se sienta cómodo integrando en el currículum contenidos LGTBQ puede, de igual modo, desarrollar las habilidades en su alumnado para ayudar a eliminar cualquier prejuicio que puedan albergar.

En la formación de los futuros docentes, en los planes universitarios para su preparación en Estados Unidos, empieza a aflorar la inclusión de temas de orientación afectivo-sexual a principios del nuevo milenio. Tras el análisis descriptivo realizado por Todd Jennings y Gary Sherwin (2008), los resultados señalan que tan solo el 55'6% de los programas incluyen estos temas dentro del currículum oficial, sin embargo, aunque aparezcan quedan aislados, con escaso material de apoyo y nula práctica profesional. En sus conclusiones, sugieren que los programas de las facultades de Educación Primaria pueden trabajar para sostener las culturas escolares homofóbicas y heterosexistas a través de la omisión de temas de orientación afectivo-sexual, a pesar del aparente compromiso para preparar a los maestros y maestras en este sentido. Señala Mayo que: "teacher educators are not always prepared to understand LGBTQ issues or may resist lessons about homophobia or sexual and gender minority issues when they are part of preserve teacher education" (2013, p.71). Incluso la intención de hacer un lugar seguro en las escuelas puede ser problemático, pues puede llevar implícito que se considere un riesgo la sexualidad, las dificultades por las diferentes identidades e incluso los intercambios lúdicos que trabajan en los límites de la normalidad.

No es suficiente con leer textos con personajes LGTBQ, es necesario generar la reflexión entre el futuro profesorado con el fin de que pueda ampliar la propia visión de su mundo y extenderla de este modo en sus clases. Junto a Bills, Hermann-Wilmarth (2010) continúa desarrollando su labor de formadora de docentes introduciendo en su alumnado estos textos y sus discusiones. Cuando este entiende que se les pregunta por cómo sus creencias o asunciones pueden afectar a otras personas, esto les abre un camino hacia la autoreflexión que les puede permitir ampliar su percepción. Dentro de una asignatura sobre literatura infantil introdujo un tema con presencia gay y lésbica, debían realizar una reflexión en torno a la lectura y compartirla en grupos de discusión. Tras el análisis de estas reuniones, la autora llega a una conclusión: es necesario tiempo y espacio. Más tiempo para la propia reflexión y la compartida, así como más

espacios de encuentro, de reflexión y de diálogo dado que todavía surgen voces entre sus estudiantes que muestran temor a trabajar con estos textos.

La pedagogía *queer* centrada en la formación docente continúa en el Oeste Australiano (Cumming-Potvin and Martino, 2014; Martino y Cumming-Potvin, 2011, 2014, 2016), en las pruebas de selección de maestras y maestros de Educación Primaria para empezar a trabajar se debía cumplir obligatoriamente con la elaboración de unidades didácticas para trabajar los diferentes modelos de familia utilizando textos literarios o virtuales como recursos pedagógicos. Para ello, a partir de una serie de álbumes ilustrados que incluían familias homoparentales las y los docentes en ciernes debían diseñar prácticas concretas de aula. El estudio se amplió e incluyó la experiencia de unos pocos docentes que fueron abastecidos con recursos específicos y compartieron su experiencia en el aula, así como de un grupo de ocho profesores de Ontario, con experiencia en la práctica inclusiva en el aula sobre amor y parentesco entre personas no (hetero)normativas. Las narrativas de las y los docentes pueden servir como herramientas para construir y, a su vez, descubrir la manera en la que las creencias y valores del profesorado influyen en su práctica docente (en términos de autorizar o permitir unas lecturas sobre otras, por ejemplo). Asimismo, propicia la reflexión en torno a los prejuicios y presunciones que rigen el conocimiento parcial de la homosexualidad.

En definitiva, las diferentes investigaciones (Blackburn y Carn, 2011; Cumming-Potvin y Martino, 2014; Kelly, 2015 Martino y Cumming-Potvin, 2011, 2014, 2016; Paiz, 2019, Steck, y Perry, 2017) coinciden en algunas conclusiones. Primero: el alumnado recibe de buen grado propuestas de lecturas que se hacen referencia a las sexualidades o a las cuestiones de género. Segundo: el profesorado manifiesta mayor grado de rechazo a estas propuestas, bien por miedo a posibles conflictos con las familias, bien por conflictos internos. Tercero: algunas propuestas señalan que no parece suficiente con la inclusión de las lecturas en la práctica diaria, que es necesaria una intervención más profunda con el apoyo de las administraciones gubernamentales para que desarrollen políticas de reconocimiento que explique los límites impuestos por la heterosexualidad obligatoria y la negación de la legitimidad del deseo del mismo sexo; sin embargo, otras defienden que ya solo la inclusión de las lecturas ofrece resultados significativos (Hermann-Wilmarth y Bills, 2010; Martino, 2009; Paiz, 2018).

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En una de las más recientes investigaciones, Buchanan, Tschida, Bellows y Shear (2019) utilizaron álbumes ilustrados donde se muestra la diversidad familiar con futuros docentes de primaria. En las encuestas iniciales mostraron una predisposición abierta a incluir a las familias LGBTQ en su práctica docente. No obstante, hubo un cambio de actitud cuando se empezó a trabajar directamente con los textos, a partir de los grupos de discusión y en las respuestas escritas finales se pudo observar que una amplia mayoría se posicionaba en contra de incluir estos álbumes en sus clases. Esbozaron tres argumentos principales: las creencias religiosas, las personales y, finalmente, el miedo a generar conflictos.

En el ámbito académico español de la última década han aparecido diferentes trabajos sobre la diversidad afectivo-sexual y de género y la educación. Melani Penna Tosso (2012) realiza una tesis doctoral donde se retrata la ausencia de aspectos concretos sobre las cuestiones de sexualidades y géneros en la formación docente. En el año 2016, Stefano Barozzi publica una tesis en la que plantea una experiencia con docentes que realizan cursos de formación en la universidad para ampliar su formación en torno a cuestiones LGBTQ. De docentes a estudiantes, la tesis de Ramírez (2012) se ha centrado en las atender las voces adolescentes que se alejan de la norma y Renovell (2017) analiza las actitudes del alumnado en Secundaria hacia la diversidad afectivo-sexual y de género, mientras que otros estudios giran en torno a la influencia de la heteronormatividad en la cultura (Carrera-Fernández, Cid-Fernández, Almedia, González-Fernández, Lameiras-Fernández, 2018).

Por su parte, desde la universidad de Cádiz, Begoña Sánchez-Torrejón (2017) denuncia la necesidad de *queerizar* la escuela a partir de los discursos del profesorado. En el ámbito autonómico, las universidades del País Valencià ofrecen cada vez más propuestas inclusivas: La universidad de Castellón Jaume I, cuenta con un proyecto de innovación educativa de la Facultad de Educación en la que Consol Aguilar Ródenas, además de sus publicaciones sobre la literatura infantil y juvenil de temática LGTB (2008) lleva a las aulas de los futuros docentes la diversidad afectivo-sexual y de género a través de la literatura infantil:

Nuestro propósito ha sido la implementación de la investigación proactiva de los y las estudiantes, como futuros maestros, cuestionando cómo sexualiza el sistema escolar desde la LIJ, y cómo se naturaliza el imaginario literario de la LIJ, para abordar los estereotipos que generan desigualdad y, así, poderlos combatir y transformar desde la igualdad, desde el compromiso, desde acciones educativas efectivas, ligadas a la inclusión de la diversidad sexual, a la defensa de los derechos humanos y a la formación de una ciudadanía crítica. Y podemos hacerlo desde el vínculo entre maestros, lectura y relaciones libres de violencia, incidiendo en la huella de la lectura

y de nuestra biografía lectora, ligadas al desarrollo de la competencia literaria desde la LIJ (Aguilar, 2017, p.7)

Desde València surgen propuestas como la de Oltra-Albiach y Pardo-Coy (2016, 2017) que inciden en la necesidad de incluir lecturas de temática LGTBQ en las aulas de Educación Infantil, partiendo de la formación de los y las docentes. Esta investigación se centra en el grado de Educación Primaria, en su último curso, a través de la asignatura de Didáctica de la Lengua y la Literatura. Durante el curso escolar 2018-9, la última sesión de la semana, se dedicó en parte a la lectura de un álbum ilustrado con representación diversa afectivo y sexualmente, así como de género con el fin de generar grupos de discusión entre el alumnado centrados en la necesidad de introducir la realidad LGTBQ en su práctica docente. Finalmente, en la última sesión se invitó al alumnado a reflexionar sobre la asignatura de manera general, así como la práctica docente, haciendo especial incidencia en las lecturas diversas.

La literatura puede ayudar a transformar el mundo, las lecturas que se realizan en la escuela deben ser elegidas con especial dedicación pues permiten transmitir y trabajar unos determinados valores, un pensamiento crítico (Llorens y Terol, 2015) que permitan desarrollar construir una ciudadanía consciente, competente y respetuosa con la diferencia. La capacidad empática de la persona lectora, la identificación con el personaje, facilita esta función de transmisión de valores a través de las emociones, miedos, conflictos... que despierta la literatura. Si en las facultades de educación, se lee y se trabaja con álbumes ilustrados LGTBQ se favorecerá un cambio de actitud en las y los futuros docentes cuya consecuencia se espera que sea un uso de este material en su futura práctica real.

El objetivo de esta investigación radica en la inclusión de lecturas LGTBQ en las clases de didáctica de lengua y literatura de la facultad de Educación, con el fin de concienciar a docentes en ciernes de la importancia de llevar la diversidad afectivo-sexual y de género a las aulas, así como de analizar sus posibles actitudes antes estos temas. Desde este planteamiento surgen los siguientes objetivos:

1. Valorar y analizar críticamente los álbumes ilustrados con presencia LGTBQ.
2. Establecer espacios de diálogo y discusión para concienciar sobre la importancia de trabajar con estas lecturas en las aulas de Primaria.

2. Método

2.1. Descripción del contexto y de los participantes

En la Facultad de Educación de la Universitat d'Alacant, dentro del grado de Educación Primaria, se incluye la asignatura Didáctica de la Lengua y la Literatura en el último curso. Como contenidos principales de la asignatura destacan la literatura infantil y juvenil, el álbum ilustrado, el cómic así como sus posibilidades didácticas tanto para la formación de la competencia lecto-literaria en el alumnado, como su capacidad para introducir otros temas o valores en el aula. En el curso escolar 2018-19 en dos grupos de tarde se realizó la presente investigación, el primer grupo (grupo 7) formado por 41 estudiantes y el siguiente por 51 (grupo 8); un total de 92 estudiantes, 36 chicos y 56 chicas. Sin embargo, dado que se trata de grupos vespertinos, la asistencia a las clases queda reducida considerablemente, alcanzándose una media de 25 alumnas y alumnos por grupo y por clase, con edades dispares que van desde los 21 años hasta los 45. El cuestionario final realizado el último día de clase fue contestado por un total de 15 chicas y 5 chicos en el grupo 7 y en el otro grupo, 13 chicas y 10 chicos.

Grupo			Frecuencia	Porcentaje	Porcentaje válido	Porcentaje acumulado
Grupo 7	Válido	Chicas	15	75,0	75,0	75,0
		Chicos	5	25,0	25,0	100,0
		Total	20	100,0	100,0	
Grupo 8	Válido	Chicas	13	47,6	47,6	47,6
		Chicos	10	43,4	43,4	100,0
		Total	23	100,0	100,0	
Total estudiantes	Válido	Chicas	28	65,1	65,1	65,1
		Chicos	15	34,9	34,9	100,0
		Total	43	100,0	100,0	

Tabla 1. Distribución del alumnado en el cuestionario final por Grupo y Género

Nota. La distribución por género entre grupos hace una suma total de 28 chicas y 15 chicos.

2.2. Instrumentos

Los instrumentos de recogida de información consistían en unos cuestionarios anónimos a final del curso, así como la observación directa del alumnado durante las sesiones dedicadas a la lectura de los álbumes de temática LGTBQ, poniendo el foco de atención en las actitudes y comentarios realizados durante y tras finalizar la lectura de los álbumes.

En cuanto a los álbumes ilustrados utilizados como elementos introductorios de las variables: lesbiana, gay, trans y homoparentalidad, pues se eligieron por mostrar la realidad diversa, pero

también en función a unos criterios artísticos, literarios y visuales siguiendo las pautas de Temple, Martínez, Yokota y Naylor (2006) que destacan como elementos fundamentales la capacidad de desarrollar la empatía en el o la lectora, que no sea moralizante en exceso, que sea creíble, con argumento convincente y palabras escogidas y literarias, que permitan ver el mundo desde otro punto de vista. Rasgos que convierten a la literatura en un poderoso elemento para combatir la homofobia, pues descubriendo o incluso sintiendo el miedo o el rechazo que sufren las personas no normativas se puede empezar a destruir los prejuicios. Un aspecto fundamental que deben cumplir estas historias pasa por mostrar el rechazo social que vive el colectivo LGBTQ en su vida diaria pues solo retratando la realidad se podrá empezar a cambiar, a evolucionar (Soler-Quílez, 2019). Para mostrar la realidad lésbica, se leyó *Titiritesa* (Quintiá y Quarello, 2007), para la realidad gay, *Rey y rey* (De Haan y Nijland, 2004), las madres de sus protagonistas no aceptan de buen grado su diferencia; con *Soy Jazz* (Herthel, J., Jennings, J. y McNicholas, 2015) se mostraba la visibilidad trans que implica, en su caso, cierto rechazo de sus compañeros y compañeras de escuela; *Aitor tiene dos mamás* (Mendieta y Piérola, 2006) muestra una anécdota de intolerancia que permite trabajar también las familias homoparentales en su cotidianeidad.

2.3. Procedimiento

Entre los meses de septiembre y octubre, la asignatura de Didáctica de la Lengua y la Literatura se imparte de manera continua todos los días con dos horas de clase. En el transcurso habitual de las sesiones se leen diferentes textos con el fin de que el alumnado conozca de primera mano una selección de lecturas para llevar al aula cuando sean docentes en activo. En la última sesión de cada semana, se procedió a la lectura de álbumes ilustrados con presencia LGBTQ. Tras la lectura, junto al análisis de la obra tanto por su calidad literaria como artística, se propiciaba una reflexión en grupo en torno a la necesidad de introducir este tipo de lecturas en su práctica diaria como herramientas para luchar contra el machismo y la homofobia. Por último, la última sesión del curso: se pidió al alumnado que contestara de manera anónima un cuestionario en el que se preguntaba por aspectos generales de la asignatura, por la práctica docente recibida en general, y en particular por las cuestiones LGBTQ.

3. Resultados

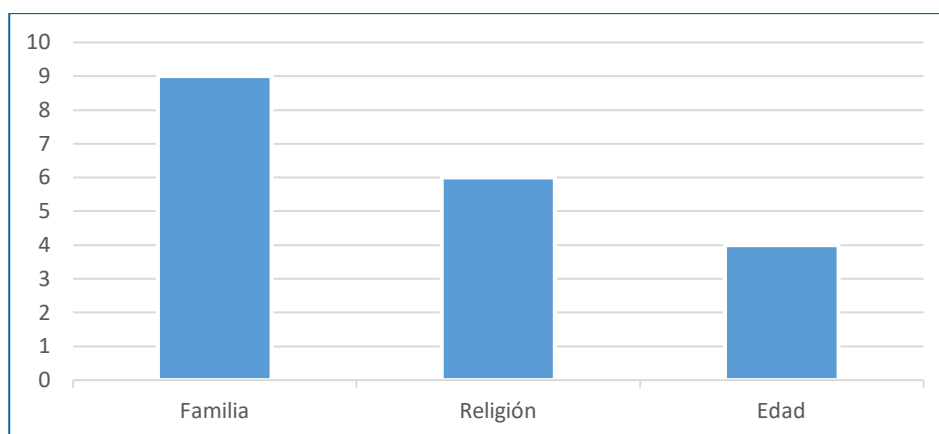
En las diferentes sesiones dedicadas a la lectura de álbumes ilustrados no (hetero)normativos, el alumnado en general mostraba una valoración positiva de los álbumes, sin embargo, cuando se les preguntaba sobre su posible introducción en la práctica docente la actitud cambiaba en algunos y algunas de los estudiantes. Tres fueron los ejes en torno a los cuales se verbalizaba

cierto grado de rechazo entre el alumnado: la familia, la edad y la religión. Las familias se

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convertían en el primer escudo, en la primera excusa para no llevar este tipo de cuentos a la escuela, es decir, el alumnado temía que la inclusión de estos temas en el aula pudiera conllevar problemas de rechazo o incluso demandas a la inspección educativa por parte de las familias. Entre los dos grupos hasta un total de 9 estudiantes diferentes defendieron este posicionamiento a lo largo de las sesiones dedicadas a la lectura debate. La cuestión de la sexualidad también aparece como un problema, pues se defendía la posición de que el alumnado de Primaria todavía es

demasiado pequeño para que aprendan este tipo de cuestiones, este argumento fue esgrimido en dos ocasiones por 4 estudiantes del grupo 7. La religión también aparece como un elemento perturbador, especialmente entre aquellas y aquellos estudiantes que se han formado en colegios religiosos y aseguraban no haber tenido ningún tipo de formación en este sentido y que tampoco la habían necesitado, entre ambos grupos 6 estudiantes manifestaron respuestas similares.



Gráfica 1. Ejes de rechazo a las lecturas inclusivas

Respecto a los resultados de los cuestionarios anónimos realizados a final de curso, se puede establecer dos posicionamientos respecto a la cuestión LGTBQ en ambos grupos. Del total de 43 estudiantes que contestaron el cuestionario final, un total de 13 escribieron respuestas que criticaban o cuestionaban la necesidad de incluir estos temas en las aulas de primaria, frente al

30 restante que mostraba unas respuestas favorables ante la posibilidad de usar los álbumes ilustrados como herramienta para poder hablar de diversidad en el aula.

Grupo total		Porcentaje
Favorables	30	69,8%
Desfavorables	13	30,2%

Tabla 2. Actitudes favorables y desfavorables sobre lecturas diversas en el aula

Por un lado, voces que explicitan el rechazo a estos contenidos, justificando por diversos motivos, véase el siguiente ejemplo que se basa en la pérdida de tiempo: “se ha perdido mucho tiempo en estas discusiones/debates en clase”. También se señala la necesidad de valorar otros temas, como el o la estudiante que reclamaba “variar los temas de LIJ” o algunos comentarios más en los que se acusaba al docente de haber planteado unas clases “algo radicales”. Otra respuesta en esta dirección señalaba que el discurso del profesor resultaba “demasiado centrado en los aspectos de la homosexualidad, cuando hay otros aspectos más importantes para tratar”. Como último testimonio destaca aquel que dice: “las clases se ha aprovechado para hablar siempre del feminismo o de la homosexualidad. Es un tema muy interesante, pero por desgracia los contenidos teóricos no tienen NADA que ver y son muy densos”.

En sentido contrario, también se han producido respuestas positivas en las que se alaba la necesidad de romper los prejuicios en la escuela: “rompe la norma hablando con total normalidad de temas tabúes en la educación”. También se destaca la oportunidad que han tenido de desarrollar su capacidad crítica: “enseñar a ser más críticos y traer y mostrar estos materiales tan útiles en el aula”, del mismo modo en que han podido descubrir la manera de introducir en el aula estos textos, así como de seleccionar tales lecturas: “es interesante ver estos cuentos en clase y aprender cómo trabajarlos, cuales sirven y cuáles no”. Por último, se pueden destacar algunas voces que ponen en evidencia la ausencia de estos temas en el devenir de su formación: “nunca nos habían dado la oportunidad de conocer la diversidad a través de los cuentos”. Unas voces que señalan como aspecto fundamental en su formación “ampliar nuestra visión con el material LGTB y feminista” o “la concienciación con el colectivo LGTB debería ser generalizada en todo el grado”

4. Discusión y conclusiones

A pesar de que todas y todos los estudiantes del grado reconocieron haber presenciado en su etapa escolar algún tipo de actitudes homófobas, una parte de la clase se sorprendió de la

propuesta de lectura. A través de esta práctica de pedagogía *queer* descubrieron que es

A través de esta práctica de pedagogía queer descubrieron que es importante construir un clima en el aula que permita a cada estudiante sentirse libre para expresarse o para actuar de un modo diferente sin que esto le convierta en objeto de burlas o de acoso

importante construir un clima en el aula que permita a cada estudiante sentirse libre para expresarse o para actuar de un modo diferente sin que esto le convierta en objeto de burlas o de acoso. Como se observa en la tabla 2, hasta un 69,8% del alumnado coincidía en que utilizar la literatura, especialmente los álbumes ilustrados leídos en las clases, les facilitaba la tarea de introducir en el aula la realidad LGTBQ. Es más, la mayoría tomó conciencia de la importancia de incluir en sus clases lecturas de esta temática para intentar reducir posibles situaciones de acoso escolar.

El segundo de los objetivos, que planteaba la necesidad de concienciar a las maestras y los maestros de las próximas generaciones sobre la importancia de trabajar la diversidad afectivo-sexual y de género en sus clases se ha cumplido. De hecho, algunas y algunos estudiantes se preguntaban sobre el motivo de la ausencia de estos temas en las diferentes asignaturas del grado, destacando la importancia que tendría una formación específica al respecto, un planteamiento que se ha reclamado desde hace ya varias décadas (Kissen, 2002; Miller, 1999; Penna Tosso, 2012; Straut y Sapon-Shevin, 2002). Sin embargo, la diversidad afectivo-sexual y de género y la escuela sigue siendo una de las tareas pendientes en el sistema educativo español en todos los niveles educativos incluyendo los grados de Educación. De ahí, que hasta un 30%, mantenga todavía vigentes argumentos en contra de llevar la realidad LGTBQ a las aulas de Primaria como la edad o la religión, aspectos que ya señalaban Schall y Kauffmann, en el año 2003 y que coinciden en parte con los resultados de Buchanan, Tschida, Bellows, y Shear (2019). El temor a una respuesta negativa de las familias también aparece como un elemento clave para evitar el uso de estas obras. El resultado de esta visión puede redundar en evitar o censurar un determinado libro por tratarse de temas controvertidos para familias o estudiantes. Si bien, no mostrar familias diversas en las lecturas puede evitar conflictos con determinadas familias más tradicionales, también se está negando a las familias diversas su reconocimiento y existencia.

En el devenir de las clases, algunas voces coincidían con Hermann-Wilmart y Bills (2010), Martino, (2009) o Paiz (2018) en que no solamente es necesario introducir este tipo de lecturas, sino que también se requiere propiciar la reflexión y el debate sobre la discriminación y el acoso entorno a las personas no normativas. No se cuestiona que tanto el lenguaje como la sexualidad y las normas están arraigados en el discurso y en la vida cotidiana del alumnado de primaria, por

este motivo, este tipo de lecturas facilita el cuestionamiento del modelo heteronormativo, permite dejar de asumir que este es el único válido. Si se quiere construir una escuela donde todas las personas se sientan incluidas, respetadas y aceptadas, es necesario renovar las lecturas en la escuela. Una de las aportaciones más innovadoras en torno al debate sobre la lectura *queer* en las clases pasa por aquellas voces que destacaron la importancia de haber recibido cierta formación crítica a la hora de elegir estas lecturas, uno de los principales objetivos de esta investigación. Cierto es que no se da en el mercado editorial un número elevado de títulos con esta temática, no obstante, parte del alumnado tomó consciencia sobre la necesidad de ofrecer unas imágenes positivas sobre los personajes diversos o la importancia de que estas historias presenten un conflicto de carácter homófobo para mostrar la realidad sin edulcorarla, pues estas escenas facilitan que las y los lectores reflexionen sobre la vida cotidiana de las personas LGTBQ. También contribuye al proceso de empatía que implica la lectura y que permite ir derribando poco a poco ciertos prejuicios o estereotipos.

Si desde el primer curso del grado, de manera transversal, se incluyera la diversidad afectivo-sexual y de género en el currículum oficial de manera explícita, es decir, si *queerizamos* la

Debe ser una prioridad en los programas de las Facultades de Educación formar a sus docentes para que sean capaces de generar espacios donde aquellas personas todavía en formación exploren sus creencias, investiguen los materiales de enseñanza y entiendan la necesidad de abordar temas controvertidos en el aula.

Facultad de Educación, seguramente este rechazo disminuiría progresivamente en cada curso. Debe ser una prioridad en los programas de las Facultades de Educación formar a sus docentes para que sean capaces de generar espacios donde aquellas personas todavía en formación exploren sus creencias, investiguen los materiales de enseñanza y entiendan la necesidad de abordar temas controvertidos en el aula. Dichos objetivos no pueden ser exclusivos de sesiones de una sola clase o actividades cortas en un curso independiente. No

se puede pasar por alto la necesidad de fomentar un entorno en el que maestras y maestros se reconozcan como aliados del colectivo LGTBQ en las aulas de las escuelas públicas. La meta radica en formar a las y los docentes del futuro con herramientas para enseñar que la diversidad nos enriquece a todas las personas favorece la vida del alumnado LGTBQ, en definitiva, contribuye a construir una escuela inclusiva, una escuela *queer*.

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How to cite this paper:

Soler-Quílez, G., (2020). Queerizando las Facultades de Educación: una escuela inclusiva es posible. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 26-43. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.16699

Chasing Remarkable Lives: a Problematization of Empowerment Stories for Girls

Persiguiendo vidas para ser contadas. Una problematización de las historias de empoderamiento para niñas

Perseguint vides per a ser contades. Una problematització de les històries d'empoderament per a xiquetes

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Abstract

This article explores the question of how to assess children's literature as feminist. Drawing upon a revision of the concept of postfeminism as a gendered neoliberalism that cultivates the 'right' disposition for succeeding in a neoliberal society, I bring together two possible objects of study upon which I outline some problematic aspects. I begin by focusing on a publishing phenomenon of the last few years: the biography compilations, such as the crowdfunded *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*, that, in a more or less explicit manner, aim to provide younger generations with new repertoires of gendered agencies. Then I analyze two picturebooks that have been recommended by reading promotion agencies and praised for their anti-sexist values: *Tirititesa* and *La bella Griselda*. In both these picturebooks, we find two protagonists transgressing gender norms and heteronormative ideals of romantic love. Yet, I argue that they reproduce systems of exclusions that are quite problematic if read from feminist intersectionality. The texts analyzed are modeled by a postfeminist sensibility in which a celebratory "girl power" is put forward, while obscuring how (gendered) exclusions work.

Key words: postfeminism, biographies, inequalities, intersectionality, picturebooks

Resumen

Este artículo explora la cuestión de cómo celebramos a un texto como feminista. Partiendo del concepto de posfeminismo como una forma generizada de neoliberalismo que cultiva disposiciones correctas para tener éxito en una sociedad neoliberal, conjugo aquí dos posibles objetos de estudio que analizo en sus aspectos problemáticos. Comienzo haciendo foco en un fenómeno editorial de los últimos años: las compilaciones biográficas, tales como *Cuentos de buenas noches para niñas rebeldes*, que de una forma más o menos explícita buscan proveer a las nuevas generaciones de nuevos repertorios de agencias generizadas. Luego hago foco en dos libros-álbum recomendados por

agencias de promoción de la lectura y celebrados por sus valores anti-sexistas: *Titiritesa* y *La bella Griselda*. En ellos encontramos dos protagonistas que transgreden las normas de género y los ideales heteronormativos del amor romántico, aunque, como argumento aquí, reproducen complicadas exclusiones. Los textos aquí analizados son examinados como productos de una sensibilidad postfeminista en la que una cultura celebratoria del “girl power” oscurece como los sistemas de exclusiones (generizadas) operan.

Palabras clave: posfeminismo, biografías, inequidades, interseccionalidad, libros-álbum

Resum

Aquest article explora la qüestió de com identifiquem un text com a feminista. Partint del concepte de postfeminisme com una forma generitzada de neoliberalisme que conrea disposicions correctes per tenir èxit en una societat neoliberal, conjuge aquí dues possibles objectes d'estudi que analitze en els seus aspectes problemàtics. Comence tot focalitzat en un fenomen editorial dels últims anys: les compilacions biogràfiques, com ara *Contes de bona nit per a nenes rebels*, que d'una forma més o menys explícita busquen proveir a les noves generacions de nous repertoris d'agències generitzades. Després analitze dos llibres-àlbum recomanats per agències de promoció de la lectura i celebrats pels seus valors antisexistes: *Titiritesa* i *La bella Griselda*. En ells trobem dos protagonistes que transgredeixen les normes de gènere i els ideals heteronormatius de l'amor romàntic, tot i que, com a argument, reproduïxen altres ideals normatius i injustícies estructurals. Els textos ací analitzats són examinats com a productes d'una sensibilitat postfeminista en la qual una cultura celebratòria del "girl power" enfosqueix com els sistemes d'exclusions (generitzades) operen.

Paraules clau: postfeminisme, biografies, iniquitats, interseccionalitat, llibres-àlbum

Introduction

In *Space, Time and Perversion*, Elizabeth Grosz poses the following questions: “By what criteria can we say a text is feminist, or feminine? How is a feminist text to be distinguished from the patriarchal or phallogentric mainstream within which we locate it and where it finds its context?” (Grosz, 1995, p.10). Grosz wrote about these concerns during the mid-90s, shortly after Judith Butler had unsettled the foundations of feminist theory with *Gender Trouble* (1990). Butler’s work accuses the feminist movement of being complicit in the reproduction of the heterosexist setup. From these writings, Grosz outlines four potential approaches that attempt to simplify the matter: 1) attentiveness to the author’s sex, 2) attentiveness to whether the content of the text includes any substantive reflections on the normativity of gender, 3) attentiveness to the readers (and the possibility of feminist appropriations of patriarchal texts) and lastly, 4) attentiveness to the style and manner of the text in its formal aspects. More specifically,

examine stylistic choices that would open up possibilities of knowing that are distant or alternative to the masculine ways of categorizing and describing¹. Grosz concludes that these four approaches fall short when trying to label a text as feminist. Consequently, she proposes three other dimensions to consider: first, how it is that texts make visible the patriarchal norms and conditions in which they come to exist; secondly, whether the text problematizes the standard masculine condition from which the locus of the author is traditionally occupied, and lastly, whether the text facilitates the production of alternative discursive positions that allow to amplify and resist the limits in the regulations for the circulation of texts.

From the publication of Grosz's essay until the present time, we have bared witness to a quasi global awakening on gender inequalities. Judith Butler has become an internationally recognized intellectual. Shortly after these publications, conservative groups coined the term "gender ideology"². The demonstrations for March the 8th, International Women's Day, summoned up multitudes of feminist minded people in different cities around the world. For the past quarter of a century, gender inequality has become one of the main focuses of public policy. More recently, there has been an attempt in public policy and social sciences research to quantify the gap in the access to power between men and women.

Gradually the conversation has become denser, by the hand of approaches such as Caroline Criado-Pérez's *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* (2017). This work traverses how the world has been studied, known, and designed to men's tailoring. At the start of Covid19 crisis, female medical workers of the National Health Service in Great Britain reported and denounced that "unisex" suits, masks, and gloves laid flat on them and increased their odds of contagion (The Guardian, 2020). Tailored to the measurements of a standard male,

¹ This last category appears to be the best suited to contemporary discussions on the matter. It is close to what Nelly Richard (2004) calls the "feminization of writing" produced "each time a poetic or erotic sign exceeds the retaining/containing frame of masculine signification with its rebellious surpluses" (eg. body, libido, enjoyment, heterogeneity, multiplicity, etc.) to interrupt hegemonic discourse.

² The term "gender ideology" (ideología de género) is used by conservative groups in Spanish-speaking countries to refer to the advancement of feminism and gender theories. The term draws upon the negative connotations that have adhered to the term ideology in an effort to refer to the advancements and conceptualizations of feminism as distant from reality principles given by differences that are understood as natural. The term crystallized through its use by conservative groups during Judith Butler's visit to Brazil in 2017 that demanded the cancellation of her conference and attacked her in the airport with banners claiming that she would go to hell. The opposing term, at least from the stance of public policy, is "gender perspective" (perspectiva de género), and refers to taking into account gender inequities in the different instances of social production. In 2018, with Claudia Matus, leading researcher of the Anillos "The Production of the Gender Norm" project, we decided to use the term "opposite genders ideology" to state that while there is an implied ideology in understanding the structural conditions that have given more power to men, there is also an ideology in upholding the male/female binary for the benefit of some. Until now, we have only used the term in interviews and in this footnote.

the suits increased their chances of becoming infected. The female medical workers concerns were featured on different news media outlets giving rise to debates that harken back to what some feminist authors have been warning us against for decades: that the world is tailored to the measure of a specific kind of man: white, able, cis-gender, heterosexual and educated. One of the authors that wields this perspective is Sylvia Wynter, a Jamaican essayist who writes about an ethnic class (White) that rules the world. Wynter capitalizes Man in her writing to bring attention to how historically— from the encounter with the so-called “New World” and all the way through the advent of the capitalist bourgeoisie in the XIX century—a group of White Western men became the measurement of the human (Wynter, 2003). In the last decade, social feminist movements have managed to install the notion of a masculine hegemony: the patriarchy.

Overthrowing patriarchal rules has been the banner of young feminist activists around the

In this article, I am interested in thinking how Gill and McRobbie’s postfeminism can be linked to cultural discourses for present childhoods, especially when they take on a “girl power” narrative of empowerment for girls

world. Feminist extensions and activists, or, according to media depictions of iceberg-shaped feminist groups whose top portion would reflect the #metoo movement, viralized at the end of 2017. Particularly noted in showbusiness, the #metoo movement is referred to as a turning point for the discourses on gender inequity. The #metoo movement gained widespread traction because it was embraced and rendered desirable by high-power corporate women and celebrities. Thanks to liberal feminism, this collective,

global movement managed to draw attention to shared experiences of sexual abuse and harassment (Banet-Weisner et al, 2020). The #metoo movement gave a turn to what feminist theorists labeled “postfeminism”, a discursive moment in which the struggles of the 70s and 80s were thought of as conquered, upholding the view that women’s access to positions of power was dependant only on their own will to do so. As explained by Angela McRobbie and Rosalind Gill (McRobbie, 2007; Gill, 2017), within the postfeminist paradigm of the turn of the millennium, the ideas of liberty and freedom of choice were inextricably tied to the category of young women. In this article, I am interested in thinking how Gill and McRobbie’s postfeminism can be linked to cultural discourses for present childhoods, especially when they take on a “girl power” narrative of empowerment for girls. In this respect, I delve into narratives that promise girls that they should and will reach spaces of power and liberty of choice that neither their mothers nor grandmothers had (Favaro & Gill, 2019).

Measuring inequity

In “Award and Gender,” published in *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination* (2004), fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin inquires how it has come to be that the majority of book prizes are awarded to men, despite the fact that most of the contending books are written by women. In her text, whose original version was distributed as a pamphlet in Seattle’s Book Fair in 1999, the author delves into how either mostly male or mostly female panels of judges (the latter being scarcer) tend to choose more men as the recipients of their awards. Among Literature Nobel Prizes, the ratio is 10 to 1, a breach that prevails in other prizes like the Newbery for young adult fiction (3 to 1), the Pulitzer for literature (5 to 1), or the Booker Prize (2 to 1). Le Guin’s figures are from the 90s, and in the more than 20 years that set us apart from her text, the Nobel has included six new female writers, which indeed improves the previous rate, yet it is not enough: we still do not have gender parity.

The urge to measure the gap between the places destined for male and female authors in the literary field may be another trap in which binary orders are produced. In *Cómo se construye una autora: algunas ideas para una discusión incómoda* [*How a female author is built: some ideas for an uncomfortable discussion* (2020)], Chilean literary scholar Lorena Amaro examines the new configurations of the Chilean literary arena and extends an invitation to review the particular figure of female authors who seek a higher visibilization of their individual personas as opposed to that of their writings (or the influences and genealogical relationships with female authors that came before them, for that matter). Amaro’s opening question in the text probes how alternative feminist configurations of authorship and the creative may look like if we break from traditional ideas on authorship and its drive as a transactional brand in a market economy.

In a similar way, research on gender in the field of children’s literature has mostly versed on how texts lack enough feminine figures and camp out stereotyped representations of feminine characters (see, among others, the works of Colomer and Olid, 2009; Crisp and Hiller, 2011; Trites, 2017; Koss, 2015; Mínguez-López, 2019). Interest in matters of female authorship seems rather absent, as does the discussion around the circulatory conditions of texts in a field which, although feminized — childhood appears in the domain of the feminine— follows the patterns of the rather patriarchal setup of the adult literary field.

In a dual corpus review of books published originally in Spanish and recommended by influential children and young adults’ book selection committees, Xavier Mínguez López and I separately attempted to examine and understand how the production of notions of difference took place within these aesthetic artifacts. With this goal in mind, we included the variable of “gender”,

alongside ethnicity, ability, age, in order to analyze which modes of narrating predominated. We took into consideration the recommendations of six institutions that carry out consistent book selecting work for young readers: the Canal Lector platform (from Germán Sánchez Ruipérez foundation), based in Spain but with contributions from institutions in Chile and Mexico; Fundalectura from Colombia, Banco del Libro from Venezuela, IBBY from Mexico, Fundación Cuatrogatos from the USA, and the White Ravens Honor List, compiled by the prestigious International Youth Library in Munich, Germany. In the first stage, we assembled a list of more than a thousand titles which had been recommended during the 2009 to 2015 period. We then considered purely those picturebooks that had been featured on the recommendation lists of at least two of the previously identified institutions. Our final corpus consisted of 99 books published in Spain, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Argentina, and Venezuela. 47 books had been written and/or illustrated by men and 31 by women (21 were the outcome of collective authorship by at least one of each). When studying the gender demographics of the protagonists, the numbers were not promising: 38 of them were male— boys, adults or male-coded animals— and 20 of them were female-coded. The remaining books featured protagonists of both sexes, and at least in our analysis, characters whose gender identity lied outside of the binary were absent. These figures may convey a lack of presence of women's creative work and lack of repertoires of female agency, even when we are careful to take them to represent gender perspectives. Focusing our analysis on the plot, we found that the stories reproduced the topics of passivity and emotionality- commonplace topics when grappling with ideas about women and girls. Female-coded characters were featured focusing on care; they were intuitive, delicate, and good companions. The few cases in which those motifs were transgressed— which I will review further on— give us a great deal to ponder on the limits of what is currently identified as a progressive narrative in relation to gender, and its enclosure within particular feminist frameworks.

In this article, I explore the question of how to read a children's literary text as feminist through two possible objects of study. I begin by focusing on an editorial phenomenon of the last few years: the biography compilations that, in a more or less explicit manner, aim to provide younger generations with new life models and the hope of overcoming the domination of male agencies. I open by analyzing two nonfiction works showcasing biographies. I then put my analysis in tension and relation with two picturebooks recommended because of how they resist gender hierarchies and posit alternative models.

“Empowerment” Stories

In 2016, Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo published *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls* (translated into Spanish as *Cuentos de buenas noches para niñas rebeldes*), a book that emerged from a Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign. This anthology of brief female biographies broke Kickstarter’s record for funding in the book category, raising over \$675,614 dollars and being translated into 47 languages. In the present, Favilli and Carvallo’s work has become a franchise that encompasses two biography books and has branched out into a postcard game, planners, and even posters, which can be found at supermarkets. As one might expect, the book’s success was followed by a shameless mimicking editorial offer which appears to be especially relevant in the Spanish-speaking book market. Among many others, we find *Las chicas son de ciencias: 25 científicas que cambiaron el mundo* (Irene Cívico and Sergio Parra), *El futuro es femenino. Cuentos para que juntas cambiemos el mundo* (various authors) and *Valerosas 1: Mujeres que solo hacen lo que ellas quieren* (Penélope Bagieu).

Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls puts together 100 female biographies, each of them page-mirrored by an illustration by one of several female artists. Among the women whose biographies are part of the compendium, we can find Malala Yousafzai, Irena Sendlerowa, Maria Montessori, Marie Curie, Frida Kahlo, Virginia Woolf, Isabel Allende, Hillary Clinton, and also, as scandalous as it might seem, Margaret Thatcher and Aung San Suu Kyi³. This book was followed by a second crowd-funded tome that included another 100 women.

The production and circulation of this collection of biographies tells us a great deal about an allegedly progressive educational discourse oriented towards gender equity. Paradoxically, these books are (crowd)funded even —as if there was no formal market for them—yet they have turned into international bestsellers. The crowdfunding seems to be creating a narrative in which no one would be interested in a book with female biographies; crowdfunding appears as the logical alternative to an indifferent editorial industry, as a solution that involves grassroots efforts and collective (consumer) actions. The authors call their supporters and readers ‘rebels’ (a monicker that is repeated in the title of both volumes): the union of forces would make possible to voice stories that otherwise silenced. Most reviews advocated this book as an alternative to princess stories; there are some cases in which the collection is directly mentioned

³ Burmese politician which ascended to the office of State Counsellor (similar to prime minister). She has been severely criticized for Myanmar’s inaction in response to the [genocide of the Rohingya people](#). In 2019, Suu Kyi appeared in the [International Court of Justice](#) where she [defended the Burmese military](#) against allegations of genocide against the Rohingya.

as an alternative to the Disney princess universe. But I would be inclined to think that this is not very far from Disney's appropriations of feminism: the ideal of an empowered and successful woman that Cassandra Stover describes as Disney's problematic postfeminism (Stover, 2013).

Shortly after the publication of Favilli and Cavallo's project, *Stories for Boys Who Dare to Be Different: True Tales of Amazing Boys Who Changed the World without Killing Dragons* (Brooks and Winton, 2018) came out to the market resembling the cover design of its girl-addressed predecessor, and featuring 100 one-page male biographies, each neighbored by a full-color illustration. No reference is made to the rebel girls book, neither as a model nor as a source of inspiration, and the anthology is presented as an "inspiring collection of histories of 100 famous and not-so-famous men from the past to the present day that made the world a better place through compassion, generosity, and self-trust" (n.p.). The name list includes characters one would not necessarily consider as compassionate or generous, such as Salvador Dalí, George VI or Arthur Rimbaud. The book's back cover includes a starred disclaimer: "without action heroes or princesses to save". 'Daring' and being 'different' are then signifiers of a new masculinity that dares to (en)counter readers with a world alternative to action heroes and passive princesses. It seems that in order to educate the men of tomorrow it is of paramount importance to emphasize a 'daring' that is not a matter of heroism anymore, but rather orients itself towards difference, towards walking the untrodden paths of male generosity and compassion. Boldness for him and rebelliousness for her, perhaps because the norm weighs differently on each side of the binary.

An analysis of the similarities and differences between the two books aids in mapping the reach and limits of a well-intentioned education sensitive to gender inequity. It is already problematic that there is a distinction to be made between the stories for girls and boys, and its framing within the discourse of empowerment for younger generations. A discursive feature that stands out in both books is their inclination towards a neoliberal logic in which individuals have the ability and capacity to direct their life over and despite their circumstances.

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Moreover, the objective of a life seems to be its orientation towards those achievements worthy of being narrated. In *Good Night Stories...*, the achievements of women are largely associated with notions of acknowledgment: the book's back cover presents the work as a collection of "life adventures" of "extraordinary women" to inspire girls to "dream big and reach their dreams".

The index displays each profile next to her occupation: ranging from writers, to politicians, queens (and pharaohs), mathematicians, activists and artists of various mediums.

A thorough look at the similarities and differences between the first volume of the *Rebel Girls*

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and the *Daring Boys* would have to course along the edges of the social in these texts. For instance, the book for girls showcases some examples of collective biographies— the Brontë sisters, the Mirabal sisters, the Williams sisters, and the "cholitas escaladoras" in Bolivia— and the book for boys features only one case of this kind of biography: a group of boys in the Isca Academy in England that defy the norm by wearing skirts to go to school. The book for girls is the outcome of collective and collaborative manufacture: two authors gestated the project, thousands of "rebels" funded it, and sixty female artists were invited to make the

illustrations. The version for boys, on the other hand, is cataloged as being authored by Ben Brooks with a blunt reference to Quinton Winton's illustrations, and the scant references to biographical collectivities seem to manufacture the daring man (and present boy) as a lone actor. Now, despite the collectivity of its design, its production context, and the few entries with references to those lives that are told together, the biographies of the book for girls also dodges references to solidarity, the social, and the collective. In a fairly standard style for children's stories, most of the biographies begin with "once upon a time." The book showcases and narrates stories of women who have had to face the world by themselves (with exception given to those cases of collective biographies), by drawing from a relentless, apparently self-gestated, inner determination in order to do what they desired. There are no guides or companions. These life stories, narrated with fairy tale tropes, produce models in which girls, in order to accomplish their dreams, must ignore traditional advice and overcome social limitations. Individual rebelliousness is presented as the model to follow in all but a few occasions— such as the one of the "cholitas escaladoras", in which the rebellion is forged from a sense of community. In the book for boys, on the other hand, the repertoire of actions, attitudes, and orientations is wider and achievements are not organized only in relation to notions of success, nor in reference to alternative ways of shaping a life. Brooks seems to dodge the cultural politics of the happy ending expected from the modern fairy-tale structure. For example, we are told the sad finale of Galileo Galilei, whose research posed opposition to the church and died when he was still under arrest, as well as the horrible fate of the Pakistani boy Iqbal Masih, murdered

for opposing and resisting the owners of the carpet factories that were exploiting him. There are several alive men featured too. The British actor Daniel Radcliffe —known for impersonating Harry Potter— is featured and he is quoting saying that having people perceiving him as gay is wonderful. Through stories like these, the book for boys seems to insinuate alternative repertoires: it is not about “big dreams” anymore but about daring to be different.

An analysis of the similarities and differences between the two books aids in outlining a certain “progressist” consensus on what a gender-sensitive education is. Girls would have to learn to empower themselves, while boys would have to learn to value difference. This way, the progressivist repertoire about education on gender seems to widen the alternatives for boys, at the same time that it returns with imperatives about girls. With the latter in mind, the book for boys can be read as a deviation from what the Australian theorist Raewyn Connell (2000) calls hegemonic masculinity: the cultural dynamic that grants a place of power and leadership to the masculine and to men. The book for “rebel girls”, on the other hand, seems to be oriented towards elaborating a narrative in which women would access power and spaces considered masculine, but does not invite girls to question the production of difference, the hierarchies of power, or how we produce a life worth telling. This variety of feminism, concerned with the legitimation of women’s capacity, is the one that Angela McRobbie and other female authors have described as postfeminism or “girl-power feminism - a feminism that produces accomplices and aligns with consumerist and individualist values (McRobbie, 2007; Ringrose, 2007). The term postfeminism is used to show how the mainstream would use the term feminism as a best-seller title, or as a signifier fancied by celebrities (Valenti, 2014; Gill, 2017). As Gill indicates, postfeminism is not exclusive to white affluent women, even though it is oriented towards traditional notions of power and privileges the aforementioned demographic. Postfeminism is a term that describes a historical moment that is usually located around the turn of the last century but that, nonetheless, remains functional to explain the uses of feminism in transnational children’s culture.

Biographies for girls can also be read as attempts to transform that biographiable life into a “happy object”, as Sarah Ahmed (Ahmed 2010, 39) labels the cultural commodities that mobilize our actions on the promise of future happiness, obscuring not only any possible critiques, but also the implied surrenders that come with choosing and living

Biographies for girls, in contrast to biographies for boys, can also be read as attempts to transform a person's biographiable life into a “happy object.” Sarah Ahmed (Ahmed, 2010, p.39) labels these kinds of productions as cultural commodities. They mobilize our actions on the promise of future happiness. These cultural commodities obscure not only any possible

critiques, but also veil the implied surrender embedded with participating in certain economic lifestyles. Urging the question: to what price is each of those celebrated lives lived?

What is the painful genealogy of women's access to spaces of power? We could also read these stories from what is currently understood as liberal feminism, a paradigm in which rebelliousness is scarcely anti-systemic, and profiles itself as an assimilation to the hierarchy, only with a larger quota of women in positions of power, and more positions of power for women. The phrase of the African American tennis player Serena Williams in the book for rebel girls gives us a good reach of how ironic this epic repertoire of rebellion is: "I am fascinating. I smile a lot. I win a lot. And, plus, I am really sexy" (p. 179).

Transgressions in picturebooks

In picturebooks, the aesthetic proposals that reproduce gender are denser in their material and semiotic aspects, which may complicate the dimensions proposed by Grosz, making them further elusive: How is a feminist story narrated? Is it enough to present empowered female characters? Must there be a critique of the dominating gendered and sexual setups? How does the interplay between text and visual narration unfold? These questions are hard to tackle, and they warn us about the difficulties of carrying out a more complex analysis. As outlined previously, we usually consider gender issues in the production of children and young adult's literature in relation to the representation of sexual and gender identities (Abate and Kidd, 2011; Smolkin & Young, 2011; Lester 2014), or in relation to the stereotyped (or emancipated) representation of their protagonists. Alternative approaches such as the analysis of ways of making the masculine (Kidd, 2003; Stephens, 2013; Pastor, 2014) or, the way mothers are depicted (Joosen, 2015) give us other entry points. In this article, I focus on protagonists that appear to be transgressive of gender norms. From the whole sample of 99 books examined by Xavier Mínguez-López and me, only two books, and only two protagonists, seemed to escape from stereotypical representations of the feminine: Griselda, in *La bella Griselda* [Beautiful Griselda] (Isol, 2010), and *Titiritesa* in the homonymous picturebook⁴. Both protagonists dominate their books to the point of naming them, and the two titles frequently appear in children's literature recommendation lists and are often labeled as anti-sexist. Still, their emancipatory proposal is not exempt from being problematic.

⁴ All of the quotations from the picturebooks featured in this article are translations I have made on my own. As of today, there are no translations of *La bella Griselda* on the market, but there is a recent translation of *Titiritesa* into English by Mark W. Heslop.

La bella Griselda, from the Argentinian illustrator Isol (2010), narrates the story of a princess whose beauty makes men lose their heads. The visual narrative — in a suggestive combination of four strong hues (blue, orange, black, and white) — showcases a set of skulls laying on the ground while the text ironically engages commonplace phrases like “make heads roll”. For further provocation, the princess makes a habit of collecting disembodied heads. Since many of

We may make sense of this cultural object with the concept of postfeminism, since it manifests the ideals of achievement and displays discourses of overcoming difficulties without (re)thinking notions of privilege and hierarchy.

her suitors are kings and princes, the surrounding kingdoms gradually become without rulers. Conjugating the counterpoints of visual and verbal narration, the picturebook produces beauty as a menacing, sanguinary attribute, a grotesque excess, which has often been associated with Silvia Ocampo’s textual imaginary (Gagliardi, 2014). The fourfold palette, featuring black, white, orange and blue, cartoonish strokes, and a mismatch between pigmentation and the line seems to also warn us that this is not a story to be taken seriously. The story of Griselda does not pretend to

be true, and is rather a distorted and absurd approximation to the princess/prince trope. Nonetheless, I would like to argue here that this ironic approximation is problematic. Firstly, because we know very little about how different types of irony are read by younger readers, although, something we know, or speculate about, is how they would understand it in a different way than adults do (Kummerling-Meibauer, 1999; Van der Pol, 2012). We could assume that the use of irony is an inherent risk that plays in the limits of communication with its readers. But the interpretations are indeed problematic because of the way in which the ending of the story restructures the initial understanding of it. Looking at the endings of stories can tell us a great deal about their moral teachings. Philosopher Noël Carroll (2007) coined the term “narrative closure” to designate when stories conclude assuring readers that the character will not meet the same difficulties in the imagined future of the narrative; a sort of conclusive ending in which the world goes back to the status quo, a sort of balance, and a certain notion of good is outlined. As a form of narrative closure, the ending of *La bella Griselda* subverts the meaning of a deadly and menacing beauty. In order to solve the problem of her lethality, the beautiful Griselda meets a blind prince— the word *ciego* could have been used, however, a more pejorative term (*cegatón*) was chosen— due to his shortsightedness, he takes longer to perceive the “unmatched beauty of the princess”. Yet, when he finally does, he too loses his head. On the next page, we are told that although the romance had been short-lived, it succeeded in leaving an imprint on the princess. This is followed by the image of the princess sitting in a chair, dressed with a mature-looking dress and a baby in her lap. “Nine months after, the princess had a baby

with great resemblance to her”, and on the opposing page: “How beautiful! she exclaimed... And that was the day in which Griselda lost her head” (Isol, n.p.). Her head rolls to the ground as the heads of her suitors had done before. The baby girl’s beauty is as lethal as her mother’s and makes Griselda’s head roll. None of the other remaining characters seem to care about the death of Griselda. In the next double-page, we are told that the girl grows up happily in the palace.

A reading from a certain notion of feminist girl power will see Griselda as a woman that resists the trope of romantic love and has no issue with becoming a menace to men. Yet maternity manages to decenter her up to the point in which she also is beheaded. One could argue that because of her daughter’s beauty; a younger and more promising beauty, Griselda loses not only her head, but her body. The mother’s sacrifice is frequently described as one of the most salient dimensions of the gender norm.

The second example of a character that escapes the gender norm is, also a princess, Tiritiesa. One should consider thinking about why models of behavior labeled as “rebellious” to the gender norm in child culture are often princesses at least if we consider how Disney animated films are complicit in the creation of a child-princess culture. From Mulan’s crossdressing to save her father from going to war, to braveness of Pocahontas and Merida, we do find examples of princesses that escape the mold of femininity and rebel. In the second picturebook, a princess named Titiritesa⁵ lives in the kingdom of Yesterday, where she likes to “gorge lumps of sugar and splash in puddles. Her father, King Tartufo, thinks this is funny, but her mother, Queen Mandolina, gets angry”. This is how the story begins: with a girl that defies the mandates of her mother by eating what she is not supposed to (sugar cubes) and playing where she is not supposed to (the puddles). The queen is swiftly constructed as an antagonist, the guardian of royal decorum, while the father remains a lax and carefree. From the text, we can observe contrasting dispositions of the monarchy in the following quote, “ Titiritesa dreamed of exploring the world on a blue horse. Mandolina dreamed of seeing her daughter married. Tartufo did not dream: on his back, he would snore and snore” (unpaginated). The illustrations show the king as sitting comfortably and unbothered, drinking wine.

⁵ An English translation of Titiritesa is available under the title Titiritesa (OQO Books, 2008, translated by Mark W. Heslop).

Titiritesa escapes from home on the back of a donkey and gets involved in a series of adventures that end when she meets another girl, Wendolina. After a while, they fall in love and dream of kissing each other. In the story, Titiritesa and her female lover kiss each other so much that they decide “not to leave their dream ever again”. Afterward, Titiritesa and Wendolina return to the castle, wanting to inform the king of their love and their intentions of getting married. Wedding arrangements begin, and the illustration features men dressed as Victorian slaves, carrying king Tartufo, who is lying on his royal bed (Figure 1). Someone may justify the presence of slaves in the ironic tone of the narrative, but the irony does not take away from the presence of a heavily racialized image. Can a feminist text reproduce a colonial imaginary? If one examines Titiritesa (Xerardo Quintiá & Maurizio A. C. Quarello, 2007) from an intersectional feminist perspective— the perspective raised by Black feminists to visibilize that the different axes of oppression intersect, and that the struggle of White feminists excluded models of class, race, and nationality, among others— this text results not only racist, but an agent of exclusionary systems that may hardly be considered feminist.

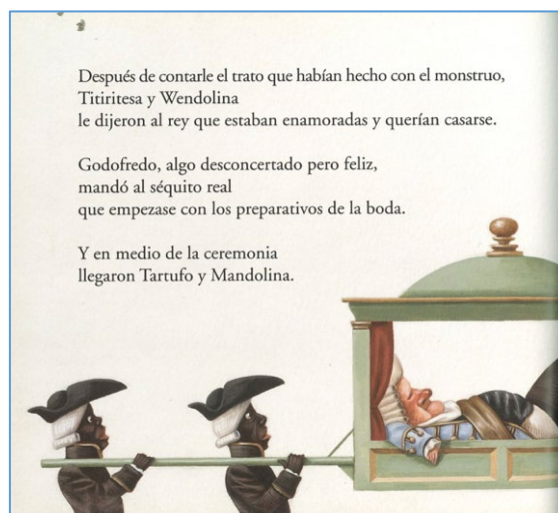


Figure 1. *Titiritesa*, by Xerardo Quintiá & Maurizio A. C. Quarello, 2007, published by OQO in Spain.

We may make sense of this cultural object with the concept of postfeminism, since it manifests the ideals of achievement and displays discourses of overcoming difficulties without (re)thinking notions of privilege and hierarchy. The worldview that (re)produces notions of hierarchized difference remains untouched, and a superficial queerness is included without it implying a

The question then remains, after reading these texts, of what children’s literature does with the gender norm when it attempts to undermine or subvert it.

subversion or critique of oppressions alien to the main character. At the end of the story, and upon witnessing her daughter's marriage to a girl, queen Mandolina faints: she was the one enforcing the gender norm, and failed to do so effectively. King Tartufo, on the contrary, carries on unconcerned, enjoying his unchallenged privileges and fulfilling the trope of the easy-going yet inattentive father (resembling, among others, Merida's father in *Brave*).

The question then remains, after reading these texts, of what children's literature does with the gender norm when it attempts to undermine or subvert it. We examined two examples of nonfiction books for children that draw upon real-life histories as a way of offering repertoires of inspiration for the lives of readers. We then bare witness to the motion of more complex semiotic codes looking closely at two picturebooks in which the transgression of the gender norm is shown as a privilege of young and daring high-class girls. It is not as easy to suppose that when presented with stories for identification or inspiration, we fall short if the focus is merely on the character's agency as model of behavior. We also tried to read the potential of irony, of the grotesque and the hyperbolic, and how it appears to displace or deterritorialize the gender norm. We ended up bringing up a critical reading that is insufficient. What stands out in both of the reviewed picturebooks is that in the end, it might be necessary to look for (and perhaps collectively engage in the creation of) a princess tale that counters what are popularly thought of as the flaws of a princess tale: one that does not only critique idealized and domesticated portrayals of gender, but also the manifold interlocking oppressions of the social. In nonfiction histories, it might also be constructive to counter and identify the problematic presence of a

Moreover, it appears to be crucial to examine the tacit definitions of rebellion present in cultural objects for children: what is understood by rebellion, and how is this particular understanding of the term and its praxis entangled with market economies?

certain gender rebelliousness. Thus move away from gender rebelliousness that appears to be disengaged from the transformation of structural conditions that (re)produce inequity and oppression, and move toward accounts that focus on fostering future models of existence that have managed to escape individual constrictions. Moreover, it appears to be crucial to examine the tacit definitions of rebellion present in cultural objects for children: what is understood by rebellion, and how is this particular understanding of the term and its praxis entangled with market economies?

This article aims to open up a critical approach to stories that are framed as feminist but appear very problematic, especially when viewed from an intersectional perspective, one in which different structural injustices and exclusions intersect.

The texts here reviewed are often used in education with belief in their potential as anti-sexist resources, which becomes quite problematic if they are not critically addressed in the classroom (Bingle, 2018). Instead of focusing on instilling gender perspectives by presenting models of remarkable lives, I would suggest thinking gender as a problem to be addressed in all narratives and epistemological productions. Concerning inquiries over narrative fiction, it may mean a focus away from characters —and mainly from protagonists— in order to examine the narrated world and its limits. What are the possible repertoires for female and male characters in the stories we read? Why is such a binary maintained? And, more importantly, how is that we assume the gender of characters and attach possible behaviors to them when we read? We need to imagine other ways of performing gender and exploiting its multiplicity outside of dyadic paradigms and, more importantly, to imagine how the performance of gender may break out from neoliberal sensibilities that orient subjects towards the values of confidence, resilience, and individualism. In this move away from stories of what is remarkable and successful, we may need to imagine again the values of care and interdependence and how collective resistances and collaborations open new modes of entangled caring existences.

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How to cite this paper:

García-González, M. (2020). Chasing Remarkable Lives: a Problematization of Empowerment Stories for Girls. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 44-61. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.18165

** This research has been supported by ANID PIA 160007 and SOC 180023

Breaking female stereotypes: Bianca Pitzorno's girls and the power of literature on gender socialization

Rompiendo estereotipos femeninos: las protagonistas de Bianca Pitzorno y el poder de la literatura en la socialización de género

Trencant estereotips femenins: les protagonistes de Bianca Pitzorno i el poder de la literatura en la socialització de gènere

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Abstract

Bianca Pitzorno is one of Italy's most famous children's writers. Her works – more than forty books translated into different languages – often address topics linked to gender identity and femininity. Pitzorno's novels for children usually depict non-canonical female characters: rebel, dynamic and intelligent young girls that fight against adult injustice in order to affirm their agency.

The paper aims to explore female portrayals in Pitzorno's novels and their potential educational impact in reconsidering gender stereotypes and roles from an early age. Literature is one of the most influential tools in the construction of gender ideals and gender socialization. Consequently, positive female models – as Pitzorno's characters – should be offered to young readers from an early age in order to foster an inclusive collective imagination about femininity.

For instance, *Extraterrestre alla pari* [Aliens on par] (1979) directly focuses on gender issues telling the story of a young alien coming from a planet where young boys and girls do not know their sex until they reach adulthood. For this reason, they are considered as gender-neutral beings. Likewise, *L'incredibile storia di Lavinia* [Lavinia and the magic ring] (1985) ironically retells Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl* working on humor and female agency. Finally, *Principessa Laurentina* [Princess Laurentina] (1990) deals with adolescence and family dynamics, offering different portrayals of female identity, from a young age to adulthood.

Because of the brilliant and nontraditional depiction of female figures and the deconstruction of gender canon in a simple but captivating way, Pitzorno's novels should be internationally considered in primary school curriculums as a starting point to introduce gender diversity in reading programs and to discuss gender issues with the help of adult figures such as teachers, educators and parents.

Keywords: Bianca Pitzorno, Gender, Children's Literature, Gender Socialization.

Resumen

Bianca Pitzorno es una de las escritoras de literatura infantil más famosas de Italia. Sus obras - más de cuarenta libros traducidos a diferentes idiomas - abordan temas relacionados con la identidad de

género y la feminidad. Las novelas infantiles de Pitzorno suelen representar personajes femeninos no convencionales: jóvenes rebeldes, dinámicas e inteligentes que luchan contra la injusticia adulta para afirmar su personalidad.

Este artículo se propone explorar los retratos femeninos en las novelas de Pitzorno y su posible impacto educativo en la reconsideración de los estereotipos y los roles de género desde la infancia. La literatura es una de las principales estrategias para construir los ideales de género e influenciar en la socialización. Por lo tanto, hay que ofrecer modelos femeninos positivos - como los personajes de Pitzorno - a jóvenes lectores y lectoras desde una edad temprana para favorecer una imaginación colectiva inclusiva con respecto a la feminidad.

Por ejemplo, *Extraterrestre alla pari* [*Un extraño entre nosotros*] (1979) se ocupa específicamente de las cuestiones de género y cuenta la historia de un joven extraterrestre que proviene de un planeta en el que los niños y las niñas no conocen su sexo hasta que llegan a la edad adulta. Por esta razón, se los considera seres neutrales en cuanto al género. De la misma manera, *L'incredibile storia di Lavinia* [*La increíble historia de Lavinia*] (1985) relata irónicamente la obra de Hans Christian Andersen "La pequeña vendedora de fósforos" y trata sobre el humor y la identidad femenina. Por último, *Principessa Laurentina* [Princesa Laurentina] (1990) examina la adolescencia y las dinámicas familiares, ofreciendo diferentes retratos de la identidad femenina.

Por su brillante y nada tradicional representación de las figuras femeninas y por la deconstrucción del canon de género de una manera simple pero cautivadora, las novelas de Pitzorno deberían ser consideradas internacionalmente en los programas de estudios de las escuelas de Primaria como un punto de partida para introducir la diversidad de género en los programas de lectura y para discutir las cuestiones de género con la ayuda de figuras adultas como docentes, educadores y educadoras y familias.

Palabras clave: Bianca Pitzorno, Género, Literatura infantil y juvenil, Socialización de Género

Resum

Bianca Pitzorno és una de les escriptores de literatura infantil més famoses d'Itàlia. Les seues obres –més de quaranta llibres traduïts a diferents idiomes – aborden temes relacionats amb la identitat de gènere i la feminitat. Les novel·les infantils de Pitzorno solen representar personatge femenins no convencionals: joves rebels, dinàmiques i intel·ligents que lluiten contra la injustícia adulta per tal d'afirmar la seua personalitat.

Aquest article es proposa explorar els retrats femenins a les novel·les de Pitzorno i el seu possible impacte educatiu en la reconsideració dels estereotips i els rols de gènere des de la infantesa. La literatura és una de les principals estratègies per construir els ideals de gènere i influir en la socialització. Per tant, cal oferir models femenins positius – com els personatges de Pitzorno – a joves lectors i lectores des d'una edat primerenca per tal d'afavorir una imaginació col·lectiva inclusiva respecte de la feminitat.

Per exemple, *Extraterrestre alla pari* [Extraterrestres tots plegats] (1979) s'ocupa específicament de les qüestions de gènere i narra la història d'un jove extraterrestre que prové d'un planeta en el qual els infants no coneixen el seu sexe fins que arriben a l'edat adulta. Per aquesta raó es consideren éssers neutrales respecte del gènere. De la mateixa manera, *L'incredibile storia di Lavinia* [La increíble història de Lavínia] (1985) relata irònicament l'obra de Hans Christian Andersen "La petita venedora de llumins" i tracta sobre l'humor i la identitat femenina. Per últim, *Principessa Laurentina* [Princesa Laurentina] (1990) examina l'adolescència i les dinàmiques familiars, tot oferint retrats de la identitat femenina.

Per la seua brillant i gens tradicional representació de les figures femenines i per la deconstrucció del cànon de gènere d'una manera simple però captivadora, les novel·les de Pitzorno haurien de ser

considerades internacionalment en els programes d'estudi de les escoles de Primària com a un punt de partida per tal d'introduir la diversitat de gènere als programes de lectura i per tal de discutir les qüestions de gènere amb l'ajuda de figures adultes com docents, educadors i educadores i famílies.

Paraules clau: Bianca Pitzorno, Gènere, Literatura infantil i juvenil, Socialització de gènere

1. Literature and gender socialization

Gender socialization (Stockard, 2006; Bussey & Bandura, 1999; West C., 1987) is a complex process that influences men and women's lives and their perception of what is culturally considered appropriate for them. Through socialization and indirect education from a very early age, boys and girls, men and women learn what is suitable for their gender in a specific social and cultural context. Gender education is a lifelong process performed in different contexts (family, schools, group of peers, and so on), at different levels (direct and indirect) and through different tools (Ulivieri, 2007; Biemmi, 2012; Brambilla, 2016; Burgio, 2015; Witt, 2001).

Male and female standards can be assimilated through different elements that indirectly build gender identity (Ulivieri, 2007). Popular culture has a particularly strong impact on this learning-process: products such as toys, magazines, advertisements, literature, cinema, cartoons, videogames, and so on create and reinforce gender norms and stereotypes (Lopez, 2017). Most of these tools – and specifically literature, cinema, and cartoons – use storytelling to indirectly promote specific gender models through the narration of archetypal stories. Indeed, narration is a particularly strong element in endorsing gender ideals. From a very early age, children become familiar with different kinds of stories promoted by different media, such as textbooks, picturebooks, novels, cartoons, films, advertisements, etcetera. Stories are part of children's and teenagers' everyday lives and, for this reason, children's and young adults' narrations can be considered as one of the most effective and influential tools in silently promoting specific roles for boys and girls.

Most of the research on the topic points out that young girls, girls, and women are seldom represented as relevant characters and/or protagonists in works addressed to young audiences, while boys and men are particularly common and are often the main, active characters of the story (Biemmi, 2012). Thus, from a quantitative perspective, girls are underrepresented in

international children's literature, while from a qualitative point of view, boys and girls are described as opposite extremes with fixed, standard identities that cannot be confused or mixed. For instance, male and female characters are characterized by different adjectives and personalities, different career opportunities, different spaces where they act, different colors that characterize them, etcetera. All these elements work together and create a specific gender ideal that will shape young readers' perceptions of masculinity and femininity in adulthood as well. Even if texts for children are often considered powerless (Faeti, 1995), their impact is silent but constant and works both through words and images at the same time (Trisciuzzi, 2017). Books, cartoons or films representing conventional gender roles promote an archaic and rigid division of gender identity and foster gender-based stereotypes that can be harmful both for girls and for boys (Sunderland, 2011). If girls lack representation and are often depicted through clichés (they are usually gentle, patient, passive, innocent), boys as well, despite their strong presence in children's literature, are often misrepresented and linked to a canonic, toxic masculinity that is as dangerous as females' limited representation (Lopez, 2017; Seveso, 2000).

If girls lack representation and are often depicted through clichés (they are usually gentle, patient, passive, innocent), boys as well, despite their strong presence in children's literature, are often misrepresented and linked to a canonic, toxic masculinity that is as dangerous as females' limited representation

In order to promote modern, open-minded values and encourage freedom beyond gender cultural norms, non-conventional, stereotype-free books for young readers are necessary both in schools and in families. Through an open-minded collective imagination, gender roles could be revised, and single identities could be understood and accepted even if they do not correspond to a specific canon linked to masculinity and femininity (Beseghi, 1994). Books for children are an influential tool that indirectly offers (or denies) possibilities for young readers (Ulivieri, 2014; Bishop, 1990). For this reason, they should be carefully selected by teachers, educators, and parents, both in schools' curricula and in family-readings.

2. Bianca Pitzorno: new female identities

Bianca Pitzorno was born in Sassari (Italy) in 1942, but she currently lives and works in Milan. She graduated in Archeology and worked for Italian television (RAI) dealing with cultural programs for children. Her first book addressed to young readers was published in 1970 (*Il grande raduno dei cowboy*, [The Great Cowboy Gathering]), when she began her career as a writer for children. Her career was extremely multifaceted: she worked as a writer, translator,

she produced programs for television, wrote plays, screenplays, and songs. Today, she is one of the best-known Italian authors for children and teenagers. Her novels were translated into several languages, such as Spanish, French, German, English, Greek, Polish, and Japanese. In 1996, University of Bologna gave her an honorary degree for her fiction for young readers, while in 2001 she received Italy's Andersen Award for her novel *Tornatras* (2000), and she was a finalist in Hans Christian Andersen Award (Casella, 2006; Tosi, 2017).

Pitzorno is one of the most appreciated and known Italian authors for children: her books are read in schools by teachers and educators and can be easily found in libraries and bookstores in

Pitzorno is one of the most appreciated and known Italian authors for children: her books are read in schools by teachers and educators and can be easily found in libraries and bookstores in different editions. Moreover, she is usually known as an author with a particular interest in female identities. Her stories tell about girls' adventure in a realistic and chaotic world which is traditionally populated and explored by male characters.

different editions. Moreover, she is usually known as an author with a particular interest in female identities. Her stories tell about girls' adventures in a realistic and chaotic world which is traditionally populated and explored by male characters. Pitzorno chooses an exclusive focus on female characters (both girls and teenagers) in order to compensate male dominance in children's literature and to offer young readers a new perspective. Her novels fascinate a great number of kids, who indirectly learn that girls, like boys, can be adventurer, and active protagonists of a story (Catarsi, 2002). Pitzorno was defined as a "literary mother of only female daughters"¹ (Beseghi, 1994, p. 70) since she filled a gap in children's narrations through a complex depiction of female protagonists.

On this issue, Bianca Pitzorno underlines a controversial fact: even if girls statistically read more than boys, they are underrepresented in books for children. Starting from classic children's literature, the author notices that male adventures are usually the only possibility given to girls and boys. Pitzorno realized that female readers needed something more than romance novels or 'chick-lit': they deserved adventures, bildungsroman, stories of grief, joy, growth. In her opinion, literature should present active, strong, clever, adventurous girls as well in order to open children's perception of what is possible for female readers, both in literature and in real life. Nevertheless, Pitzorno often highlighted her passion for children and adults' classics, despite their general neglect of female identity (Caso, 2015). Quoting her words:

¹ Translated by the author. Original Italian text: "madre letteraria di sole figlie femmine".

For me, classics were a source of incredible pleasure and literary models. If I chaotically try to remember their protagonists, I only see a myriad of men: boys, teenagers, men of different ages, nationalities, with different physical characteristics and different social conditions. Why don't we try to pick some of them? Robinson, Little Lord, Sandokan, [...] Giamburrasca, Mowgli, Remy, David Copperfield [...], Jim and Peter Pan, [...] Gulliver, Christopher Robin, Tom Sawyer... There were books, I remember, that had as main characters a mixed couple of children. However, the girl was a complementary character and was usually sacrificed, [...] she usually was the crybaby that slowed down the adventure because of her fears (Vv. Aa., 1987).²

Specifically, the writer was inspired by authors such as Lewis Carroll, Karin Michaëlis, Astrid Lindgren, and Roald Dahl because of their interest in female protagonists that subverted the canons of children's literature. Consequently, Pitzorno often revisited classics from a modern, female perspective. For instance, *Il barone rampante* [*The Baron in the Trees*] (1957) by Italo Calvino inspired her novel *La casa sull'albero* [*The house in the Tree*](1984): Cosimo (Calvino's protagonist) and Aglaia (Pitzorno's main character) both want to live on a tree, but while Cosimo's choice is characterized by constraint, Aglaia decides to live on the trees to reach freedom. In addition, *Pinocchio* (1881) by Carlo Collodi could be compared to *La bambola dell'alchimista* [*The alchemist's doll*](1988): both present a story based on puppets that turn into boys and girls, but while *Pinocchio* is a book where many deathly overtones are presented, Pitzorno's novel is based on life, energy, freedom. Moreover, *The Jungle Book* (1893) by Rudyard Kipling and *L'amazzone di Alessandro Magno* [*Alexander the Great's Amazon*] (1977) show strong correspondences since both Mowgli and Mirtale grow up in a wolf-family: on the one hand, Mowgli depends on his family; on the other, Mirale's story is based on independence and, again, freedom. (Tosi, 2017, p. 106).

Another singularity in Pitzorno's works is her peculiar approach to children's readers. In Pitzorno's opinion, literature for children should not select a didactic line (Tosi, 2017, p. 108; Pitzorno, 1995). The author states that books for children may have two different narrators:

² Translated by the author. Original text: "Ma torniamo ai classici che furono per me fonte di incomparabili godimenti ed anche modelli letterari. Se richiamo alla mente i loro protagonisti sia pure in modo disorganico e confuso mi vedo circondata da una folla di maschi: bambini, ragazzi, uomini di tutte le età, nazionalità, caratteristiche fisiche, condizioni sociali. Vogliamo provare a pescare a caso nel mucchio? Robinson e il Piccolo Principe, Sandokan [...] e Giamburrasca, Mowgli e il Capitano Nemo, Remy e David Copperfield, [...] Jim e Peter Pan, [...] Gulliver, Christopher Robin, Tom Sawyer... C'erano anche libri, ricordo, che avevano per protagonisti una coppia mista di bambini o ragazzi. La bambina però era di solito una comprimaria un po' sacrificata, [...] era addirittura la piagnona che con la sua fragilità e le sue fisime rallentava il ritmo della avventura".

educators and pure narrators. The former tells stories intending to educate children, but they usually appeal to adults more than youngsters because of their strong morals; the latter wants to charm children presenting real-life experiences and real emotions, feelings, anxieties. These narrators usually fascinate kids since they approach the reader as a complex, intelligent person that has an active role in the construction of the story and on its interpretation (Picherle, 2004; Beseghi, 1994). Pitzorno strongly criticizes edu-narrator, while she declares herself a 'pure narrator' that appeals to children with the power of storytelling. Thus, her influence is not direct, overtly didactic and moralistic, but invites children to actively reflect on delicate, contemporary topics that are part of ordinary life.

For this reason, Pitzorno's portrayal of young girls is not simply quantitative. The writer constructs strong, multifaceted young girls that deal with everyday life problems, such as growth, death, divorce, puberty, and so on (Garavini, 2012; Beseghi, 1992). Pitzorno's girls are round characters that usually perform predominant roles in the plot (Barsotti, 2006). Furthermore, her girls often act in traditionally male spaces: they do not act at home, in the garden or the school, but explore different settings, they find adventures in open, dangerous places, they walk in the cities, they leave the comfort and security of their homes to meet the outside world. So, Pitzorno's girls reach female empowerment and self-awareness through realistic stories that show the difficulties of growing up. Therefore, the writer's female characters are not easy to classify: they have a non-stereotypical, complex identity and present different shades of femininity, going beyond gender canons.

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Another important characteristic in the portrayal of girls and women in Pitzorno's works is the strength and clarity of their emotions: female and, generally, children's feelings are not denied, but deeply explored and considered a natural part of human identities and behaviors. Pitzorno is not afraid of portraying emotions linked to loss, death, suicide, and separation. All feelings are clearly depicted in her pages to present real human (male and female) experiences and, consequently, real characters (Barsotti, 2006). The author also tells stories about extraordinary events that take place in everyday life, in an ordinary context: her attention to common details that suddenly turn into fantasy make identification easier and encourage her young readers to feel closer to her characters. Little boys and girls who read Bianca Pitzorno's works will easily

feel part of the common contexts and settings she presents in her novels (Caso, 2015; Tosi, 2017).

Settings are fundamental in Pitzorno's works: sometimes, her stories are set in ancient times, like Middle Ages, or in future times, but they always present issues related to contemporary times. Even when she writes about fantasy or past worlds, she always selects contemporary hints that encourage the reader to reflect on modern topics. Fantasy and reality are interconnected, and they influence each other: starting from real problems, Pitzorno builds imaginary worlds that mix what is ordinary and extraordinary. Moreover, the writer mixes different genres: fairy tales meet the novel and are revised through a contemporary approach, for example in *L'incredibile storia di Lavinia [Lavinia and the magic ring]*, which is both a fairy tale and a novel at the same time.

In Bianca Pitzorno's novels, the reader can perceive how society is evolving considering gender dynamics, social roles, education, labor, and so on (Garavini, 2012). In Pitzorno's works women have new professions (lawyers, engineers, architects) and new roles in family dynamics. This demonstrates women's social empowerment both in literature and in everyday life. Pitzorno deals with femininity, related both to young girls and to older women, offering children a wide spectrum of possible identities. Moreover, Pitzorno chooses particular names – which she selects from books and calendars on the topic – to give the reader peculiar characters that can be easily remembered (Caso, 2015).

Thus, Pitzorno wants children's literature to be free of any kind of censure and wishes to present to young girls and boys every kind of topic, even uneasy issues, if part of their personal experience or if it can catch their interest. So, in her opinion children should be introduced from an early age to the complexity of life through books that cover different shades of identity and a wide range of topics. Traditional education should be surpassed in order to leave young readers free to select what to read (Barsotti, 2006).

The author's personal style is deeply connected to her personal experience regarding literature and education. Pitzorno grew up in a wealthy, well-instructed family, where she had the possibility to read a great variety of books. Women too, in Pitzorno's family, could read and take part in intellectual meetings. Bianca's mother fell in love with Virginia Woolf's works, while her grandmother – despite being a simple housewife who spent her life at home, as a mother and wife of a Greek and Latin professor – loved to read Grazia Deledda. As a consequence, Bianca Pitzorno became a passionate reader as well.

In addition, little Bianca particularly liked to tell and write stories starting from her personal experience. She explains that writing was her only weapon to retaliate against an adult world that looked at children – and girls in particular – as inferior human beings. In particular, she had a troubled relationship with her teacher, who was a despotic woman that had no respect for her pupils, and specifically for poor girls. Bianca silently looked at her arrogant, violent manners, starting to despise the educational system she was part of: teachers resorted to black pedagogy in order to teach children to be little, perfect adults, without considering their needs, their feelings, their thoughts. Because of her teacher, Bianca started to write against adults and their hypocrisy. Bianca wanted to write about children's lives, showing their perspective in the unbalanced relation they had with adults while trying to encourage disobedience (Caso, 2015). Bianca Pitzorno defines herself as “a little girl who is angry and uses the pen as a weapon to offend and defend herself” (Pitzorno, 1995).

Bianca wrote her stories in the agendas her father received from pharmacies. He gave her those diaries to scribble, but Bianca used them as strong weapons of resistance against her teacher. Her stories became immediately popular amongst her classmates since the evil teacher was usually punished for her behavior. From that moment, Bianca never quit writing and her stories kept on being works of female resistance against an adult, sexist world. Real-life and imagined stories are strongly connected, even if reinterpreted and not purely autobiographical, and for this reason they may have a strong influence on young readers and their perception of their roles in the society. Bianca grew up telling stories and finally became a professional writer that could still hear her young, childish voice. The author declared that, despite being in contact with many children, the only little girl she knows is herself, the girl that she was years ago (Caso, 2015).

Moreover, Pitzorno also wrote many of her books in the 1970s, in a period of resistance and fights, giving an influential contribution which could be contemporary nowadays too. Her books offer complex questions about gender, death, loss, love, giving children the possibility to reflect on compelling topics while reading stories about themselves.

3. Three case-studies

The present paper aims to analyze three books by Bianca Pitzorno addressed to different targets, from primary school readers to teenagers: *Extraterrestre alla pari* [Aliens on par] (1985), *L'incredibile storia di Lavinia* [Lavinia and the magic ring] (1979) and *Principessa Laurentina* [Princess Laurentina] (1990). The three novels focus on female identity presenting little girls' experiences through different plots, strategies, and metaphors. These three works demonstrate

Pitzorno's ability to portray children's identity in different life-phases, from childhood to adolescence, introducing complex topics such as growth, divorce, death, loneliness, revenge, and so on (Beseghi, 1992).

These works can be useful and indirect tools to educate children from different points of view. To begin with, reading these novels, young audiences will be familiar with strong female

Pitzorno's books help to reconsider gender stereotypes and roles from an early age, fostering an inclusive collective imagination that integrates female protagonists. Therefore, as part of children's literary background, these books have a strong influence on gender socialization and on children's perception of what is suitable for boys and girls, men and women

characters who are usually not so common in the pages dedicated to children. Both boys and girls will be fascinated by young girls' adventures and will indirectly reconsider female identity and future possibilities for little girls. Pitzorno's books help to reconsider gender stereotypes and roles from an early age, fostering an inclusive collective imagination that integrates female protagonists. Therefore, as part of children's literary background, these books have a strong influence on gender socialization and on children's perception of what is suitable for boys and girls, men and women. Furthermore, these books also present an occasion to introduce gender diversity and discussions about gender

norm in scholastic curricula: reading Pitzorno's works, children can discuss – helped by teachers and education – issues related to femininity, masculinity, and childhood. Moreover, thanks to their simple but captivating language and their brilliant, non-canonical plots, these books may create a literary sensibility that cannot be given by other low-quality products. Pitzorno's books also present realistic models, real emotions, feelings, reactions. Consequently, they may involve children directly, helping them empathize with young fictional characters that resemble real children's experiences.

a) *Extraterrestre alla pari* [Aliens on par]

Extraterrestre alla pari [Aliens on par] (1979) is a book that openly deals with gender norms and social influences on masculinity and femininity. The novel was inspired by the book *Kommt ein Mädchen geflogen* [Star girl] by Henry Winterfield, that was published in Italy with the title *Piovuta dal cielo* in 1973 by the Italian publisher Martin Pescatore (Casella, 2006).

Mo is an alien that lives on planet Deneb. In Deneb, children have no sex until they are sixteen: boys and girls are educated together with no differences based on gender. Mo spends some years on planet Earth, where (s)he is adopted by the Olivieris family, a middle-class couple that

has no children. The Olivieris immediately want to know Mo's sex to understand how to treat and educate him or her. As remarked by the couple: "If we do not know if he is a boy or a girl, how are we supposed to treat him? Or her?"³ (Pitzorno, 2014, p. 12).

Mo cannot say if (s)he is a boy or a girl: his/her real mother never wondered the child's sex since it is an irrelevant matter in Deneb, where children are neutral. So, the Olivieris have Mo tested to solve this mystery, but the alien's weird answers cannot link him or her to a specific sex. So, the Olivieris decide to treat Mo as a boy: he is taught how to drive, he is the boss of a young boyband, he reads books for boys and cannot play with dolls or take care of his little cousins. Finally, the Olivieris manage to discover Mo's sex through blood analysis: he is a girl! Her education immediately changes: Mo cannot drive anymore, she has to wear different clothes and she is often silenced. As pointed out by Zanfabro:

As a boy, Mo is expected to excel in science and mathematics and in all kinds of team play; he leads a group of boys and is never asked where he is or to come home at a certain time. On the contrary, the education of the young Mo as a girl is described in all its normative restrictions. As a girl, Mo loses the freedom she had as a boy: she cannot do anything, and whenever she tries to disagree with something adults tell her, she is silenced. The only thing she can do – and she couldn't as a boy – is wear coloured clothes rather than only blue ones (Zanfabro, 2017).

Mo reflects on this sudden change and cannot explain it:

What's so wrong in being a girl and not a boy? [...] What would change, finally? A word written on a sheet. Mo kept being Mo. From the moment the doctor spoke about it, not a single atom in her body had changed, not a bit of her being (soul, personality, spirit, intelligence, psyche, call it as you want) had changed. (Pitzorno, 2014, p. 82)⁴

Although Mo's reflections are correct, her life drastically changes when she is discovered to be a girl. Mo feels lost and embarrassed after this shocking event that completely transforms her life on Earth. Mo is not happy with her new life and feels repressed: she wishes to be herself, beyond gender norms. Therefore, the alien girl decides to leave planet Earth and go back to

³ Translated by the author. Original Italian text: "Se non sappiamo se è un maschio o una femmina, qual è il modo in cui lo tratteremo?".

⁴ Original Italian text: "Cosa c'è, in fondo, di tanto drammatico, nel fatto di essere una ragazzina e non un maschio? [...] Cosa cambiava, indefinitiva? Una parola scritta su un pezzo di carta. Mo era ben sempre Mo. Dal momento in cui il dottor Gil aveva parlato, non un solo atomo del suo corpo, non un briciolo del suo modo di essere fatta dentro (anima, carattere, spirito, intelligenza, psiche, chiamatelo come volete) era cambiato".

Deneb. Some of her human friends decide to flee with Mo in search of a new life: Maria cannot stand female education and feels repressed; similarly, Caterina – Mo’s cousin – and Stella want to do the same. Thus, little girls become aware of their condition and decide to rebel and flee to another planet where their identity will be respected and they will have the opportunity to act as they wish, breaking gender standards. Another girl wishes to change her life but chooses a different strategy: Cecilia feels imprisoned as well, but prefers to stay at home and actively rebel the system. She rips her female clothes, she learns how to whistle, she climbs on trees with boys, and so on. Cecilia resists gender norms and performs her own identity without leaving planet Earth.

She will keep resisting with calm and violence, she will keep loving her mother and disobey to her, she will keep beating Luigi and defend him against strangers... There was no reasoning behind her decision: it was a matter of attitude Cecilia felt strong enough, considering her age, to face the entire world (Pitzorno, 2014, p. 111).⁵

This character represents hope for a terrestrial change in women’s education, offering an optimistic, happy ending: the last words of the novel are “Good Luck, Cecilia!”, so to highlight the girl’s importance in transmitting her subversion to other little girls.

Extraterrestre alla pari was published in 1979, a period of feminist riots and discussions, but many critics opposed Pitzorno’s approach in dealing with female issues. For instance, Marcello Argilli, a critic, in 1978 decided not to publish the book since he considered it a simplistic and polemic feminism that was already old, outdated. Pitzorno replied that she simply wanted to represent diversity and portray children that does not feel part of our society, that do not feel free to express their personality because of cultural and social norms (Tosi, 2017; Caso, 2015). When the book was finally published, it was acclaimed and won

Extraterrestre alla pari was undoubtedly revolutionary when it came out in the Seventies. Nonetheless, the constitutive limit of such an operation is that, by subverting gender norms, it reconfirms and reinforces the same norms it purports to subvert. Pitzorno’s story is imbricated in binarism and the only open possibility seems to be given by the existence of another planet, Deneb, where sexual difference and gender identities are less normative than on Earth

⁵ Original Italian text: “Avrebbe continuato a resistere con calma e con violenza, a voler bene a sua madre e a disobbedirle, a picchiare Luigi e a difenderlo dagli estranei... Non c’era un ragionamento alla base della sua decisione: era una questione di carattere. Cecilia si sentiva abbastanza forte, con i suoi otto anni, da tener testa al mondo intero”.

several awards. However, some critics reflected on the book's limits concerning identity and binarism. For example, Zanfabro stated that:

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Although Zanfabro reflections are well-based, Pitzorno's book was a first, strong attempt to open children's mind about gender issues, offering a new path to follow, new rules to subvert. In this work, Pitzorno encourages a non-sexualized identity, beyond female and male expectations, offering children the possibility to reflect and discuss a contemporary topic such as sexual and cultural differences. Although the main focus of the novel is on female identity, the issues raised by the book may be considered from a male perspective as well – or an a-gender perspective - trying to understand dangerous stereotypes that construct masculinity.

b) *L'incredibile storia di Lavinia [Lavinia and the magic ring]*

L'incredibile storia di Lavinia was written in 1981 for a five-year-old friend, Valentina, that wished to hear more stories about poo and pee, a taboo topic that often fascinates children, while disgusts adults. The story of Lavinia was initially transmitted orally, but Valentina liked it so much that Bianca Pitzorno – as she explains in the introduction of the book – decided to print and bind it herself. The work circulated in photocopies for some years and was finally published in a newspaper in 1984 with some notes to help parents in dealing with the taboos of the story. In 1985, the novel was published by EL Edizioni (Caso, 2015; Tosi, 2017).

Lavinia's story was inspired by Hans Christian Andersen well-known fairy tale, *The Little Match Girl*. As Andersen's little protagonist, Lavinia is a young, homeless girl that sells matches in a cold, snowy Milan. Since she cannot sell any matches, she risks dying in the snow during a stormy night, as the original Little Match girl. However, Pitzorno's novel has an unexpected twist: a yellow cab brings a strange woman, with light blue clothes and a wizard's hat. The woman gives Lavinia a magical ring - in exchange for a match - that has a peculiar power: it can turn everything into poo. Lavinia's life immediately changes with her precious ring: she uses it to survive and to blackmail people to get whatever she wants. For example, the little girl extorts expensive clothes to adults and finds anything she needs, even a flat to live in. Lavinia also decides to help people

with her magical powers: she sets some animals free from the zoo and she saves a baby. However, Lavinia is so flattered by her new life that turns herself into poo as well while she was looking at her image in a mirror. Clodoveo, a male friend, saves her and helps her find a safer, calmer life: she finds out that friendship is even more powerful than her magic ring (Pitzorno, 2014).

Pitzorno explained that in her opinion it was important to introduce this silenced topic – poo –

Thus, this humorous and contemporary fairy tale is particularly appreciated by children for two main reasons. Firstly, it clearly speaks about a taboo topic, poop, which is usually eliminated in educative texts since considered not appropriate. Secondly, a powerful, lively female character that breaks social norms and fights against adult power is offered to young

since children's life is usually dictated by a biological rhythm that influences family life as well. When children grow up, this topic turns into something that cannot be spoken (Beseghi, 1991). Consequently, children are attracted by something that is not pronounced by parents and, even more, by teachers and educators. So, the writer fought against social respectability: she wanted to speak about a taboo with irony and make children laugh about it.

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Pitzorno chooses a melancholic story, Andersen's fairy tale, and turns it into an ironical, funny novel. The little match girl is reinterpreted from a different perspective: while in Andersen's tale she is a poor, passive, gentle girl, Lavinia is strong, funny, active, smart, she makes fun of adults and revenges her original character. Pitzorno's protagonist breaks stereotypes linked to femininity and childhood through a weird weapon that ridicules adult figures, highlighting children's necessity to be more powerful and independent. Lavinia wants to revenge herself and all those girls that are forced to act as virtuous, kind, passive children. The novel takes children's side and shows common, unbalanced relationships with adults, breaking gender and cultural norms linked to childhood (Caso, 2015; Tosi, 2017; Casella, 2006).

c) *Principessa Laurentina* [Princess Laurentina]

The novel *Principessa Laurentina* (1990) deals with topics such as adolescence, divorce, death, loss and is targeted to a different audience: teenagers. The young protagonist of the story, Barbara, moves to Milan with her divorced mother when she decides to marry a man and have a new baby, Laurentina, which is called "principessa" (princess) since her father is a noble engineer. In the beginning, Milan appears to Barbara as a horrible, empty city: the girl feels inadequate, lonely, she has no friends and no interests at all. Barbara slowly starts feeling integrated and makes new friends, but when her mother reads her secret diary, the girl decides to leave Milan to live with her father. Soon after this choice, Barbara's mother dies in an accident in Africa during a trip with her husband, and Barbara feels terribly guilty. Every night, Barbara cannot sleep and for this reason invents a story to convince herself that her mother is still alive. The girl cannot stand the truth and finds relief in storytelling, although she perfectly knows that she will have to deal with her mother's absence and with her regrets (Pitzorno, 2014). In the meantime, her little sister, Laurentina, is given to two old aunts, but Barbara decides to kidnap her and take care of her last connection with her mother. Her mother's death reunites the two sisters and suddenly turns Barbara into a woman. Barbara is now independent and can control her own life, despite being a teenager and despite her suffering. Death tragically helps Barbara in personal growth and maturity.

In this novel, readers cannot find Lavinia's magical elements and irony: *Principessa Laurentina* presents a real, dramatic, compelling story. Compared to Lavinia, Barbara experiences more complex feelings: she is lonely, fragile, in a different phase of her life. The young protagonist suffers solitude, she can't deal with her new classmates and friends, she misses home and feels alone, melancholic, tired, powerless. She also has to deal with a physical transformation: Barbara is growing up, but she eats a lot of chocolate, gains weight and has many pimples. Consequently, she also feels physically inadequate. In addition, Barbara cannot stand the relationship she has with her mother and with adults in general: she feels totally passive and defenseless, with no power over her life. Quoting the book: "It's awful when adults make decisions for you, and you cannot rebel in any way. You get so angry that you feel suffocated. You feel like a fly in a spider's web"⁶ (Pitzorno, 2014, p. 64).

⁶ Original Italian text: "È tremendo quando gli adulti decidono per te, e non ti puoi opporre in alcun modo. Ti viene una rabbia impotente che ti soffoca. Ti senti come una mosca nella tela del ragno."

Despite these complex events, the death of her mother is a tragic fact that helps the girl to love another human being and to grow up. Pitzorno softly touches topics such as mourning, adulthood, and responsibilities, giving Barbara a strong personality, which is slowly developed through the story. Although she has to suffer for different reasons, Barbara reaches self-awareness and builds a strong relationship with her sister Laurentina. Family – despite being non-traditional – is portrayed as a source of love and salvation.

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Furthermore, Pitzorno introduces another taboo topic in children's books: death and loss. Besides, the mother's death occurs during a terrible fight between mother and daughter: Barbara's reaction is extremely complex to analyse, but Pitzorno manages to explore the teenager's mind and her inner feeling realistically. Young readers can identify with her because of the truthful reflections and emotions selected by the author. Moreover,

Pitzorno argued that this book could help those readers that lost a parent since it delicately addresses the topic of mourning, choosing teenagers' side while portraying their sensibility. Even if the book is not directly educational, it can be interpreted as an indirect, educative tool in dealing with difficult issues such as death. Moreover, the book offers an overview of different kinds of girlhood and womanhood: Pitzorno portrays many female characters in different phases of their lives, from baby Laurentina to young Barbara, besides the girls' mother and the two old aunts (Casella, 2006). Human identity is deeply explored since the writer offers a wide spectrum of models regarding femininity.

4. Conclusions

Bianca Pitzorno is a renowned author in Italian children's literature and several of her books have been translated in different languages. In Italy, the writer's stories are often used in schools as a tool for education and entertainment. Pitzorno's books can be approached as a starting point to discuss gender roles and gender norms with children in primary schools. Her books often present female characters that go beyond female canons: active and clever girls that explore the world outside and affirm their identity, their personality, their attitudes.

The present paper focused on three well-known work by Pitzorno – *Extraterrestre alla pari* [Aliens on par] (1979), *L'incredibile storia di Lavinia* [Lavinia and the magic ring], and

(1985) *Principessa Laurentina* [Princess Laurentina] (1990) – and highlighted their key points regarding gender identity and female awareness. While brilliantly reconstructing the canon of children fiction, Pitzorno offers modern portrayals of little girls and women, depicting different life-phases and relational dynamics. The writer's approach directly involves young readers with funny, grotesque and sarcastic moments, alternated with dramatic and complex passages, where the character's identity is explored in depth.

Consequently, Bianca Pitzorno's books could be considered as precious educational tools to start a discussion about gender standards with little boys and girls, as these works of fiction counteracts gender stereotypes through the fascination of storytelling. Therefore, teachers, parents and educators should carefully consider her works in order to introduce children to the complexity of gender identity from an early age and through a familiar medium, children's literature.

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How to cite this paper:

Forni, D. (2020). Breaking female stereotypes: Bianca Pitzorno's girls and the power of literature on gender socialization. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 62-79. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.15998

De bosques, sueños, galaxias y mares: poemas y narrativas para niños y adolescentes

Of Forests, Dreams, Galaxies, and Seas: Poems and Narratives for Children and Adolescents

De boscos, somnis, galàxies i mars: poemes i narratives per a infants i adolescents

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Extended abstract

To talk about children's and youth's literature in Latin America is to talk about the history of oppression, geography, fauna, multiple languages, and culture of the Latin American nations. Latin American cultural borders, with distinctive geographical spaces, have provided cultural conditions for the creation of a unique regional children's and youth's literature permeated by the linguistic and historical richness of the Latin American nations; which, even, has gone as far as the creation of sidereal spaces in which children can dream. Latin America cannot and should not be seen as a homogeneous conglomerate of nations, because the linguistic and cultural diversity of the countries that comprise it goes far beyond the generalized idea of political turmoil created and supported by imperialistic nations. These heterogeneous nations have created a universal children's literature that it is rooted in Latin American regional cultures. Therefore, it is not surprising that a series of themes stand out in Latin American children's literature, which not only adhere to different regional aspects, but are also composed by thematic elements which are part of world children's and youth's literature. All these themes are as well a fundamental part of the development of children's literature in the Americas.

In the poems and stories studied in this essay, the themes revolve around images of Latin American fauna and flora and intergalactic imaginary travels. Likewise, the themes are interrelated with contemporary topics, such as sexuality, marginalization, destruction of the environment and personal harassment; topics not too often very covered in Latin American children's literature. In the essay I am examining the children's literature of Latin America within the perspective of gender, cultural values, and environment. The study is based on a thematic analysis of children's literature written by Bella Clara Ventura (Colombia / Mexico), Amarilis Hidalgo de Jesús (Puerto Rico), María Luisa Lazzaro (Venezuela), Ana María Guillén Lazzaro (Venezuela) and María Juliana Villanueva (Puerto Rico). The essay has been divided into two parts: "Flora and Fauna, Gender and Environment" and "The Fight for the Environment in an Intergalactic Journey." All themes are combined through images of animals, or journeys to other galaxies based on the recovery of the environment. In the first part, the stories and poems are analyzed within the context of animals whose voices are the major narrative voices in the story, thus creating an environmentalist and gender discourse through a progressive fauna discourse. In the second part, the environmental

theme evolves around the voice of a girl, Aurora, and her travel to other planets in search of help to save Earth. Stories, poems and a short novel/long short story have been chosen as the basis of the study that, to a certain extent, symbolize the new path of Latin American children's writing within a spatial, narrative and thematic framework that breaks with the traditional patriarchal statutes of the children's literature in the literary history of Latin America. In the first part "Flora, Fauna, Gender and Environment" we analyze poems written by Bella Clara Ventura, a poem and short story written by Amarilis Hidalgo de Jesús, a poem written by María Luisa Lazzaro, and a story written by Ana María Guillen Lazzaro within a cultural, environmental and gender perspective. In the second part, "The fight for the Environment in an Intergalactic Journey", we analyze the short novel *Aurora and her intergalactic travels* by María Juliana Villafañe (Puerto Rico). Unlike the other texts studied, in this short novel/long short story the themes of gender, culture and environment are presented within an extrasensory and sidereal perspective seen through the eyes of a girl and her friendship with a prince from another galaxy.

In the texts studied, similar themes are explored within a universal cultural context through the lived experience of each of the characters, or poetic voices. Similarly, there is a literary and cultural connection in these texts that revolves around the development of an analogous Latin American theme with linguistic elements that, although different in each nation, are also part of the Latin American cultural conglomerate. Each text represents the cultural and social reality that Latin American nations live through political, gender, cultural, and religious conflicts. Without a doubt, this conglomeration of themes is important when approaching the study of the literary production of children's literature in Latin American societies, where fauna and human imagination echo the social, political and ecological problems that these nations have passed through. Therefore, when entering his study, a researcher necessarily has to know the history and idiosyncrasies of the Latin American people in order to understand the children's literary production of Latin American nations.

Keywords: Latin American children's literature, children's poetry, miscenegenation

Resumen

Hablar de literatura infantil y juvenil en Latinoamérica es hablar de la historia del mestizaje, la geografía y la cultura de nuestras naciones. Las fronteras culturales latinoamericanas, con distintivos rasgos geográficos, han dado pie a la creación de una literatura para niños y una literatura juvenil permeada por la riqueza lingüística e histórica de nuestras naciones; la que, inclusive, ha llegado hasta la creación de espacios siderales en los cuales los niños puedan soñar. Latinoamérica no puede ni debe ser vista como un conglomerado homogéneo de naciones, puesto que la diversidad lingüística y cultural de los países que la conforman va mucho más allá de la idea generalizadora que se ha creado de estas naciones. Todo este conjunto de naciones heterogéneas ha creado una literatura infantil que, si bien se ha arraigado en las culturas regionales latinoamericanas, también se ha universalizado. Por ende, no es de extrañar que en la literatura infantil se destaquen una serie de temas, que no solo se adhieren a distintos aspectos regionales, sino que asimismo se mezclan con elementos temáticos que son también parte de literaturas infantiles y juveniles mundiales. Todos estos temas son parte fundamental de los poemas y cuentos que se estudian en este trabajo, cuyas temáticas giran en torno a las imágenes de la fauna y la flora latinoamericana y viajes intergalácticos. Asimismo, los temas se interrelacionan con tópicos contemporáneos, como la sexualidad, la marginación, la destrucción del ambiente y el acoso personal; temas no muy tratados en la literatura para niños latinoamericana.

Palabras clave: Literatura infantil hispanoamericana, poesía infantil, mestizaje

Resum

Parlar de literatura infantil i juvenil a Llatinoamèrica és parlar de la història del mestissatge, la geografia i la cultura de les nostres nacions. Les fronteres culturals llatinoamericanes, amb distintius trets geogràfics, han donat peu a la creació d'una literatura per a infants i una literatura juvenil amerada de la riquesa lingüística i històrica de les nostres nacions, la qual, fins i tot, ha arribat fins a la creació d'espais siderals en els quals els infants puguen somniar. Llatinoamèrica no pot, ni ha de ser vista, com un conglomerat homogeni de nacions, atès que la diversitat lingüística i cultural dels països que la conformen, van molt més enllà de la idea generalitzadora que s'ha creat d'aquestes nacions. Tot aquest conjunt de nacions heterogènies ha creat una literatura infantil que, si bé ha arrelat en les cultures regionals llatinoamericanes, també s'ha universalitzat. En conseqüència, no és estrany que a la literatura infantil es destaquen una sèrie de temes que no sols s'adhereixen a distints aspectes regionals, sinó que també es barregen amb elements temàtics que són també part de literatures infantils i juvenils mundials. Tots aquests temes són part fonamental dels poemes i contes que s'estudien en aquest treball, les temàtiques dels quals giren entorn a les imatges de la fauna i la flora llatinoamericanes i viatges intergalàctics. Així mateix, els temes s'interrelacionen amb tòpics contemporanis com la sexualitat, la marginació, la destrucció de l'ambient i l'assetjament, temes no molt tractats en la literatura per a infants llatinoamericans.

Paraules clau: Literatura infantil i juvenil llatinoamericana, poesia infantil, mestissatge.

1. Introducción

La literatura infantil latinoamericana se caracteriza por el uso de imágenes que aluden a la fauna, la flora y su geografía. Cada imagen a su vez se conecta con las distintas culturas que se han desarrollado en el continente americano. Por tanto, no es de extrañar que cada nación latinoamericana se acerque a su literatura infantil de una manera muy peculiar y escueta, a la vez que la integra a ese arcoíris cultural y lingüístico que arropa al continente americano. Un arcoíris desintegrado en mares, ríos, montañas y animales coloridos que se entremezclan con la historia y la cultura de cada nación latinoamericana y el asedio cultural, económico y de su vecino del norte. Teniendo en consideración lo anterior, en este ensayo propongo hacer un estudio temático de la literatura infantil escrita por Bella Clara Ventura (Colombia/México), Amarilis Hidalgo de Jesús (Puerto Rico), María Luisa Lazzaro (Venezuela), Ana María Guillén Lazzaro (Venezuela) y María Juliana Villanueva (Puerto Rico). El ensayo se ha dividido en dos partes: *Flora y fauna, género y medio ambiente* y *La lucha por el ambiente en un viaje intergaláctico*. Ambos temas se compaginan mediante imágenes de animales o viajes a otras galaxias basados en la recuperación del medioambiente. En la primera parte, se analizan cuentos y poemas en los cuales se le da voz a los animales, creándose así un discurso ambientalista y de

género a través de un discurso de fauna progresista. En la segunda parte, se vuelve a retomar el tema ambientalista en la voz de una niña, Aurora, y su viaje a otros planetas en busca de ayuda para salvar a la Tierra. Se han escogido como base de estudio cuentos, poemas y una novela corta que, en cierta medida, simbolizan el nuevo camino de la escritura infantil latinoamericana dentro de un marco espacial, narrativo y temático que rompe con los estatutos patriarcales tradicionales de dicha literatura en la historia literaria de América Latina.

2. Flora, fauna, género y medio ambiente

En esta parte analizamos poemas de Bella Clara Ventura, un poema y un cuento de Amarilis Hidalgo de Jesús, un poema de María Luisa Lazzaro y un cuento Ana María Guillen Lazzaro dentro de un ámbito cultural, medioambiental y de género.

2.1. Bella Clara Ventura, *Hechizos de Bosque* (Colombia/México)

La idea del multiculturalismo ha sido conectada a las injusticias sociales y su habilidad de reconocer diferencias culturales y raciales, normas sociales y perspectivas personales mientras

En estos poemas la voz poética alaba el poder de la naturaleza y la fauna a través del cántico de aves, mamíferos, peces, animales mitológicos y sirenas dentro de un marco de hechizos; los que levantan la voz por medio de personificaciones y cantos melodiosos, que recuerdan muchas veces, versos bíblicos, fábulas o historias mitológicas que hemos oído desde niños

se representan realidades sociales, políticas y económicas (Lalas, 2007). La judía colombo-mexicana, como se autodenomina Bella Clara Ventura, no ajena a esto en su libro de poemas *Hechizos de Bosque* recoge una serie de imágenes de animales universales y regionales a los que da voz a través de los versos de su poesía. En estos poemas la voz poética alaba el poder de la naturaleza y la fauna a través del cántico de aves, mamíferos, peces, animales mitológicos y sirenas dentro de un marco de hechizos; los que levantan la voz por medio de personificaciones y cantos melodiosos, que recuerdan muchas veces, versos bíblicos, fábulas o

historias mitológicas que hemos oído desde niños. Cada poema está acompañado de un simple dibujo del animal o personaje en blanco y negro. La voz poética tiende a ser exclamativa y precisa al describir la función de cada ente dentro del reino animal y se entremezcla en muchos de los poemas con voces de la mitología griega, como por ejemplo en “Caballito de Mar” en donde se conecta al personaje con la mitología europea, “Erguido, rey de historia. Mitología entre burbujas de luz” (p. 12) o en “El camello” en donde se describe, paso a paso, la constitución del animal, su piel y su función dentro del transporte en el desierto, a la vez que se relaciona con la

temática árabe a través de la mención de un personaje de sus cuentos, “Al compás de Alí Baba, su sombra usurpadora de sueños” (p. 13).

Muchas veces en esta colección de poemas de adolescentes, el lenguaje poético es parco y accesible a la imaginación de aquellos; otras veces se vuelve duro y hasta un poco grotesco para distintos tipos de sensibilidad humana; lo que se puede ver en el poema “Las palomas” mediante el uso de un lenguaje grotesco y disonante, en el que se utilizan palabras denominadas “malas” o fuertes para el lenguaje de una persona cuyo público es adolescente, “la cabeza del héroe adornada de excrementos, recuerda que aún en la eternidad la mierda nos cae a todos por igual” (p. 44). Por otra parte, en el poema “El pato” el lenguaje toma un tono más erudito y complicado para un niño, a la vez que se refleja en la temática de un cuento clásico transformado en un símbolo de libertad humana. De igual modo, la voz poética oscila entre el uso de un lenguaje simple y complicado, en el cual la historia del patito feo se transforma en la ruptura con el miedo a la libertad. Una ruptura en la que la imagen de la luna convertida en espejo y su relación con los cantos de eunucos, seres mutilados sexualmente por el poder masculino, combinados con las imágenes de “bajo una noche luminosa” se rebelan para ir en busca de un camino perdido, ya bien sexual, social o racial representado en el patito feo convertido en cisne o el eunuco, “Una noche luminosa y de cantos de eunuco, la luna se convirtió en espejo” (p. 41). Pero por un momento, no sabemos a cuál de los tres mundos terminará uniéndose la voz poética, si al del cisne bello, “El patito feo comprobó cómo sus plumas cambiaban de volumen. Despejando miedos y dolores. En cisne se transformó” (p. 41) o al de las imágenes del canto de los eunucos, que dentro de su mutilada sexualidad se han transformado en cantos de voces suaves y melódicas, “Sonriente, volvió a la laguna donde lanzó su último lamento” (p. 41). Así pues, su transformación de patito feo a cantos de eunuco y finalmente a cisne, visto a través de su imagen en el espejo de la luna, le hace ver que no es distinto sino diverso, por lo cual, al romper con su último lamento, rompe con el mito de la fealdad y se convierte en el portavoz de una libertad racial, social y de género.

Botelho & Rudman han expresado que existe una dualidad en la representación de discursos culturales e históricos en la literatura de niños (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 104). Por ello es importante hacer hincapié, según Malcolm & Lowery (2011), en la representación de los temas de raza y clase (Malcolm & Lowery, 2011, p. 44). En *Hechizos de Bosque*, asimismo hay poemas en los que los estereotipos se revierten para así validar un discurso racial y de género, en donde la voz poética se apodera de una voz femenina para darle fuerza al mensaje de rebeldía que se encarna en el comportamiento rebelde de una oveja negra, “escudriña a sus hermanas, Blancas y dóciles siguen al pastor. La oveja negra acorta el paso. Siente y huele diferente. No obedece”

(p. 39). En el poemario también se alude al tema de la ruptura humana con el papel tradicional de la mujer dentro de la sociedad patriarcal. Un ejemplo de esto lo tenemos en “Las sirenas” en cuyas estrofas el canto a la idea tradicional de la libertad femenina emerge al principio del verso, “A veces nos olvidamos de ser mujeres” (p. 47) y “Ariscas nos asumimos como sirenas” (p. 47), el cual se va deconstruyendo a medida que avanza el poema y cuya libertad se rescata de ese laberinto de opresión social al cual se expone la mujer, “El cuerpo se cierra. Los sentimientos se desdibujan de la entrega. Nos enjoyamos de escamas” (p. 47). De este modo, el tema del poder de la mujer de controlar su cuerpo se vuelve a retomar en “La serpiente” en donde la poeta transforma la historia bíblica de Adán y Eva al convertir a la serpiente en ave, “Algún día pájaro fue” (p. 46) y al enfrentarla a Dios la hace portadora de un discurso de rebeldía del cual emerge una voz femenina. La voz poética, asimismo, hace hincapié en que el animal ha sido castigado por su atrevimiento y, a diferencia de los otros poemas, lo que empieza como un signo progresista femenino, termina enredado en el discurso tradicional de opresión femenina religioso con el cual ha ido jugando la voz poética, “Rastrera, transgredió vedas. Tentó al hombre con el afán de igualdad” (p. 46). En este poema primero se le da voz, libertad y poder a la serpiente para terminar contraponiéndolo al discurso tradicional bíblico anti-mujer. A esta temática de opresión femenina se añade el poema “Los cóndores” en el cual se presenta la visión tradicional bíblica de, “hasta que la muerte nos separe” (p. 22) mediante las imágenes del comportamiento de las parejas de cóndores ante el ciclo de vejez y muerte. De este modo, emergen discursos que, si bien son contradictorios, también rompen con los patrones de género establecidos para la mujer por siglos.

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2.2. Cuentos de Isla y Mar de Amarilis Hidalgo de Jesús (Puerto Rico)

Las múltiples invenciones del “yo” en la poesía infantil tienen que ver con presentar el poema dentro de una visión de infancia, mediatizada por una voz poética adulta que se aproxima al modo de ver la vida de un niño (Bajour, n.d., p. 4). Los personajes de animales son la ruta perfecta para crear este entorno y relación entre un lector adulto y un receptor niño puesto que emisor o personaje es el que se encarga de transmitir la información con la que el lector u oyente niño se puede identificar, como se identificó Aydén, un niño de 5 años viviendo en Carolina del Sur, “Yo quiero ser como Are y Pita o como la olita, quiero regresar a Puerto Rico” (2018, febrero

18). Y es dentro de este esquema poético de identificación que analizamos el poema “Are y Pita”, ya que en este poema la relación receptor y emisor se complementa a través de la narración poética. Es decir, la historia de dos tortugas caribeñas se transforma en un diálogo entre receptor y emisor que va más allá de una simple narración poética, puesto que las tortugas se convierten en un símbolo de resistencia ante los ojos de un pequeño espectador, que ya bien sea caribeño o de otra zona del planeta, se identifican con el mensaje de resistencia cultural y espacial que emerge detrás de la historia, “Are y Pita son dos tortuguitas que viven en un estanque en el centro de un país. A Are le gusta comer y a Pita dormir” (p. 9). Por tanto, la voz poética ha utilizado elementos de la cultura antillana que asocian a las tortugas con metáforas culturales que representan a la cultura musical del Caribe. Así, el elemento común que las une

Por tanto, la voz poética ha utilizado elementos de la cultura antillana que asocian a las tortugas con metáforas culturales que representan a la cultura musical del Caribe. Así, el elemento común que las une es el baile y la música que, a su vez, se convierten en resistencia cultural ante la cultura anglosajona

es el baile y la música que, a su vez, se convierten en resistencia cultural ante la cultura anglosajona, “Are baila al son de la bachata y Pita nada cuando oye salsa” (p. 9). Por ende, el sueño de regresar, “a su ambiente natural” (p. 9) se convierte en la metáfora de liberación que va guiando al receptor, el niño, a utilizar su imaginación para ir visualizando el viaje del regreso, “Are y Pita son dos tortuguitas exploradoras de rutas buscando cómo llegar a una playa tropical, a la arena antillana, nido eterno del tinglar” (p. 9). Mediante este viaje de regreso, las tortugas se convierten en símbolos de fuerza y esperanza. Por lo tanto, para un niño de origen caribeño que vive en la zona

fría de los Estados Unidos, Are y Pita se tornan en modelos a seguir; y para un niño que no se identifica con esa cultura, Are y Pita son simplemente dos tortuguitas buscando su camino al mar. Es decir, como dice Ana Romero, “En la literatura infantil cuanto más cerca del lector estén los personajes más se identifica con la psicología de los personajes y más le gusta a un niño el libro que está leyendo” (Romero, 2012, p. 2).

Para crear literatura dirigida a niños se necesitan utilizar colores, espacios y personajes que atraigan la atención de un niño. Por eso es importante, los colores que se usen y el modo en que se configuran las ilustraciones que muchas veces muestran la manera en que se desarrolla la historia. En el caso del Caribe los colores en las ilustraciones son esenciales si la temática gira alrededor del mar, la tierra y la libertad. En *Cuentos de Isla y Mar* hay tres cuentos que se relacionan con la temática del mar y la libertad. En la “Pequeña ola” el tema central es la búsqueda de identidad de una olita perdida en el mar. Esa ola es la representación de la

dicotomía cultural puertorriqueña, del ser o no ser, del pertenecer o no pertenecer a ese otro Caribe, cuya historia los abraza y a la vez los distancia, por la situación colonial de Puerto Rico. Por eso, abre el cuento con, “Había una pequeña olita que vivía solita en el mar. Como no tenía la protección de otras olas, las algas marinas la cuidaban de vientos huracanados” (p. 1). Esa olita veía desde la distancia a otras olas similares a ella, a las cuales no se acercaba y de las cuales se sentía parte, “Un día, allá en la lejanía, muy adentro del Mar Caribe, la olita vio a un grupo de olas cuyo vaivén y ritmo caribeño se sentía en todas las islas del archipiélago antillano... tururú... quimbambá... las olas cantaban y bailaban” (p. 2). Hasta que un día las gaviotas al verla triste le dicen, “Te llevaremos con tus hermanas al mar de las Antillas”. La historia termina con la olita feliz, “paseándose con sus hermanas por el Mar Caribe y las Antillas”. La intención de la voz narrativa de este cuento es la de mostrarle a un niño que la unidad es parte esencial de la sobrevivencia humana, puesto que “En la literatura infantil cuanto más cerca del lector estén los personajes más se identifica con la psicología de los personajes y más le gusta a un niño el libro que está leyendo” (Romero, 2012, s.p.). Esta misma idea se emplea en el cuento “Pancholo” en donde el tema de la libertad perdida se convierte en el eje motor del relato, “De momento sintió una mano fría que lo aprisionaba... ¡Pobre de nuestro amigo! Esta vez no escaparía” (Hidalgo de Jesús, 2016, p. 6). En este cuento hay suspenso y acción. El receptor, en cierta medida, se convierte en el personaje y vive a través de Pancholo su felicidad y sufre con él la tristeza de ser sacado de su ambiente natural y trasladado a otro ambiente que no reconoce. Asimismo, el tema del cuento sirve para mostrarle la malicia a un niño y darle el mensaje de que no todas las personas son buenas.

En “La ceiba”, por otra parte, la temática gira en torno a la destrucción del ambiente y cómo un árbol emblemático de la resistencia colonial en Puerto Rico, sobrevive a los siglos de aniquilación cultural a los que ha sido sometido la isla, “La ceiba resistió los embates de los huracanes, los leñadores y de los modernos constructores... Entonces pasó inevitable. La ceiba se convirtió en árbol centenario, cuya historia silbaron por siglos los pájaros del archipiélago antillano” (p. 12). La ceiba también es sinónimo de la resistencia lingüística a la imposición de un idioma extranjero, inglés y que, por eso a pesar de tanto asedio cultural y lingüístico, aún se sigue hablando español en la isla. Aunque el tema sea poco complicado para un niño, lo que el niño recordará de la historia es que la perseverancia humana no tiene límites, lo que en cierta medida lo acerca a los intereses de lectura que “forman parte de su edad” (Sandra, 2011, p. 1).

2.3. María Luisa Lazzaro, “Una mazorca soñadora” (Venezuela) y Ana María Guillén Lazzaro, “El gato y la Begonia ya ni se asustan ni asombran” (Venezuela).

En la creación de los cuentos para niños tenemos que darnos a la tarea de buscar modos de mostrar las cosas como verdaderas a la vez que las conectamos con el tono infantil que desarrollaremos en el cuento. Asimismo, hay que enfocarse en metáforas y temas que cautiven la atención del niño receptor. Por eso, Guillen Lazzaro (1999) y Lazzaro (1997) se valen de elementos de la naturaleza para ubicar la temática de sus cuentos. Lázzaro (1997) en su cuento “Una mazorca soñadora” desde un principio utiliza la imagen de una mazorca soñadora que, “quiso cambiar su destino inevitable” (Lazzaro, 1997, p. 1), para aproximarse al tema de la maternidad y la sobreprotección y enseñanzas maternas al luchar por la libertad; y al igual que

Así poco a poco mientras va avanzando el cuento emerge la imagen de una madre protectora que solo se preocupa en hacer de sus hijos (los granitos de maíz) seres fuertes y autosuficientes. Para ello se crea una comunicación entre madre e hijos a la vez que los protege y va preparando para la vida

la señora mazorca, sus hijos también escapan al final del poema de lo que sería su fatídico destino, “Saltaron tan pronto Comprendieron el destino Y corriendo, corriendo, llegaron a las estrellas. Se montaron en el sol. Se metieron en la luna” (p. 14). En este cuento la protagonista, mazorca venezolana, quiere cambiar su destino, a la vez que se afana en proteger a sus hijos de ese destino, puesto que, “Ser arepa, Chicha, Cachapa O bollos tiernos no quería” (p. 1-2). Así poco a poco mientras va avanzando el cuento emerge la imagen de una madre protectora que solo se preocupa en hacer de sus hijos (los granitos de maíz) seres fuertes y autosuficientes. Para ello se crea una comunicación entre

madre e hijos a la vez que los protege y va preparando para la vida, “Mientras maduraba fue hablando con sus hijos granitos refulgentes de energía y vida” (p. 3). Del mismo modo, la mazorca se da en la misión de irlos educando en el desarrollo de sus cinco sentidos a la vez que les da un espacio de esparcimiento para su crecimiento intelectual y corporal, “Mazorca Madre entendiendo el alma de sus granitos amarillos fue aflojando la carne prisionera de sus niños” (p. 12). Pero como la protección materna no dura toda una vida, lo cual es el mensaje del cuento, los granitos al verse amenazados de ser separados y cocinados, toman la determinación de huir de su posible fatal destino para ir en busca de uno más progresivo, “Y comenzaron a crecer Germinando maná Música celestial. Alimento de ángeles llegando hasta la galaxia más vital del universo” (p. 16). Digamos que, al liberar a sus personajes, Lazzaro logra reestablecer el balance entre la vida y la muerte y la lucha por la sobrevivencia humana.

Ana María Guillén Lazzaro en “El gato y la begonia ya ni se asustan ni asombran”, utiliza la relación entre una niña, su mascota y su planta para adentrarse en el tema de las desavenencias entre un gato y una flor, al mismo tiempo que toca el tema del acoso (*bullying*) en la vida de los personajes. Fifi es un gato que le tiene rabia a una begonia, “... la quería arañar. Se la quedaba mirando y mirando como si quisiera almorzar” (Guillén Lazzaro, 1999, p. 1). Begonia es una mata que en las noches cuando nadie la ve se burla de Fifi y lo enreda entre sus hojas, “y lo mareaba y mareaba” (p. 8). Como el problema de quién acosa a quién no es tan claro, la autora utiliza un personaje neutro, la niña, para que se encargue de hablarle a la begonia de los miedos del gato y del porqué de su comportamiento, “¿Por qué en vez de perseguir a Fifi no juegas con él? ¿No ves que se asusta?” (p. 10). De este modo, se resuelve el asunto y los dos personajes enemigos terminan siendo amigos, “Desde ese día Fifi y la begonia juegan de día y duermen a la noche” (p. 11). En este cuento el niño se identifica de inmediato con la emisora, la niña, quien sirve de intermediaria entre la relación mutua de acoso entre ambos personajes, la begonia y el gato. Esto lleva a que se reitere el mensaje de aprender a enfrentarse y defenderse de un acosador. Del mismo modo, lleva al niño a entender que existen otros medios para hacer justicia y que la violencia no siempre será la respuesta a la injusticia. Finalmente, el texto también da el mensaje de que puede existir una amistad entre dos enemigos si surge un diálogo entre ellos.

3. La lucha por el ambiente en un viaje intergaláctico

En esta parte analizamos la novela corta Aurora y sus viajes intergalácticos de María Juliana Villafañe (Puerto Rico). A diferencia de los otros textos estudiados, en esta novela corta los temas de género, cultura y ambiente son presentados dentro de una perspectiva extrasensorial y sideral vista a través de los ojos de una niña y su amistad con un príncipe de otra galaxia.

3.1. Aurora y Sus Viajes intergalácticos de María Juliana Villafañe (Puerto Rico).

Dentro de la literatura infantil también entra la temática de viajes intergalácticos y sus personajes. Se puede decir que es una literatura orientada más hacia un público infantil de mayor edad, dado que los textos son más extensos y cuentan con pocas imágenes por lo que es difícil para los más pequeños poder leerlos. Mas, sin embargo, para un preadolescente este tipo de texto se convierte en una lectura agradable y fascinante. Este es el caso de *Aurora y sus viajes intergalácticos* escrito por María Juliana Villafañe. El libro se puede considerar como un cuento largo o una novelita corta cuya temática engancha a cualquier niño lector, como ha dicho una niña puertorriqueña, “¿Qué es lo que tiene este cuento, que lo empiezas a leer y no lo puedes soltar?” (2003, octubre 22). En el cuento o novela corta la autora trata el tema de la imaginación humana, “Y así poco a poco, en sus escapadas con Milsy Aurora fue descubriendo otros mundos,

otros seres, que, aunque diferentes, la llenaban de felicidad” (p. 3), a la vez que aboga por la preservación de la naturaleza mediante el reciclaje, que el amor no tiene fronteras espaciales y que tal vez, quién sabe, en otras galaxias existe una vida muy parecida a la del planeta Tierra. Es decir, como apunta Adriana Manzanares, “hay una reflexión acerca de la existencia humana, de la vida y de los sueños, de la felicidad que no es un estado infinito del ser, de la importancia de creer, de lo bueno que es ser agradecido” (s.n. 2018). Esa vida es explorada por Villafañe en la historia de Aurora y sus amigos a través de la personificación de una estrella y una latita oxidada.

Al principio de la novela, la autora le da características humanas a la estrella Milsy, quien se convierte en el ente que guía a Aurora hacia su encuentro con el príncipe Siul en otra galaxia. Es decir, estamos ante la inversión de la historia cristiana del nacimiento de Jesús y la estrella de oriente. Por eso, la historia se vuelve en la búsqueda del amor eterno y el dolor por el que tiene que atravesar la protagonista para conseguirlo, “Se negaba a ver a sus amigos, no quería hablar ni con Milsy, la estrella luminosa, con la que recorría el mundo, ni con Kixt, su amigo intergaláctico de otra especie que fue el intermediario entre ella y el príncipe para la cita inigualable” (Villafañe 2018, p. 5). Del mismo modo, Milsy se convierte en el motor de la comunicación humana entre Aurora, sus amigos, el príncipe y los otros personajes intergalácticos que lo rodean.

La historia de Aurora y su compenetración con Mitsy se profundiza en el cuento al entrar en la narración el tema de la destrucción del ambiente con la personificación de una latita oxidada, llamada Morena que se convierte en su alter ego. Ella es quien de ahora en adelante medirá el pasar del tiempo en los viajes intergalácticos de la protagonista. La acompañará a todas partes dirigiéndole los pasos en la tierra y en sus aventuras intergalácticas. También será su consuelo en momentos de tristeza y soledad y será la que ayuda a Aurora a completar el ciclo desdoblamiento humano entre el planeta y otras galaxias.

4. Conclusión

Mirar hacia la visión del entendimiento de la vida de un niño o un preadolescente no es tarea fácil para ningún autor que se dedique a escribir este tipo de literatura. Se requiere paciencia, observación y mucha imaginación para lograr el cometido, y a un buen ilustrador que logre captar el sentido de la palabra en una ilustración colorida y detallada. Los textos aquí descritos y brevemente analizados son fuentes literarias latinoamericanas, que si bien no conocidas, logran captar la atención de un lector niño o preadolescente al mismo tiempo que son cuentos y poemas ambientalistas en los que los discursos de género y solidaridad humana están muy presentes. Por ejemplo, los poemas de Bella Clara Ventura trascienden la idea de la mujer sumisa

judeo-cristiana vista a través del crisol de distintas voces narrativas que rompen con los discursos tradicionales bíblicos del viejo testamento. “Are y Pita” y “La olita” de Amarilis Hidalgo de Jesús, por otra parte, simbolizan enclaves culturales que se rebelan al exilio, asimilación y aislamiento cultural. A esta temática se añade la del acoso de género expuesto en “El gato y la begonia ya ni se asustan ni asombran” de Ana María Guillén Lazzaro. No muy distante al tema de las disputas familiares, está el tema de la desestructuración familiar desarrollado por María Luisa Lazzaro en “Una mazorca soñadora” y la lucha de una madre para mantener la unidad familiar protegiendo a los hijos de la maldad humana. Un tema muy parecido dentro de un contexto ambientalista, lo presenta Amarilis Hidalgo de Jesús en “Pancholo, el isleño” y “La ceiba” en donde el tema del desarraigo humano y la lucha por la existencia se combinan con la temática ambientalista tan presente en la historia contemporánea de las islas del Caribe. Dicha temática la retoma María Juliana Villanueva en Aurora y sus viajes intergalácticos a través de la historia de una niña y su lucha por mejorar el ambiente para proteger al planeta y su isla. Asimismo, en los textos estudiados se exploran temáticas parecidas dentro de un contexto cultural universal a través de la experiencia vivida por cada uno de los personajes o voces poéticas. De igual modo, existe una conexión literaria y cultural en estos textos que gira en torno al desarrollo de una temática similar latinoamericana con elementos lingüísticos que, si bien son distintos en cada nación, también son parte del conglomerado cultural latinoamericano. Cada texto representa la realidad cultural y social que viven las naciones latinoamericanas a través de conflictos políticos, de género, cultura y religión. Sin lugar a dudas, este conglomerado de temas es importante al aproximarse al estudio de la producción literaria de literatura infantil en las sociedades latinoamericanas, en donde la fauna y la imaginación humana se hacen eco de los problemas sociales, políticos y ecológicos que viven estas naciones. Por tanto, al adentrarse en su estudio un investigador, por fuerza tiene que conocer la historia e idiosincrasia del pueblo latinoamericano para poder entender la producción literaria infantil de las naciones latinoamericanas.

Cada texto representa la realidad cultural y social que viven las naciones latinoamericanas a través de conflictos políticos, de género, cultura y religión. Sin lugar a dudas, este conglomerado de temas es importante al aproximarse al estudio de la producción literaria de literatura infantil en las sociedades latinoamericanas, en donde la fauna y la imaginación humana se hacen eco de los problemas sociales, políticos y ecológicos que viven estas naciones

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How to cite this paper:

Hidalgo de Jesus, A. (2020). De bosque, sueños, galaxias y mares: cuentos, poemas y narrativa para niños y adolescentes. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 80-92. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.17012

Gender in Literature. Women's Position from traditional to modern society

Género en la literatura. La posición de mujer en la literatura desde la sociedad tradicional hasta la moderna

Gènere en la literatura. La posició de dona en la literatura des de la societat tradicional fins la moderna

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Abstract

The remarkable influence of gender studies in recent years on the Greek educational system has inevitably led to the integration of a multi-focal thematic section entitled "Gender in Literature" in the new Lyceum curriculum. This section truly captures the interest of adolescents, as it stimulates the approach of literary texts and promotes constructive discussions that often lead to further enjoyment of reading. On this base a collaboration between University of Athens and Anavryta Model Lyceum was carried out in Literature class in both institutions. This article aims to present the main stages of this cooperation on the subject of "Literary Representations of Women's roles from traditional to modern society", as the institutional framework for teaching literature clearly supports the historicity of texts. Besides explaining the rationale behind this educational action, we are proposing a selection of literary texts that were used in class and presenting the objectives and didactic methods practiced, the type of tasks assigned to the pupils as well as the skills developed by them. The paper insists on certain texts that are particularly valuable for this approach and offers examples of taking advantage of contextual elements. Finally, we are showing how this collaboration became a real example of extroversion for both institutions and we are attempting a comprehensive evaluation of this project and its impact within the students' and teachers' community.

Key words: gender in literature, woman's position, literary education, female writers.

Resumen

La notable influencia de los estudios de género en los últimos años en el sistema educativo griego ha llevado inevitablemente a la integración de un apartado temático multifocal titulado "Género en la literatura" en el nuevo plan de estudios de la Educación Secundaria. Este apartado capta, de hecho,

el interés de los adolescentes ya que estimula el acercamiento a los textos literarios y promueve discusiones constructivas que a menudo conducen a un mayor disfrute de la lectura. Sobre esta base, se llevó a cabo una colaboración entre la Universidad de Atenas y el Liceo Modelo de Anavryta en el marco de la asignatura de Literatura en ambas instituciones. El objetivo de este artículo es presentar los puntos básicos de esta cooperación cuyo eje temático era "Representaciones literarias de los roles de la mujer en la literatura desde la sociedad tradicional hasta la moderna", puesto que el marco institucional para la enseñanza de la literatura respalda claramente la historicidad de los textos. Además de explicar los fundamentos de esta acción educativa, se propone una selección de textos literarios utilizados en clase y se presentan los objetivos y los métodos didácticos puestos en práctica, el tipo de tareas asignadas al alumnado, así como las habilidades desarrolladas por ellos. En este artículo, se insiste en ciertos textos que son particularmente valiosos para el enfoque y se ofrecen ejemplos de cómo se saca provecho a los elementos contextuales. Finalmente, después de presentar cómo esta colaboración se convirtió en un ejemplo de extroversión para ambas instituciones, se aporta una evaluación integral de este proyecto y su impacto dentro de la comunidad de alumnado y profesorado.

Palabras clave: género en la literatura, posición de la mujer, educación literaria, escritoras.

Resum

La notable influència dels estudis de gènere als últims anys al sistema educatiu grec ha dut inevitablement a la integració d'un apartat temàtic multifocal nomenat "Gènere en la literatura" en el nou pla d'estudis de l'Educació Secundària. Aquest apartat capta, de fet, l'interés dels adolescents ja que estimula l'acostament als textos literaris i promou discussions constructives que sovint condueixen a un major gaudi de la lectura. Sobre aquesta base, es va dur a terme una col·laboració entre la Universitat d'Atenes i el Liceu Model d'Anavryta en el marc de l'assignatura de Literatura en ambdues institucions. L'objectiu d'aquest article és presentar els punts bàsics d'aquesta cooperació l'eix temàtic de la qual era "Representacions literàries dels rols de la dona en la literatura des de la societat tradicional fins la moderna", donat que el marc institucional per a l'ensenyament de la literatura dona suport clarament a la historicitat dels textos. A més d'explicar els fonaments d'aquesta acció educativa, es proposa una selecció de textos literaris utilitzats a classe i es presenten els objectius i els mètodes didàctics posats en pràctica, el tipus de tasques assignades a l'alumnat, a més de les habilitats que aquests desenvolupen. En aquest article, s'insisteix en certs textos que són particularment valuosos per a l'enfocament i s'ofereixen exemples de com es trau profit dels elements contextuals. Finalment, després de presentar com aquesta col·laboració va esdevenir un exemple d'extroversió per a totes dues institucions, s'aporta una avaluació integral d'aquest projecte i el seu impacte dins de la comunitat d'alumnat i professorat.

Paraules clau: gènere en la literatura, posició de la dona, educació literària, escriptores

1. Introduction

The development of gender studies in recent decades has inevitably influenced the study of literature in the new Lyceum curriculum. This obviously brings the focus on the evolution of representations of biological and social sexes in Modern Greek literature (Apostolidou, 2002), as well as on the examination of identity and diversity issues through the lens of contemporary values and attitudes. Literature should thus be considered as a vehicle to support interdisciplinarity (biology) and social anthropology (gendered behaviour, social construction of the sex) in classroom (Athanasidou, 2009). Gender issues pose a number of objective questions that are openly raised during the educative procedures, encouraging subjective searches and promoting reflection in literature class: What is gender? What do we mean by literary representations of gender? In what ways are these two concepts related in the field of a literary text (Evans, 2004; Sifaki, 2015)?

2. The criteria for the selection of the section "Gender in Literature" in the new Lyceum curriculum

According to the new curriculum, the study of the thematic section "Gender in Literature" during the first term of the first year of high school, was selected on the basis of the pupils' age and literary interests, as they are going through adolescence, a most critical stage of self-determination, with the interest in the other sex maturing and being reinforced. Specifically, according to the institutional framework the main criterion for selecting this subject is the fact that gender identification is a central issue for much of the Greek literary production in general and also for not few of the literary texts anthologised in the school books, including poetry and prose. Most importantly though, gender identification is a timely topic for teenagers who shape at this stage of their lives their own identity. The question of gender is related to the stage of adolescence in literary texts but also to the theme of love and it is always determined by the historical and social context as well as the perspective and style of each author. All the above offer the opportunity for a rich goal setting.

According to classroom educators, the section "Gender in Literature" is really a multi-focal subject that captures the interest of adolescents (Zacharatou, 2012). It stimulates the approach of literary texts and promotes constructive discussions that often lead to further enjoyment of reading. At the same time, the institutional framework for teaching literature in secondary education clearly supports the historicity of the texts, highlighting the era and conditions of both writing and reading. It is certainly important for students to understand that gender issues in literature concern all stages of human life and are related to many other topics, not only to blood

relations (father-daughter, brother-sister, mother-son) but in fact to all areas of social life (friendship, love, marriage, family, economy, culture) (Mike, 2019). Although the school lesson does not ignore the literariness of texts (language, narrative techniques, aesthetic currents), it mainly focuses on gender representations, characters and roles, which are always defined by the historical, social and cultural context. Typically, texts depicting traditional societies have certain constants, as they reproduce social stereotypes, which is why their modifications and reversals are particularly important (Fisher et al., 2003). Similar images or findings are not readily offered in literary texts referring to modern society, where many volatile factors dominate such as complex social and cultural processes that tend to push individuals into particular gendered behaviours and roles (Kyriazis, 1995; Ziras, 1997; Diekman & Murnen, 2004).

On this basis, students are asked to interpret the texts taking into account origins, time and ideology of the author or narrator, to compare perspectives or texts, to detect social stereotypes and to see how literary writing functions against these stereotypes. Besides, the ultimate goal of teaching in general, apart from providing basic knowledge and promoting social awareness, is to develop critical thinking and produce documented discourse that will be characterised by contemporary reflection, a broader insight and historical consciousness/empathy (Collins, 1993; Johnson, 2002; Kulhman & Moutray, 2002; Gelder, 2005; Malafantis, 2006). To this end, only minor guidance is given by the teacher to the pupils, who work mainly on their own. The teacher encourages collaboration in groups where students study one or more texts, organize a rationale, freely present their views, learn from each other, learn to respect and embrace diversity, and last but not least shape a democratic conscience and a positive attitude towards life.

3. Lyceum-University collaboration

"Gender in Literature" instruction module, already tested in the Greek educational system for nine consecutive years, served as the basis for our Lyceum-University collaboration (cf. Menti, 2013). This collaboration commenced in the beginning of the school year 2019-2020 and evolved throughout the first term for secondary and winter semester for higher education. The action was based on the initiative of Dora Menti, tutor of Modern Greek Philology at University of Athens, and Christina Sideri, philologist of the Anavryta Model Lyceum, along with her colleagues -all teachers of literature at A Lyceum- taking part in this action. The selection of the literary texts, the main axis of the teaching and the overall organization of the project was carried out in the framework of the academic course "Approaches to the teaching of Modern Greek Literature" attended by fourth year students of the Department of Modern Greek.

3.1 Thematic axis and criteria for the selection of texts

The thematic axis we chose was 'Women's Position in Literature' and the overall approach followed the historical evolution of things. It was based on a feminist perspective and aimed at

The thematic axis we chose was 'Women's Position in Literature' and the overall approach followed the historical evolution of things. It was based on a feminist perspective and aimed at depicting representative social roles and differences between sexes,

depicting representative social roles and differences between sexes, avoiding the inclusion of texts with particular masculine violence or sexism (Ruthven, 1984; Eagleton, 1986/2003; Gamble, 2006; Moschovakou et al., 2019). It is true that, in our time, gender does not function as a separate field of study and ideological confrontation, but we rather perceive it as an element linked, inter alia, to social class, occupation, and nationality. Particular attention was paid to the co-

existence of texts written by men and women writers, which contain illustrations and representations of the female sex (Pampouki, 1980; Athanasopoulos, 1997; Robinson 1997; Psarra, 2008; Roussou, 2010). The portrayal of women by the authors of both sexes particularly motivates students to trace differences or similarities in the representation of women by authors of the same or different gender (Fisher et al., 2003). The texts selected were addressed to all students of A Class of the Anavryta Model Lyceum for whom a two-hour weekly lesson is institutionally prescribed. In the selection of texts, apart from the thematic criteria, an attempt was made to include, in an evolutionary order, a variety of literary genres (folk song, narrative poem, theater, poem, autobiography, short story, novel):

POEMS

- Παραλογή «Του νεκρού αδελφού» [Ballad of The Dead Brother]
- Βιτσέντζος Κορνάρος, «Ερωτόκριτος» [Vitzentzos Kornaros "Erotocritos"]
- Γεώργιος Χορτάτσης, «Ερωφίλη» [George Hortatsis, "Erofilis"]
- Νίκος Εγγονόπουλος, «Ύμνος δοξαστικός για τις γυναίκες π' αγαπούμε» [Nikos Engonopoulos, "Hymn to the glory of the women we love"]
- Ζωή Καρέλλη, «Η άνθρωπος» [Zoe Karelli, "Woman Man"]
- Βικτωρία Θεοδώρου, «Εγκώμιο» [Victoria Theodorou, "Praise"]
- Κική Δημουλά, «Σκόνη» [Kiki Dimoula, "Dust"]
- Τζένη Μαστοράκη, «Το σόι» [Jenny Mastoraki, "The kin"]

PROSE

- Ελισάβετ Μουτζάν Μαρτινέγκου, «Απομνημονεύματα» [Elisavet Moutzan-Martinengou, “My story”]
- Ανδρέας Λασκαράτος, Τα μυστήρια της Κεφαλονιάς [Andreas Lascaratos, The mysteries of Kefalonia]
- Εμμανουήλ Ροΐδης, «Μονόλογος ευαίσθητου» [Emmanuel Roidis, “Monologue of a sensitive man”]
- Γεώργιος Βιζυηνός, «Το μόνον της ζωής του ταξίδιον» [George Vizyinos, “The one and only journey of his life”]
- Αλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης, *Η Φόνισσα* [Alexandros Papadiamantis, *The Murderess*]
- Γρηγόριος Ξενόπουλος, *Στέλλα Βιολάντη* [Gregorios Xenopoulos, *Stella Violanti*]
- Κωνσταντίνος Θεοτόκης, *Η Τιμή και το Χρήμα*, «Πίστομα» (διήγημα) [Konstantinos Theotokis, *Honour and Money*, “Face down” (short story)]
- Γιώργος Θεοτοκάς, *Αργώ* [Giorgos Theotokas, *Argo*]
- Μ. Καραγάτσης, *Η μεγάλη χίμαιρα* [M. Karagatsis, *The Great Chimera*]
- Διδώ Σωτηρίου, *Ματωμένα χώματα* [Dido Sotiriou, *Farewell Anatolia*]
- Κώστας Ταχτσής, «Τα ρέστα» [Kostas Tachtsis “The Change”]
- Ευγενία Φακίνου, *Η Αστραδενή* [Eugenia Fakinou, *Astradeni*]
- Ρέα Γαλανάκη, *Ελένη ή ο κανένας* [Rhea Galanaki, *Eleni, or nobody*]
- Άλκη Ζέη, *Η αρραβωνιαστικιά του Αχιλλέα* [Alki Zei, *Achilles' fiancée*]

3.2 Objectives-Methodology

During our educational action students, working either in groups or individually and practicing ICT skills, were asked to identify through a comparative examination of texts how social perception of gender has been shaped over time, to link these perceptions with the historical and social context of the writer and also with different forms of art (cinema, painting, comics) as well as with their personal experience gained within their own environment. Particular emphasis was placed on women’s social position, the stereotypes surrounding them, the antinomies and reversals we recognize around us from old times to the present day. These stereotypes stem largely from the patriarchal notion of “feminine nature” and are closely linked to the perpetuation of the human species through maternity and its identification with the virtues of patience, empathy and self-sacrifice. Our aim was to capture the stereotypes found in literary texts and investigate whether and how they survive in today's social life. In this context, the students were asked to:

- Distinguish and describe central as well as minor literary characters, in relation to the social male or female roles, making the necessary references to the text. Justify their estimate taking into account the historical and social context in which the text was written.
- Express their opinion on the subject of the text, evaluate ideas, values, attitudes, behaviours that emerge from it. Compare these elements with current perceptions or relate them to personal experiences and emotions.
- Identify the *narrator* and *focus* of the text and justify the author's choice, taking into consideration the author's gender.
- Observe how the image of the sex is constructed (through the words and actions of persons, from what others expect from them, as well as from the extent to which persons accept or object to the role that they are assigned).
- Comment on social parameters that determine men's and women's attitudes (codes of conduct, needs, abilities).
- Compare the literary representations of the sexes with other performances from journalistic, scholarly discourse or multimodal texts.
- Practice creative writing and other forms of expression: change the storyteller to emphasise the importance of "voice", identify with the hero/heroine of the text and write pages of his/her diary or letters, turn an interactive scene into a narrative or vice versa, choose a literary description and depict it, provide their own ending to the story (Iser, 1978; Kalfas, 1994; Pesketzi, 1994; Jaus, 1995; Eagleton 1996; Souliotis 2012; Chontolidou, 2014).

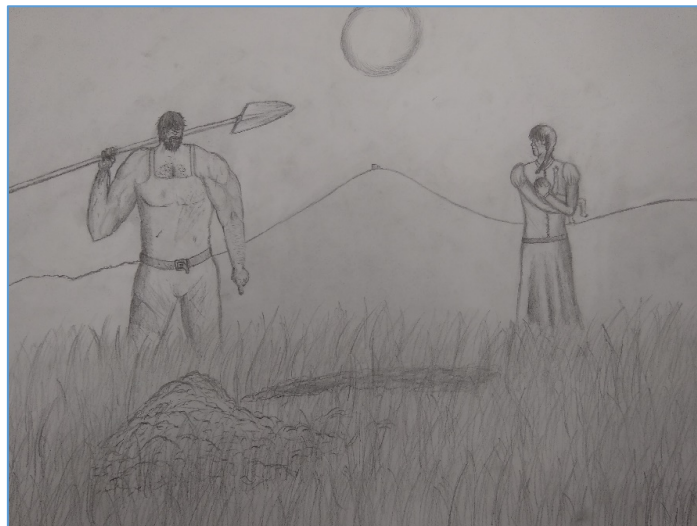


Figure 1. Konstantinos Theotokis, "Face down". Student's creation.



Figure 2. Konstantinos Theotokis, “Face down”. Student’s creation.

3.3 Text utilization

The proposed texts, particularly suitable for a feminist analysis, functioned more as a set of texts that gave teachers a common direction in approaching the position and the most prominent

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womanly roles from traditional to modern society (Ruthven, 1984; Eagleton, 1986/2003; Gamble, 2006). On the one hand, a variety of texts highlight female devotion as a key feature of the gender (Mike, 2002; Karakotias, 2005; Mpasli, 2007), and, on the other, in several literary texts we can observe the “ruptures” (Η Φόνισσα) (Aslanidis, 1988; Margaronis, 1989; Saunier, 2001) and subversions of the central image («Το μόνον της ζωής του ταξίδιον»).

The Murderess is a scarcely 60 year old woman who decides to kill girls in order to set them free from a miserable life of servitude and release their parents from the heavy burden of the dowry. She conceives this insane idea, as she sits sleepless and tired next to her newborn granddaughter.

For many nights Frankoyannou had forced herself to keep her eyes open and had not allowed sleep to weigh down her eyelids, but had remained awake beside the little creature, which could have no conception of the trouble it was causing, nor of the suffering it would itself have to undergo if it survived.

But see, nothing is what it seems, but is something different-more like its opposite.

Since sorrow is gladness and death is life and resurrection, then suffering is joy and sickness is health. In which case, all those scourges which appear to be so terrible and carry children off before their time, smallpox and scarlet fever and diphtheria and other illnesses, are they not in fact blessings, are they not caresses and woundings from the wings of the little Angels, who rejoice in heaven when they receive the infant souls? It is we human beings in our blindness, who think these are misfortunes, afflictions, something bad. [...] Shouldn't we like good Christians help the Angels in their task? Think how many boys, even noblemen's sons, are taken before their time. Even the daughters of the nobility die more easily -although it's rare for the sex- than the innumerable girls born into poverty. Girls of this class are the only ones with nine lives! It's as though more and more get born on purpose to put their parents through hell even in this world. When you think about it, it's enough to make you lose your mind...!

And her usual wish for small girls was for them 'not to live to get any bigger!'

'I have to say, sometimes you just feel like strangling them at birth...'

She may have said it, but of course she could never have done it. She herself didn't believe she could.¹

On the other hand, in the story of Vizyinos, the divergence between sex and gender is manifested not only in the character of the narrator's grandfather but also in that of his depriving and authoritarian wife, Chrousi, who makes all the trips prepared by her husband and is compared to the most extreme version of the male sex, the janissaries (Athanasopoulos, 1996).

I knew that no one ever crossed grandmother's threshold without being pressed into doing some chore or other. Nevertheless, after the way in which I had been summoned from Constantinople, and considering the purpose for which I had come, I expected to be informed what had become of poor grandfather in this struggle with the angel. So I stood there unwillingly holding the jugs and wondering how to broach the subject, after his wife's behaviour and the reception she had given me.

But grandmother was accustomed to seeing her orders obeyed instantly.

"Don't just stand there, you weakling! she shouted. "Don't just stand there! Are you afraid of straining your kidneys? And to think you want a shirt and collar from me. A curse on you, you good-for-nothing, you rascal, you lazybones!"

¹ Translation by Denise Harvey, 2011 (pp. 4, 34, 15); for the digital form of the Greek text see the website of the Σπουδαστήριο Νέου Ελληνισμού <http://www.snhell.gr/>

In such circumstances grandmother resembled those contraptions which, once wound up, must play their music to the last note. [The difference was just in this, that no one could stand listening to grandma's music till the end.]

"Where's grandpa, grandma?" I asked respectfully, having returned to find her in a better mood, probably because there was no other task at hand for me to perform.

"And well might you ask!" tuning herself to another key. "He's gone and left me! The layabout, the lazybones, the good-for-nothing, the ne'er-d-well!" and so on and so forth.

Grandmother -I thought to myself- must expect grandfather to come out of his tomb every morning to perform the tasks she assigned to him during his life, and to return to his grave in the evening!

"What do you expect poor grandpa to be doing now (that) there's no work to do?" I said in a low voice, as if talking to myself.

"Why, he's sunning himself!" retorted grandmother, winding herself up to an even higher pitch. "He's sunning his belly, the idler, the sponger, the laggard!" and so on and so forth.

How strange, I thought. She's keeping her eye on the poor man even in the next world to see what's he's up to.

Whenever grandfather (was) tired of grandmother's invective, he would sneak out and climb that steep rock and sit for hours up in the sunshine. Grandfather justified his choice of spot by asserting that as well as the warmth he enjoyed the charming panorama of the country from up there. Everyone knew, however, that grandfather used to climb so high because, owing to her rheumatism, it was the only place where grandmother could not come and fetch him home.

"All these years we've been married, I would make the preparations and she would make the journey. [...] There was one journey I was planning secretly, love. I was keeping it for myself. For years and years I put aside any little extra money and I hid it as best I could. When I'd saved 50.000 piastres, I made up my mind and called your grandmother-when I had my mind made up I didn't stand on ceremony with her. So I say to her with a decisive air 'Chrousi! I'm planning to go on a journey, so make sure there's no pregnant animal or sick man or anyone needing help, and make sure no visitor enters the house, otherwise, I'll smash his legs!'"

Grandfather made a gesture which showed his admiration for what he had done. Then he went on. "You should have been there to see how flummoxed she was! She didn't say a word! That's just what I wanted. [...] When I had crossed myself ready to mount, I said to her: "'Come on, Chrousi, it's a matter of life and death! Forgive me and may

God forgive you! Whereupon she burst into tears". Grandfather spoke agitatedly, as if the scene were taking place at that very moment. [...]

"The tears in her eyes!" exclaimed grandfather, changing his tone. "What could I say? I lifted her on the horse and packed her off to the Holy Land with her brother.

"From then on," said grandfather, brushing the palms of his hands together as if he were dusting them, "I've never tried to make a journey. "

[...] So I was married with pomp and ceremony, and instead of being taken by some janissary I was taken by your grandmother."

Grandmother, with her hands clasped round her knees, her hopeless gaze fixed on the grandfather's face, sat by his side, pale and motionless as if she were turned to stone. What would the unfortunate woman not have given to prevent him from going on this journey!²

These texts were the basis for the transition from the original erotic model of women in the poems we have chosen (Tolika, 2006) to the existential search for a separate entity (Frantzi et al., 1990; Christou, 2016; Karageorgiou, 2019) through the articulation of the speech of «H άνθρωπος» (*Αντιθέσεις*, 1957) in Zoe Karelli's homonymous poem (Karatassou, 2008; Douka-Kampitoglou, 2012).

I do not cry or sing,
but the break I must make
is the cruelest
to know the world through myself
to speak my own words.
I who until now have existed
to worship, respect and love.

I no longer belong to him,
I exist on my own,
a human being.

Zoe Karelli, 'Woman Man/Εγώ, η άνθρωπος' (1957), translated by Karen Van Dyck (2009).

² Translation by Peter Mackridge, 2014 (pp. 37-39, 45-47, 49, 56); for the digital form of the Greek text see the website of the Σπουδαστήριο Νέου Ελληνισμού <http://www.snhell.gr/>

This discourse can then be deservedly intersected with Eleni's individual artistic claims in the homonymous novel by Rhea Galanaki. In her postmodern feminist work, Rhea Galanaki combines History with gender concerns and mythological context, as is the case with her novel *Eleni or Nobody* (Anagnostopoulou, 2011; Zerdeli, 2015; Gerakini, 2017; Marcou, 2018). This particular book is a biographical novel of the famous painter Eleni Boukoura- Altamura (Marcatou, 2009). The protagonist was born in Spetses in 1821 and was the eldest daughter of Arvanitis Captain and fighter Yannis Boukouras. From an early age, Eleni realises that she is different from the girls of her age and moves away from the predetermined social roles of her time. Her only allies will be her progressive father and her teacher Raffaello Ceccoli, who encouraged her to broaden her artistic horizons.

The fact that what was for her a normal practice of going out and observing did not apply to the other girls led her to the conclusion that perhaps she was somewhat different from the other girls of her age, but also from the other women in her family.

Eleni had to be punished, as she went on drawing not only in the breaks, but in class too, during the lessons.

Eleni did not give in to tears as long as the punishment lasted, the duration of which seemed longer and more unbearable because of the humiliation. It was then however, that she decided she would become a painter whatever happened, even if this meant always being different from other girls of her age and even from the other women in her family.[...] She swore on the faith of her mother tongue that only death would prevent her hand from painting, while her proud, and so eventually insubordinate mind wandered to her father's naval flag with its Greek words, 'Freedom or Death'.

By the time I'd reached twenty-seven, my mother had grown weary of trying to find a match for me. I could at least have consented to stay, to grow old as a spinster next to my married sisters and let the demons of painting turn my wits till the end of my life, as she said to me every day throughout the whole winter. But I wanted academies and laurels. Men's tokens. To do what with them, she asked. With my dowry, I could find a good match any time I wanted, she went on, ignoring the fact that I had agreed with my father to pay for my maintenance from the capital of that dowry for as long as I would remain in Italy for my studies.

In Italy, where she will continue her studies, Eleni disguises herself as a man, under the name of Giovanni Chryssini, in order to have the opportunity to study at the school of Nazarene painters in Rome.

And I, resolving that morning in a foreign city to take examinations as a man, perhaps even to live like this for a few years, gave birth to myself as Nobody. The name with which I'd sign the exams, my studies and works was of no importance, given that the name Chryssinis, even Boukouras or Boukouris, when transliterated into Italian, gave no indication of whether it belonged to a man or a woman. I would live henceforth as Nobody.

The *Nobody*, who managed to escape from the Cyclops' cave, is the name by which Odysseus was introduced to Polyphemus.

During her stay in Italy, Eleni met and fell in love with an Italian painter, Saverio Altamura but their marriage did not last long. Saverio leaves her:

In it (Saverio's letter) he told me that he'd left with Jane Hay, my English friend and a painter herself. [...] That he had taken with him our third child, Alexandros, who was still an infant, so that I wouldn't make him vanish too behind my Oriental veils. That he respected me as a painter, and that he had loved me as his wife, but that he had grown tired of my melancholic character, my lack of trust, my continuous trips, my displeasure whenever I had to dress in women's clothes, my shorn hair. That he would not be coming home.³

So, Eleni returns to her hometown of Spetses; she is now a recluse and reputedly a witch who dies all alone having burnt her paintings.

3.4 The exploitation of the context

The educational procedure presented above took frequently into account experience and information stemming from real life (e.g. daily news) as well as from movies (Aggeli, 2013; Georgiadou & Mpikos, 2017). This helped us also expand the cultural field to another system of reference, including the lack of freedom of women which burdened and still burdens the gender across much of the globe. To this end, the French-American animation "Persepolis" (2007) by M. Satrapi and B. Parano, with the heroine of Margie growing up, as an exception, in a progressive family in Tehran in 1978 was projected and discussed in class. Due to the Iran-Iraq war and the prevalence of religious fanaticism Margie's parents send her to study in Vienna where, growing up and facing controversial identity issues, she discovers another dimension of her life and sex.

³ Translation by David Conolly, 2003 (p. 21-22, 46, 53, 75-76).

3.5 School visit at the Faculty of Philosophy and its Library and a university lesson in classroom

Indeed, the distance between the two cooperating educational institutions in Athens is large and often insurmountable. However, a visit for the Lyceum students was planned from the very beginning at the Faculty of Philosophy, as well as a guided tour in the Faculty Library and the attendance of an academic class. This visit took place on good terms in the middle of the first semester on Thursday 28th November 2019, its main theme being Alexandros Papadiamantis' famous novel "Η Φόνισσα", which, fortunately, had been read by most University students as a whole literary book at some point in their lives and by most Lyceum students in the 3rd High School. That is why our first meeting resulted in a dynamic reflection on the biological and social gender of the heroine, the way the author creates and treats her, the way each of us perceives her attitude and actions. After the visit at the university, the general analysis of the literary work, the focus on the heroine and the verdict on her actions, we set the next meeting towards the end of the semester so that we could move on to a different literary text that cancels stereotypes and predisposes to the position that women occupy nowadays. The questioning of the social gender that had been imposed on women by the family for centuries and the emergence of feminist consciousness by the new poets of the regime state period were the next and final stage of our cooperation. This was indeed a true example of extroversion and feedback for the university class. Our collaboration was certainly based on genuine contact and fruitful dialogue with students, enriching at the same time the quests of struggling secondary school colleagues.

Our last text was Jenny Mastoraki's poem "Περίληψη" (Το σόι, 1978), which contains information on the maternal model and outdated perceptions about upbringing and childcare, and is a representative sample of writing stemming from a younger generation which challenged social conventions and claimed more freedom (Van Dyck, 1998; Panagiotou, 2017):

As a child my mother
 would put on my flesh the "Our Father"
 and blue amulets of Tinos.
 She would get a big key
 and doublelock my sleep.
 In the morning she counted my dreams
 and recorded them in a notebook.
 Now she dispels
 my song from the lips
 while I am sleeping
 and every night my bed

becomes an embroidered frame
with "Freedom or Death" written on it.

4. Evaluation of the co-operation and dissemination of its results

In an overall evaluation of our cooperation it would be appropriate to take into account the following criteria: students' response to the implementation of this educational action, the choice of texts and the communication and feedback. The students were very interested in the proposed texts and eagerly responded to all the tasks assigned to them; they composed an anthology with excerpts of texts they had come across and presentations of the female presence in them highlighting the evolution of the womanly position over time, whereas several of them drew inspiration from the texts and created remarkable works of art. A group of students went even further choosing to extend the study of certain literary pieces (e.g. Galanaki's *Eleni, or Nobody*) within the frame of another collaboration, this time with Lyceum Condorcet of Paris, exploring not only the gender quests of the authors but also the use of the ancient myth in Modern Greek literary texts.

In her direct contact with the high school students, the University teacher realised that students who came across an excerpt of the Papadiamantis' "Φόνισσα" had satisfactory knowledge about the story, the plot and the central heroine's character; they easily shaped her gender's social profile, integrated it into the historical context and focused on the multiple instances of its reversal within Frankoyannou's family, observing with ease the author's interactions between himself and the characters of his work. In particular, during the class they recognised elements about the birth, upbringing, livelihood, marriage and dowry of women -important sub-topic of the novel-, and expressed their views on both the actions of the killer and the author's reasoning. The students noticed the insignificant role of the male figures in the novel and highlighted the social and other causes behind the murders committed by the heroine. They disagreed with the desperate attitude of this woman and most of them condemned her unconditionally, though there was a small minority of dissenters who were not given the opportunity to support and exchange views due to lack of time. At the second two-hour meeting at the Lyceum's auditorium on the 16th January 2020 the students easily discerned the eternal suffocating motherly presence in Jenny Mastoraki's poem, compared it with their own personal experiences, and gave different versions about what would be the next stage in the relationship between mother and daughter.

At the same time, the University students and most probably future high school teachers had the opportunity to attend a lesson where the theory already learned was implemented, which could be fruitful for their future career and aspirations.

Lastly, we would like to mention that after the presentation of our collaboration at the Symposium under the title “Approaches to Literature: Raising Awareness of Students in Creative Reading”, organised by and held at Model Lyceum of Anavyrta on the 1th February 2020, under the auspices of the University of Athens and the Institute of Educational Policy, we realised the wider impact that our project had on teachers; notably, an educational approach to the issue was set for May 18th at International School of Athens (Kifissia, Greece);⁴ also, this presentation motivated the organization of a seminar for philologists entitled “From reading literary texts to promoting literacy” by the 2nd Regional Center for Educational Planning of Athens (24th February 2020, Nea Ionia) and of a literary competition under the title “We stay at home” by the 4th Regional Center for Educational Planning of Athens (April 2020) addressed to students of secondary education.

In conclusion, despite the difficulties, the collaboration between the two institutions proved certainly successful regarding the quality of communication and the multifaceted use of the educational visits.

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⁴ This meeting had to be postponed due to the emergency circumstances created by the coronavirus pandemic.

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How to cite this paper:

Menti, T. & Sideri, C. (2020). Gender in Literature. Women's Position from traditional to modern society. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 93-111. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.17340

La mujer y el personaje femenino en cuentos jordano-palestinos de tradición oral

La dona i el personatge femení en contes jordano-palestinians de tradició oral

Women and female characters in Jordan-Palestinian tales from the oral tradition

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Extended abstract

This article aims to present a study on the presence of women and female characters in Palestinian-Jordanian tales from oral tradition and their didactic use from an intercultural and coeducational perspective. It is based on the ethnographic research carried out by Asensio (2015) through which she compiled a corpus of oral stories through a publication process. These stories were originally told in Arabic and were transcribed into Latin characters and translated into Spanish. It is understood that, being oral tales, they are presented in dialectal Arabic; specifically, in Jordan we can highlight four dialect varieties that respond to ethno-national origin (Transjordan / Palestine) and lifestyle (sedentary [urban, rural] or Bedouin [nomadic, semi-nomadic]). However, my interest in these stories arose because oral narrative is the most spread literary subgenre within Children's and Young Literature. I consider oral tradition the most ingrained discursive essence of the human being from an early age and children can easily recognize it. Additionally, the story is understood as an ethological fact. Although it may present certain geographical peculiarities, it is still a cross-cultural manifestation: all human beings narrate, and especially stories; all human beings use oral tradition to present social warnings, transmit values, etc.; the folktales, in addition, share common structural and organizational basic elements, although with their own spatial-temporal and socio-cultural idiosyncrasies. On the other hand, analysing stories from an oral tradition other than the Spanish one answers the need to train future teachers to recognize cultural diversity (global and national) and the different contributions which can be found, around the world, to inform this diversity. In the case at hand, for instance, data reveal a type of active female character that also serves to dismantle stereotypes and prejudices.

Along the same lines, this work aims to collaborate in the construction of a broader and intercultural literary canon of Children's and Youth Literature in the light of the reality of many Spanish educational classrooms (and of the world in general), overcoming the dominant monocultural approach to education. We agree with Colomer (2005) with the fact that literature is a space for the formation of cultures, but also a place to meet others.

Focusing on the data of the analysis, we must say that it followed the proposal of Dundes (1964) and Günthner and Knoblauch (1995) based on a holistic analysis considering: the text, the texture and the context. Thus, we can conclude that the role that women occupy within the framework of the Palestinian-Jordanian oral narrative places her as the "active depository" of said tradition, following

the terminology of Sydow (1965). The age variable is also a determining factor along with the gender. In addition, women are culturally associated to fiction, compared to man characters that are linked to reality. This means, from the narratological point of view, that women in the studied context have a greater repertoire of stories than men, as well as a more varied and open subject matter. The Jordanian-Palestinian woman, upon reaching maturity, associated with menopause (Rabadán, 2003) and motherhood (Bassiouney, 2009), gains status and, at the same time, frees herself from all sexual charges and certain social taboos. Additionally, women have no qualms about introducing eschatological or erotic elements into their stories while men do.

On the other hand, the analysed stories show a tendency to introduce female characters under three parameters: youth, beauty and marriage. However, female characters do not always have a passive role, although initially it may seem that way. There are more female characters found than in canonical Western tales and, above all, they are active. Sometimes, they are born as passive characters depending on the will of parents, especially fathers, but in the face of adversity take control of the situation and face it without waiting to be saved by a typical "prince charming" of Western stories. Regarding the latter, it is observed that their active role has its reward, the power to marry a prince who appears to be passive and without any will since it is his mother who decides that marriage. Culturally, in the studied context, marriage is still valid as part of personal fulfilment, but it is not exclusive of the female gender. It is also a male goal and, consequently, it leads to procreation. The data also highlight the feminine role of mothers as the wise characters, who put order, who seek and recognize their lost daughters or who make decisions such as marriage as previously mentioned. The partial or total absence of the father figure is also interesting.

In short, the results of this research provide cultural and literary information for training Early Childhood and Primary Education future teachers from an intercultural paradigm and taking into account the gender issue. In the specific case of the analysed corpus and its context, it helps to confront existing stereotypes about Arab-Islamic culture, specially, cultural and gender stereotypes. This study offers an experience research to the lectures on Children's Literature useful for training students that can apply this knowledge in the school and, above all, can consider different sociocultural realities in order to work towards coeducation.

Finally, I hope this research contributes to expand the literary canon of Children's and Youth Literature from an intercultural and coeducational perspective. A canon, on the other hand, which encourages the inclusion of the active female character on an equal basis with males that serve to build more egalitarian and equitable societies in line with goal 5 of *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations* (United Nations, 2015).

Key words: women, female character, folktales, Arabic oral tradition, coeducation, children's and youth literature

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar un estudio sobre la presencia de la mujer y del personaje femenino en cuentos palestino-jordanos de tradición oral. Para ello, partimos de la investigación etnográfica realizada por Asensio (2015) y el corpus de cuentos por esta recopilados. Así, mostraremos, por un lado, el papel que ocupa la mujer dentro del marco de la narración oral como depositaria activa de dicha tradición siguiendo la terminología de Sydow (1965) y, por el otro, ofreceremos un estudio sobre el personaje femenino teniendo en cuenta el corpus mencionado. Estos datos servirán para dar a conocer nuevos contextos literarios para la construcción de un canon literario de LIJ intercultural, etnopluricultural y coeducativo para docentes de Educación Infantil y Primaria.

Palabras clave: mujer, personaje femenino, cuentos, tradición oral árabe, coeducación, literatura infantil y juvenil (LIJ)

Resum

Aquest article té com a objectiu presentar un estudi sobre la presència de la dona i del personatge femení en contes palestinojordans de tradició oral. Per a açò, vàrem partir de la investigació etnogràfica realitzada per Asensio (2015) i el corpus de contes recopilats per aquesta. Així, mostrarem, d'una banda, el paper que ocupa la dona dins del marc de la narració oral com a dipositària activa de la dita tradició tot seguint la terminologia de Sydow (1965) i, d'una altra, oferirem un estudi sobre el personatge femení tenint en compte l'esmentat corpus. Aquestes dades serviran per donar a conèixer nous contextos literaris per a la construcció d'un cànon literari de LIJ intercultural, etnopluricultural i coeducatiu per a docents d'Educació Infantil i Primària.

Paraules clau: dona, personatge femení, contes, tradició oral àrab, coeducació, literatura infantil i juvenil (LIJ)

1. Introducción

La necesidad de construir sociedades más igualitarias en términos de género, equitativas y también respetuosas con otras culturas, hace que tengamos en cuenta el potencial de los cuentos de tradición oral para la formación de los futuros y las futuras docentes de Educación Infantil y Educación Primaria desde la coeducación y la educación intercultural.

En el mundo globalizado en el que nos encontramos, donde la relación con la “otredad” entendida como los grupos sociales culturalmente distintos al nuestro, debería ser más fluida a tenor de las posibilidades tecnológicas de las que disponemos para interconcernos como es Internet, lo cierto es que parece que aumentasen los malentendidos culturales, las incomprensiones, la estereotipación, los prejuicios y, en definitiva, los bulos y los discursos de odio, especialmente en las redes sociales (Campos, 2015; Cabo y García, 2017; Fundación Cepaim, 2019). De igual modo, siguen existiendo planteamientos asimétricos entre los distintos géneros asumiendo la tradicional binariedad de estos (masculino-hombre/femenino-mujer) y, por otro lado, los roles que hemos ido construyendo a tenor de esta dualidad en la que persiste la desigualdad. Esto hace que sean necesarios estudios que den cuenta de otros contextos culturales como es el caso de este artículo, centrado en cuentos de tradición oral jordano-palestinos y que lo hagan, además, desde una perspectiva de género alineados con la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible de las Naciones Unidas, en concreto, con el objetivo 5, Igualdad de género (Naciones Unidas, 2015).

Por otro lado, en este trabajo nos hemos interesado por el cuento por ser el subgénero narrativo y literario de mayor difusión dentro de la Literatura Infantil y Juvenil (LIJ). El hecho de que

proceda de una tradición oral distinta a la española se fundamenta en la necesidad de constituir

El hecho de que proceda de una tradición oral distinta a la española se fundamenta en la necesidad de constituir un canon literario de LIJ más amplio e intercultural a tenor de la realidad de muchas aulas educativas españolas superando el enfoque monocultural dominante.

un canon literario de LIJ más amplio e intercultural a tenor de la realidad de muchas aulas educativas españolas superando el enfoque monocultural dominante. La literatura es un espacio de formación de culturas, pero también de encuentro con otras (Colomer, 2005) y es importante analizar el tratamiento que tiene la mujer y lo femenino en estas.

Así, la estructura expositiva que hemos seguido en este artículo es la que sigue: una justificación de la necesidad de atender al estudio de los cuentos de tradición oral y caracterización de los mismos; una aproximación a la

tradición oral árabe seguida del contexto de investigación y la construcción del corpus de estudio; posteriormente, nos detenemos en el análisis propiamente dicho desde dos perspectivas: el contexto y el texto; al final, cerramos este artículo con las conclusiones donde incluimos el aprovechamiento de los datos obtenidos desde el punto de vista de la educación literaria con perspectiva de género intercultural.

2. ¿Por qué los cuentos de tradición oral?

Todos los pueblos establecen unos sistemas de transmisión cultural, una herencia narrativa a través de la cual, aprenden, aprehenden y comprenden el mundo, a sí mismos y a su comunidad (Calsamiglia y Tusón, 2001, p. 270). Así, narrar es un instrumento personal, social y cultural en donde el cuento ocupa un lugar privilegiado entre las diferentes manifestaciones narrativas desde temprana edad (Bassols y Torrent, 2003). Dentro de la narración destaca el cuento como un hecho transcultural, un hecho etológico en tanto que no parece tener un origen en la autorreproducción cultural, sino como una disposición mental más general, asumiendo los presupuestos de Schaeffer (2005, p.63). En este sentido, recogemos las palabras de la profesora Morote (2019):

El cuento oral es patrimonio de la humanidad y universal por naturaleza. Encontramos cuentos en todos los continentes y países. Unos se han transmitido de generación en generación y luego se han fijado por escrito, y otros solo por escrito. Todos permanecen sin obstáculos de lenguas e ideologías durante el transcurrir de los tiempos. (p. 207).

Además, el cuento de tradición oral comparte una serie de características que corroboran dicha transculturalidad, exposición que sigue los presupuestos de Morote (2002), Pedrosa (2003) y Asensio (2015), entre otros. Por un lado, estos cuentos no tienen un autor o autora concreto/a, son anónimos, por tanto, son patrimonio de toda la comunidad. Por otro lado, son breves debido a que se apoyan en la memoria del transmisor o la transmisora. Esto último hace que empleen fórmulas hipercodificadas que funcionan como apoyos mnemotécnicos. Además, todos ellos responden a una estructura que el niño/la niña reconoce fácilmente y que tradicionalmente se sintetiza en introducción, nudo y desenlace, aunque Adam (1992, p. 57) concretó en el esquema de secuenciación narrativa que sigue:

Dentro de la narración destaca el cuento como un hecho transcultural, un hecho etológico en tanto que no parece tener un origen en la autorreproducción cultural, sino como una disposición mental más general, asumiendo los presupuestos de Schaeffer.

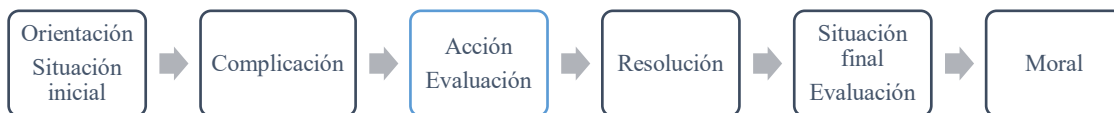


Gráfico 1. Secuencia narrativa de Adam (1992).

Asimismo, dispone de una temática basada en universales humanos que responden a las necesidades, sentimientos o emociones de los seres humanos como son el amor, la felicidad, la tristeza, la precaución, la envidia, etc. Sin embargo, no podemos olvidar que estas temáticas están condicionadas por los aspectos socioculturales y lingüísticos de la comunidad en las que se desarrollan. Por tanto, los cuentos de tradición oral contienen determinados mensajes endoculturales que sirven para conocer normas del grupo, moralidad o comportamiento de este (Gómez, 2002, p. 178).

Desde el punto de vista narrativo, es frecuente que los personajes se presenten como una categoría funcional (héroe/heroína; villano/a; ayudante; etc. (la tipología más conocida es la propuesta por Propp (1998), aunque resulta limitada para el cuento oriental como indica Mamet-Michalkiewicz (2011) en relación a las *Mil y una noches*), o como arquetipos y estereotipaciones en donde se juega con el dualismo bueno/a-malo/a; protagonista-antagonista y la presencia de un narrador omnisciente que es el que nos guía por el relato aportándonos los datos necesarios para reconocer el espacio, el tiempo o las emociones. También es frecuente

que los cuentos combinen realidad y fantasía (verosimilitud e inverosimilitud). Como señalan Díez y Díez-Taboada (1999), en el cuento cabe todo:

lo real, lo maravilloso, la enseñanza y la diversión, lo trágico y lo cómico, lo cotidiano y el ensueño misterioso, el mundo infantil y el adulto, el amor y el odio, la crueldad y la bondad, la venganza y la generosidad (p.104).

Centrándonos en los personajes, los cuentos tradicionales pueden agruparse bajo un parámetro binario: hombre-niño (género masculino) /mujer-niña (género femenino). Al respecto, Holbek (1998) indica que todos los cuentos maravillosos son de dos tipos, masculinos o femeninos, y que tienen dos figuras principales, un héroe y una heroína; la inclusión en uno u otro tipo depende del grado de actividad del héroe/la heroína.

Ahora bien, Sanfilippo (2019) nos recuerda que gran parte de los cuentos de tradición oral que se conservan, fueron recogidos por hombres por lo que la tendencia dominante en los estos es la de plasmar aquellos de tipo masculino. En este sentido, como argumenta Taggart (1990), el género del narrador y la audiencia condiciona el argumento y el rol de los personajes principales. Por otra parte, la mayoría de los recopiladores eran hombres, de manera que las narradoras probablemente no les contarían ciertas historias reservadas a contextos exclusivamente femeninos Sanfilippo (2019).

Contar un cuento es un acto comunicativo complejo que no consiste simplemente en transmitir información, sino que tiene la capacidad de sintetizar la visión y la organización del mundo (Sanfilippo, 2019). Además, al contar un cuento los niveles de producción en los que textura, texto y contexto (Dundes, 1964) se relacionan con la formulación, narración y dramatización de este. Precisamente, es en el acto narrativo en donde se ubican un compendio de valores naturales, sociales y culturales existentes en un lugar y un momento determinados, que influye en la vida material y psicológica del individuo en su comunidad y, a la vez, lo condicionan.

3. Contextualización

3.1. Aproximación a la tradición oral árabe

La tradición oral ha estado siempre presente a lo largo del tiempo en el mundo árabe. Como explica Allen (2000), las leyendas y los relatos pre-islámicos se han filtrado en la tradición oral. Así sucede con historias como la de Maʿnūn Layla, los ayyām al-ʿarab –epopeyas o gestas– (que recogen las guerras tribales al estilo de nuestra época) o la sīra –la biografía del Profeta Muḥammad y posteriores colecciones de relatos calificados de populares como la historia de los

Banī Hilāl que cuenta la historia de Abu Zayd al-Hilālī, héroe árabe que representa el coraje y la fortaleza y que viajó de Oriente a Occidente, hacia Túnez, conquistando estas tierras para el Islam (Allen, 2000); las historias jocosas del pícaro ʿĪḥā o la célebre compilación Las mil y una noches que para el-Shamy (2004) comprende gran parte de los relatos de literatura tradicional árabe:

most of the narratives constituting *Alf laylah wa laylah* in the Arabic language are literary representations of traditional folktales. These tales may be assumed to have been in oral circulation at the time(s) the book was being cumulatively formulated, and may represent older versions of contemporary folktales (p.34).

También, la primitiva lírica árabe, la denominada poesía ʿāhilī¹, manifiesta su carácter oral, pues como afirma Adonis² (1997) nació como canto, “es decir, surge como algo que se oye, y no se lee, como cántico no como escritura. Era el verbo y otra cosa que lo trascendía, pues trasladaba la palabra, y algo que la palabra, especialmente la escritura, es incapaz de traducir” (p. 123).

Como ha pasado en otros lugares del mundo y otras literaturas, también la tradición oral ha estado relegada a un segundo plano, cuando no al ostracismo.

Ahora bien, los movimientos nacionalistas e independentistas de los distintos países que conforman el mundo árabe, coincide con lo que en literatura árabe se ha dado en conocer con la Nahḍa (se entiende como Renacimiento o Despertar árabe a nivel cultural).

Este movimiento se originó y desarrolló a mediados del siglo XIX y principios del XX. Este despertar supuso el resurgir folclórico posiblemente como un mecanismo de reafirmación nacional e idiosincrática frente al colonizador en una doble dirección: la ʿuruba (la arabidad) y la reivindicación de la identidad regional dentro del marco del concepto compartido anterior. En definitiva, la Nahḍa supuso una toma de conciencia y la revalorización de la herencia folclórica de cada país árabe. Además, la urgencia de recuperar las tradiciones y especialmente la cultura oral vehiculada por las lenguas vernáculas como apunta Fanjul (1977), especialmente en países considerados en vías de desarrollo como sucede con muchos de los países árabes:

El interés por el folklore reviste un cierto carácter revolucionario que en los países árabes había sido sistemáticamente marginado por evadirse, a la vez, de la cultura clásica o de los modelos extranjerizantes. El surgimiento a flor de agua del folklore no

¹ Si bien el término es despectivo, significar “ignorante” en tanto que es anterior a la revelación coránica.

² Pseudónimo con el que se conoce al poeta y ensayista sirio ʿAlī Aḥmad Saʿīd Isbir (Esber).

es tanto el del individuo como el de las clases desdeñadas. Porque aunque no exista una prohibición formal de publicar obras en árabe vulgar (el único que utiliza la literatura popular), sí existe una “selección por el descrédito” (p. 49).

Cabe también mencionar que, la recuperación de lo folklórico también ha estado unido a la consideración de las lenguas vernáculas árabes como portadoras de cultura, puesto que la ‘cultura oficial árabe’ se basa en la escritura y esta solo puede ser en árabe clásico³. Así, para Badawi (1992) la incursión de lo tradicional y popular en la esfera literaria supuso la ruptura de la barrera entre los dos registros lingüísticos; se rompen las barreras entre lo coloquial y el árabe clásico o estándar y, al mismo tiempo, este último se ve enriquecido por las aportaciones de la tradición oral y adoptando sus técnicas:

[...] the range of themes has widened, the language has developed new registers, in particular thanks to the breaking down of barriers between colloquial and *fushà*, the possibilities for enrichment offered by the Arabic oral and written literary tradition have been recognized, the techniques used have become increasingly sophisticated (p. 269).

En definitiva, la tradición oral árabe ha sobrevivido al paso del tiempo, al margen o en paralelo, de la cultura culta y escrita, gracias al interés social que despierta, a lo que esta aporta a la comunidad en la que se encuentra.

3.2. El contexto de la investigación

Jordania comprende un área geográfica de 89.328 Km² y se encuentra ubicado en el corazón del Oriente Próximo. Este país limita al norte con Siria, al nordeste con Iraq, al este y sur con Arabia Saudí y al oeste con Cisjordania. Para entender este país, su sociedad, sus tradiciones o, concretamente, sus cuentos de tradición oral, hemos de tener presente los acontecimientos históricos-políticos más recientes (al-Wer, 1999).

Por un lado, nos encontramos con una población en la que predominan dos grupos etnonacionales (palestinos y transjordanos) con minorías circasianas, chechenas o armenias (sin contar con la población actual refugiada iraquí o siria o los grupos de inmigrantes egipcios o

³ Al respecto, hemos de recordar que la lengua árabe se debe entender desde los presupuestos de diglosia. Desde la perspectiva tradicional fergusoniana, encontramos dos variedades del árabe: una cultura o variedad alta que sería el árabe clásico o *fushà* propia del registro formal y, sobre todo, de la escritura y otra variedad baja, que serían los dialectos, propia del registro coloquial, sin representación escrita. No obstante, la situación lingüística jordana resulta mucho más compleja que la división dicotómica fergusoniana de diglosia (Asensio, 2018).

filipinos). Por otro lado, la forma y estilo de vida también determina el tipo de etnocuento y la propia lengua dialectal de transmisión:

- La población sedentaria distribuida en dos tipos de asentamiento: uno urbano y el otro rural.
- La población seminómada que solo se mueve dos veces al año a zonas acotadas para el pastoreo.
- La población beduina, es decir, nómada.

Asimismo, como señala Asensio (2015), en Jordania resultan fundamentales dos tipos de agrupaciones sociales: la tribu, sobre todo entre población transjordana-beduina, y la familia extendida que podemos entender como una forma reducida de organización tribal en la que se engloba tanto al núcleo familiar propiamente dicho (padre-madre-hijos/as), como también a abuelos/as, tíos/as, primos/as, sobrinos/as, etc. y que sirve de soporte económico. Además, existe la tendencia a vivir todos en el mismo edificio o en el mismo barrio, estableciendo una cercanía también espacial. En concreto, los hijos varones casados tienden a vivir o en el mismo edificio de los padres o cerca de estos.

Por último, la religión oficial de este país (y preponderante) es el islam de rito sunní y escuela jurídica hanafí y representa el 97,2% de la población, con un 2% de chiíes y drusos. Otro 2,2 % de la población es cristiana (tanto oriundos de palestina como transjordanos) en su mayoría griegos ortodoxos, aunque también encontramos maronitas, griegos y romanos católicos, sirios ortodoxos, coptos ortodoxos, armenios ortodoxos, protestantes y un 0,7% de personas que profesan otras religiones (CIA, en línea).

4. La construcción del corpus de estudio

Este estudio parte de un corpus de cuentos jordano-palestinos que forman parte de la tesis doctoral de Asensio (2015). Realizó una investigación de enfoque cualitativo basado en el trabajo de campo, en concreto, de corte etnográfico y en la que se emplearon, además de una revisión de la literatura, otra serie de instrumentos de investigación: la observación participante, la entrevista y el diario de campo.

Se construyó un corpus total con 27 cuentos de un total de 15 informantes. Estos fueron clasificados según el catálogo ATU (2004), en los casos en los que se encontraron equivalentes, como puede verse en el cuadro que sigue:

Cuentos de animales. El hombre y los animales
<i>Cuento 1: ar-rayûl al-ġabî w-at-ta'aleb makkâr</i> El hombre tonto y el zorro astuto [ATU 155]
Cuentos maravillosos
<i>Cuento 2: bint al-armala. La hija de la viuda</i> [ATU 312]
<i>Cuento 3: al-ġulâ wa-l-walad al-mu'addab. La ogresa y el niño respetuoso</i> [ATU 110-312-327/ 327b]
<i>Cuento 4: al-mihran al-ajzar. El caballito verde.</i> [ATU 444]
<i>Cuento 5: al-jaytân as-sa'ab. Los siete hilos</i>
<i>Cuento 6: eĥdedwan wa ijwanoh. Eĥdedwan y sus hermanos</i> [ATU 124]
<i>Cuento 7: el-ġôl wal-awlâd muš na`imîn. El ogro y los niños que no duermen</i> [ATU 327C]
<i>Cuento 8: `ušša leïla w-aġ-ġîb. Leyla y el lobo</i> [ATU 333]
<i>Cuento 9 a: Ýubēna. Quesito</i> [ATU 407]
<i>Cuento 9 b: versión de Ýubēna</i> [ATU 407]
Cuentos de tontos o bobos
<i>Cuento 10: ýoĥâ wal-lišš. Ýoĥa y el ladrón</i> [ATU 1341]
<i>Cuento 11: ýoĥâ wal-armala. Ýoĥa y la viuda</i> [ATU 1341]
<i>Cuento 12: ýoĥa w martoh sagatat min-al-ĥmâr. Ýoĥa y su mujer, la cual se cayó del burro</i> [ATU 1542]
<i>Cuento 13: musmar ýoĥa, El clavo de Ýoĥa</i> [ATU 1341]
<i>Cuento 14: el-jēt al-aĥmar. El hilo rojo</i> [ATU 1457]
Cuentos morales
<i>Cuento 15: al-mustaqriġât Las prestadas.</i> [ATU 294]
<i>Cuento 16: kalba baraqiš. La perra Baraqiš.</i>
Cuentos acumulativos
<i>Cuento 17: al-`oġġa w- dēlah. La gata y su cola</i> [ATU 2034]
<i>Cuento 18: dubbānâ susu. La mosca Susu</i> [ATU 2034]
Cuentos en los que se demuestra el ingenio de las personas
<i>Cuento 19: bint al-šultân. La hija del sultán</i> [ATU 875D]
<i>Cuento 20: kēd an-nisā`. Las argucias de mujer</i> [ATU 910]
<i>Cuento 21: šēj al-`arab al-awal. El primer sabio (jeque) árabe</i> [ATU 1542]
<i>Cuento 22: el ĥallaq. El barbero</i> [ATU 1542]
Cuentos de formulas
<i>Cuento 23: giššâ brid gazet. La historia de la jarra de aceite</i> [ATU 2300]
Cuentos de matrimonios
<i>Cuento 24: el-fuqarâ`w-l-ĥubb. Los pobres y el amor.</i>
<i>Cuento 25: al-fustân. El vestido.</i>
<i>Cuento 26: al-ojtēin mutazwiġât w ýužĥēin. Las hermanas casadas y sus maridos.</i>

En última instancia, procedimos al análisis del etnomaterial siguiendo el modelo propuesto por Dundes (1964) y Günthner y Knoblauch (1995) en tres niveles de análisis:

- La «textura», que es el aspecto formal de la actualización del mensaje. Hace referencia al nivel lingüístico y estilístico.
- El «texto», que es la versión individual recogida y relacionado con el nivel semántico. Atiende al contenido de los relatos en cuanto al tema, el argumento o los personajes.
- El «contexto» que son las situaciones sociales específicas en que se produce el hecho folclórico. Asimismo, contempla otros aspectos del acto narrativo como son los elementos no verbales y paralingüísticos.

5. El análisis del corpus

5.1 Ámbito y modalidad de la transmisión del corpus

La experiencia etnográfica nos hace situar la narración de cuentos de tradición oral en Jordania como un tipo discursivo propio del espacio privado:

- El cuento lo narra un miembro a otro de su propio núcleo familiar –incluida la familia extensa– o bien en el seno de la tribu.
- Jordania no dispone actualmente de narradores profesionales llamados *ḥakawātī* (حكواتي) o *rāwī* (راوي).

El orden social jordano se basa, como se expuso anteriormente, en dos sistemas superpuestos, la tribu y la familia extensa, y ambos núcleos constituyen el verdadero punto de inferencia cultural. Si bien el sistema tribal todavía pervive en la organización socio-política de Jordania, en realidad es la familia el ámbito más propio de la cultura asociada con lo popular, es decir, al margen o en paralelo, si se prefiere, de la cultura aprendida de tipo oficial e institucional más propia de la instrucción escolar (Asensio, 2015).

La familia es el primer grupo de relación del individuo y de transmisión cultural pues es un recipiente de la herencia filogénica, es decir, lo biológico y la ontogenia que es la cultura de cuya transmisión es garante. En la familia es donde el individuo primeramente interioriza normas, usos, costumbres, tradiciones y, también, valores, emociones, afectos, pensamientos, creencias, actitudes sociales.

Los cuentos que conforman este corpus están relacionados directamente con la familia y de forma directa o indirecta los informantes hacen mención al hogar como espacio narrativo:

Ejemplo 1. Informante IHJ2: “ha-ḥikayə gallatnī emmī, ya’nī, sittī, ḡaddatī⁴ ‘ašān hiyyə sakina ma’a ahlī” (“Esta historia me la contó mi madre [o sea, mi abuela (repite la palabra abuela pero en árabe normativo) porque ella vive con mi familia)”).

En este caso, además, enfatiza el hecho de que la abuela viviera con ellos.

Ejemplo 2. Informante IMJ1: “kāna eḥkilnā el-ḡiddāt | yḡūlna w ummī, allāh yarḥamiha, teḥkilnā” (“nos lo contaban los abuelos, nos los contaban y mi madre, que Dios la tenga en su gloria, nos lo contaba”).

Ejemplo 3. Informante IMP2, que a diferencia de los anteriores ejemplos, se realiza en inglés: “before we was, | were, were youth we doesn’t TV so:: she, tells us stories and there are so:: nices:: | we didn’t sleep | without stories” (“antes nosotros era | éramos, éramos jóvenes y no teníamos tele, por tanto:: ella, nos contaba historias y son tan:: bonitas:: | nosotros no podíamos dormir | sin historias”)

La narración del cuento folclórico en el contexto jordano se inscribe en la esfera privada porque carece de espacios públicos para tal fin.

5.2. La voz autorizada para la narración de cuentos de tradición oral en Jordania

Sydow (1965) había establecido dos categorías de depositarios de la tradición oral en función de un *rol* y un *status* en términos sociológicos que cada miembro tiene dentro de la sociedad (Giner, 2010):

1. El depositario activo que es aquel individuo que dentro de su grupo social mantiene, reproduce o produce tradición oral. Este puede ser un profesional de la narración o un aficionado. Dispone de unas características concretas, en otras palabras, de la ‘competencia folclórica’ suficiente entendida como “saber decir, saber escuchar, saber hacer, donde se ponen en juego las relaciones de comunidad consigo misma y con su entorno. Lo que se transmite con los relatos es el grupo de reglas pragmáticas que constituye el lazo social” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 48).
2. El depositario pasivo que conoce algunos materiales folclóricos, pero no suele ser trasmisor de forma activa. Para Taggart (1990), el género de los narradores y de la audiencia es determinante en tanto que condiciona el argumento, aunque hemos contemplado otras variables a la hora de estudiar al (la) narrador/a como son la edad, la educación y la

⁴ El informante emplea el término abuela en dialecto de tipo jordano que luego repite en árabe normativo. Esto se debe a un intento, por parte del informante, por explicar un vocablo que, a priori, no considera entendible por un extranjero.

ocupación laboral. Todas estas variables influyen en la personalidad y la pragmática de la narrativa oral.

Así, el grupo final de informantes fue de 15 personas agrupadas en función de las variables edad, género, formación académica y procedencia etnonacional:

		JÓVENES Hasta los 30			ADULTOS Hasta los 64			ANCIANOS Más de 65		
		Hombre	Mujer		Hombre	Mujer		Hombre	Mujer	
Alfabetos	FS	1 J	1P	2 J		2P	1 J	2 J	1P	1P
	FE							1J		2P 1J
Analfabetos										

Cuadro 1. Variables sociales para la distribución de los informantes.⁵

En los epígrafes que siguen, nos vamos a detener en cada una de las variables indicadas.

La variable de edad

La edad de los/las informantes resulta significativa a la hora de determinar quién es o no es un depositario activo de la tradición oral.

En el caso de nuestro estudio, los informantes fueron distribuidos en tres grupos en función de esta:

- Jóvenes con una edad no superior a los 30 años. Se entrevistaron un total de 20 individuos estudiantes de español en la Universidad de Jordania y el Instituto Cervantes de Amán.
- Adultos cuyas edades oscilan entre los 31 y los 64 años.
- Mayores de 65 que es el grupo que cuenta con mayor número de informantes.

Del primer grupo, solo cuatro de ellos permanecen como narradores/narradoras al no considerarse a sí mismos narradores en contraposición a otros miembros de su familia como la madre, la abuela o los abuelos en general y, a veces, incluso tíos como se desprende de los siguientes testimonios de los informantes finalmente seleccionados:

⁵ Leyenda FS = formación superior / FE = formación elemental, J = Jordano / P = Palestino.

Testimonio 1. Informante IJM2. Esta parte de la intervención fue en español: “mi abuela es una experta en contar historias” “tengo una tía, la hermana de mi padre. Es mayor | no está casada, ella sabe contar muy bien”.

Testimonio 2. Informante IHJ3. Para este informante, su abuela es el verdadero referente narrativo, así pues, afirma “mā ba’ref ġuṣaṣ | ŷaddatī, na’m, hiyya ta’ref” (“no sé cuentos | mi abuela, sí, ella sabe”) y continúa diciendo “lamma kunt sġir, kunt dā`iman ma’a ŷaddatī. hiyya eḡkilnī ġuṣaṣ dā`iman | bas ensit kullu, [ya’nī] jallinī ufakkir šwai /” (“cuando era pequeño, estaba siempre con mi abuela. Ella me contaba cuentos siempre | pero olvidé todo, [bueno] déjame pensar un poco /”).

Testimonio 3. Informante IMP3. El testimonio de esta informante es especialmente significativo porque no solo apuntó a su madre y a su abuela –que por el contexto se desprende que se trata de la abuela materna- como prototipos de depositarias activas, sino que insistió en que entrevistásemos a su madre (su abuela había fallecido). En efecto, su madre se convirtió en la informante IMP2. Esta informante IMP3 dijo lo siguiente: “tiḡkī ma’a ummī, hiyya, na’m, hiyya ta’ref ḡikayāt / wa allāh, ḡikayēt ŷamilā / (Ri) | habla con ella, yo, yo..- | ummī w teta /ahh..- sameithum `uṣaṣ ŷamilā | anā muš šatra li-l-uṣaṣ bas:.. / ummī wa ŷaddatī:.. mā ša` allāh! / | allāh yuharbaha/ | kanat amaizing | Leš ma tiḡki ma’a ummī, profesora?/ ya’ni, ḡelwə ašan momkin usammi marra tānia al-uṣaṣ li-eḡkilah li-awladī” (“habla con mi madre, ella, sí, ella sabe cuentos / por dios que sabe cuentos preciosos / (Ri) | habla con ella, yo, yo:: | mi madre y la abuelita / ah- les escuché cuentos preciosos | Yo no soy muy lista para las historias [no sé] pero:.. mi abuela ¡madre mía! ¡qué Dios la tenga en su gloria! era increíble | ¿Por qué no hablas con mi madre, profesora? Bueno, genial⁶, porque podría escuchar otra vez las historias y contárselas a mis hijos”).

La misma tendencia se observa en el grupo de informantes adultos. Para estos, también son sus mayores los *narradores expertos* y, por tanto, *voces autorizadas* como dice la informante IMP2: “bas what my mother said it much better than me | kif!/ | and my grandmother (Ri) | sittī kān eḡkilnā muddalla, ba’dēn | mm:: | ba’dēn, kif?, ah::, yalla | ġēr teḡkillah, (Ri) aḡla minnī:.. / we always went to visit her to Nablus | she was amaizig:.., w-allāh, amaizing! / I remember her stories (Ri-MCa)” (“pero que era mi madre [que] decía esto mucho mejor que yo | ¡cómo! / | y mi abuela (Ri) | nos contaba con cariño después | mm:: | después, ¿cómo?, ah::, venga |

⁶ La informante utiliza el adjetivo ḡelwə que significa literalmente “dulce”, pero que puede ser traducido o bien como “bonito” o como “qué deleite / qué alegría”.

diferente la contaba (Ri) más bonita que la mía:.../ nosotros siempre íbamos a visitarla a Nablus | ella era increíble, ¡por Dios, increíble!/ recuerdo sus historias (Ri-MCa”).

Por último, el tercer grupo también tiene como referentes narrativos de los cuentos folclóricos a sus mayores como se puede observar de las palabras de la informante IMJ1: *“kāna eḥkilnā el-ḡiddāt | ygūlna w ummī, allāh yarḥamiha, teḥkilnā”* (“nos lo contaban los abuelos, nos los contaban y mi madre, qué Dios la tenga en su gloria, nos lo contaba”). La diferencia de estos informantes con respecto al resto es que también dejan constancia de sus conocimientos como sucede con el informante IHJ1 cuando afirma *“anā, ba’ref guṣaṣ ktīr”* (“yo sé muchas historias”). Por su parte el informante IHJ2, una vez que le expliqué los objetivos que pretendía alcanzar con este trabajo de investigación me dice *“ḥelū /, ah::, ‘anḡed /”* (“¡qué bonito!/ sí::, ¡de verdad!/”) y comenzó con la primera historia, sin ningún preámbulo más. No justifican el origen de quién se lo contó –en muchos casos ni lo recuerdan– y no se plantean si son o no buenos narradores, sino que cuentan historias sin cuestionarse nada.

De lo expuesto se desprende que los depositarios activos de la tradición oral en el contexto de estudio son los miembros de mayor edad debido, a nuestro parecer, a cuatro motivos:

- La ausencia de tecnología. Así, por ejemplo, la informante IMP4 dice no recordar más historias porque las escuchaba en la radio: *“mā tdakar | anā, kān ‘indī radio”* (“no recuerdo | yo, tenía radio”).
- La educación, sobre todo para las niñas, era más limitada.
- El tiempo y la paciencia. La jubilación en Jordania es a los 60 años, siempre que las condiciones lo permitan, por lo que los y las jubiladas tendrán más tiempo para estar en el hogar con los más pequeños. Por otro lado, es más frecuente que las mujeres mayores hayan dedicado su existencia al hogar y la crianza por lo que continúan dicha labor con sus nietos. Generalmente, serán las abuelas paternas las que cuiden de los nietos/nietas de sus hijos varones. De igual modo, la cultura árabe en general suele mostrarse más paciente con los niños/las niñas por lo que se hace extensible a la narración de cuentos (Asensio, 2015).
- La memoria. En sociedades donde la oralidad es mayor, la memoria también. A esto se le une el mayor empleo de la memoria a largo plazo por parte de estos informantes.

No obstante, como afirma Sydow (1965), un depositario activo está supeditado al tiempo y al contexto, es decir, el informante-narrador cambia con el paso de los años porque se ve

influenciado por sus experiencias personales, su capacidad memorística y actúa en función de la situación, el público (o el receptor al que se dirige). En definitiva, estoy de acuerdo con Lakoff (1972), para quien la experiencia vital es determinante porque la narración es la representación de vivencias pasadas.

La variable de sexo y formación

Si atendemos al género de los informantes, en palabras de Sadiqi (2003), el género en la narración adquiere significado. Para Sirhan (2014), referido a las historias de vida entre los palestinos expone: “there are notable differences in the personal narratives of woman and those of men, not only in style but also in content and form” (p. 222).

A este respecto, los introductores tendieron a ponerme en contacto con mujeres más que con hombres. Puede que por el hecho de ser mujer-investigadora. Como resultado, el 18,52% son narradores-hombres, frente al 81,48% que son mujeres-narradoras. ¿Qué es lo que motiva que la presencia femenina sea mayor que la masculina?

En primer lugar, la primera motivación se debe al ámbito de comunicación en el que se localizó este tipo de manifestación folclórica y que es el espacio privado. Si tenemos en cuenta los parámetros del contexto social jordano-palestino de índole patriarcal, en el que este espacio está reservado a la mujer. La mujer es considerada “el ángel del hogar”, que es el lugar que tradicionalmente se le asigna y que, por extensión, la hace ser la encargada de educar, alimentar y vestir a los niños frente al hombre, que está asociado más bien a los espacios públicos.

En segundo lugar, el carácter ficcional del cuento folclórico tiende a relacionarse con la mujer. Rabadán (2003), al referirse a los cuentos de tipo fantástico, a los relatos maravillosos (*al-jrefiyye*) en Palestina, considera que “es poco frecuente que los hombres narren este tipo de cuento indiscutiblemente relacionado con la patraña y la ficción (...)” por lo que los define como “un arte de mujeres” (p. 52). Los hombres entrevistados marcan más la barrera entre la imaginación y la realidad como lo demuestra el siguiente testimonio del informante IHJ3, el cual comienza su primera intervención narración advirtiendo de la veracidad del relato: “anā aḥkilek ḡiṣṣa min ḥaqiqa | hada, hada, hada qiṣṣa ḥaqiqī (Ri)” (“yo te voy a contar un cuento de verdad. Este (este, este) es un cuento verdadero”).

Por último, y teniendo presente la relación que se ha establecido entre mujer y ficción, se halla otro aspecto que ha de tenerse en cuenta: la edad de la mujer. Esta, al alcanzar la madurez asociada a la menopausia (Rabadán, 2003) y a la maternidad (Bassiouney, 2009), gana estatus y, al mismo tiempo, se libera de toda carga sexual y de ciertos tabúes sociales por lo que no tiene reparos en introducir elementos escatológicos o eróticos en sus historias. Así pues, la informante IMJ1 narra el cuento C19 titulado Kēd al-nisā que trata de las argucias⁷ de las mujeres y previene contra ellas: “Gālloh: “Yā rab, yā rab taṣēr tadī la-rabha ennoh yōzha yen’amī w yiḡī ṣāḥbha illī hiyya btaḡraf wiyāh w btat’alal hadā huwwa “hātī” hiyya wiyāh w ennoh mā yšōfoh (“Señor mío, Señor mío... que su marido se hiciera ciego para que su amigo (amante) vaya a pasar tiempo con ella y para que su marido no lo vea”). No sucede lo mismo en el caso de los hombres que se presentan más pudorosos como en el ejemplo extraído del informante IHJ2 durante la narración del cuento C.6: “lāzim aḏḥak ‘alayoh ī-šī ‘ašgla kabira [2=fī ī-šī `uṣṣa bil-baṭṭija bisāwī ī-šī kān byḥkī w lā ī-šī=] ah:: huwwa | nāsī [2=lā, bibdanā hadōl al-qīṣaṣ, lāzim hadōl al-muhmīn=] ṣār yafir min al-baṭṭija ḥassabat nab’a, nab’a w taṣrab tagūl: “la’nā allāh ‘alayah mayya māliḥa” (“tengo que reírme de él haciendo algo grande. (=hay algo del melón, hace algo que:: que estaba llorando... [2=sí::, él | olvidé]=no queremos historias así, son necesarias estas son las interesantes=] se puso a mear desde la sandía y ella creía que era una fuente (agua saliendo) y la bebió y dice “Dios maldiga a esta agua que está salada”); en cuanto a la presencia de lo erótico en el relato masculino debe observarse que este estará totalmente ausente cuando en su auditorio hay mujeres. Impera, en este caso, la restricción impuesta por el pudor (jayal-خيل / hayā-هيا).

[...] al alcanzar la madurez asociada a la menopausia (Rabadán, 2003) y a la maternidad (Bassiouney, 2009), gana estatus y, al mismo tiempo, se libera de toda carga sexual y de ciertos tabúes sociales por lo que no tiene reparos en introducir elementos escatológicos o eróticos en sus historias

Herrero Muñoz-Cobo (1996: 118) observa en el caso tetuaní que la edad libera a las mujeres que emplean un discurso difesmístico. Para un occidental, desde el punto de vista de la imagen (Goffman, 1967 [1970]) podría calificarse de desinterés por su propia imagen, aunque en realidad, es una clara demostración del estatus adquirido con los años.

Una última observación relativa al sexo de los informantes se refiere a la variedad de la lengua con la que se comunicaron pues, exceptuando los casos de alumnas estudiantes de español y el

⁷ Este tema aparece tratado en el Corán, en concreto en la azora ¹² dedicada a Yusuf, aleya 28: “ فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ أَن كَيْدَهُنَّ أَكْبَرُ مِن دُبُرِ قَالَ إِنَّهُ مِن كَيْدِكُنَّ إِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيمٌ يُقَالُ عَنِ النِّسَاءِ أَنْ كَيْدَهُنَّ عَظِيمٌ ” (ver <http://www.holyquran.net/cgi-bin/prepare.pl?ch=12>)

caso de la informante IMP2, por lo general, las mujeres emplearon el árabe dialectal en todo momento. Los hombres entrevistados muestran mayores reticencias al uso dialectal. En el caso de la informante IMJ1, debido a lo complicado de su variedad dialectal beduina, o bien sustituía alguna palabra en su variedad dialectal por otra estándar o recurría a su nieta para que esta la explicara en español. Por su parte, los hombres sí mostraron, como digo, más reticencias a la hora de emplear el árabe dialectal.

En cuanto a la formación de los/las informantes, existe una clara relación entre el sexo y la edad afectando a las mujeres como tendencia generalizada a nivel mundial, ya que el acceso a la educación era (y es en ciertas comunidades) más limitado para estas y, sobre todo, en la Jordania y Palestina de hace 40 años. En el caso estudiado destaca la informante IMJ1 por ser la que más etnomaterial transmitió y por su calidad narrativa, seguida de IMP4, IHJ1 e IMP1. En definitiva, como afirma Pinon (1965), “un buen informante debe poseer un lenguaje poético; una memoria excelente; cierta resistencia física y tener un estilo que agrade al auditorio” (p. 47). En el estudio de Asensio (2016) sobre el mundo árabe y los cuentos de tradición oral corrobora que la mujer sea “la voz autorizada y depositaria activa de la tradición oral árabe” (p.304) y donde libera su voz y su sabiduría.

La variable estilo de vida y origen

En cuanto a las variables estilo de vida y origen etnonacional, destacamos dos cuestiones, la primera es que existe un mayor número de narradoras mujeres palestinas de estilo sedentario urbano (IMP1, IMP2, IMP5 e IMP6) y que los hombres narradores son mayoritariamente transjordanos (IHJ1, IHJ3 -sedentarios, urbanos- e IHJ2 (sedentario-rural).

Por otro lado, estas variables afectan también al aspecto lingüístico –la variable diatópica– (Suleiman, 1985; Asensio, 2018) y desde el punto de vista del texto, es decir, la tipología de cuento y el argumento del mismo.

5.3 Análisis de nivel textual

Dentro de este nivel nos vamos a detener en dos aspectos concretos: el sexo del personaje (de los personajes) y la temática y caracterización de estos personajes.

Estudio del personaje

En los cuentos analizados destaca el hecho de que el personaje femenino sea porcentualmente superior al masculino, aunque el papel protagonista esté igualado. En concreto, aparece un 66,67% de mujeres, frente a un 25,73% que es íntegramente masculino. Por otro lado, hemos de aclarar que los cuentos que tienen a animales como personajes u objetos (que constituyen

el 7,41% de los cuentos), no han sido contabilizados en este cómputo. Si bien los tres aparecen en femenino (C16 *kalba* (perra), C17 *oṭṭa* (gata) y C18 *dubbāna* (mosca), esta última no marca el sexo porque sucede igual que en español, es decir, es un sustantivo epiceno.

En cuanto al papel activo o pasivo del personaje femenino dentro de los cuentos analizados, destacan dos cuestiones. Por un lado, la presencia de personajes femeninos secundarios activos

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(C4); se trata de la hija del sultán que es la que se ofrece a investigar el misterio de las monedas de oro que aparecen cada noche en casa de un pobre, mientras desaparecen del castillo. Por otro lado, en los cuentos C2 y C5 se observa un fenómeno similar y es que inicialmente los personajes femeninos aparecen como pasivos en tanto que dependen de la voluntad de la madre (C2) o del padre (C5), pero luego se muestran activos. En el primer caso, la madre acuerda el matrimonio de esta con un forastero recién llegado al pueblo que busca casarse y en el segundo caso, el padre dispone que salgan por la noche de casa para, posteriormente, este la abandone de noche en mitad del

desierto. Ambos personajes no quedarán a expensas de su situación: una movida por la curiosidad y la otra por la necesidad van a tener un papel reactivo. Así, la primera incumple la norma de su marido de no entrar en una habitación determinada del castillo. Con este incumplimiento sabe que su marido es en realidad un *gul* (equivalente a ogro) camuflado en la apariencia de un bello y apuesto hombre; esperará para poder escapar siendo perseguida por el *gul* y volverá a descubrirlo al transformarse este en cordero, si bien no será ella la que lo mate, sino el padre de esta –contradictoriamente, ya que al inicio aparece como hija de una viuda. En cuanto al personaje del cuento C5, cuando esta se despierta y ve que no está el padre, no se quedará paralizada a esperar a ser rescatada, sino que tomará la iniciativa de salir del sitio en el que se encuentra y buscar una solución; tras varias aventuras, la protagonista terminará casándose con un príncipe.

En el caso de los cuentos C9a y C9b el personaje de *Yubēna* es el de una chica sumisa y obediente. Así, en el caso de la versión b, este personaje está a merced de la decisión familiar (no se especifica si del padre o de la madre) de casarla con un joven de otra tribu, aunque sabemos que es la madre la que pone una esclava negra para acompañarla en el viaje y que será esta esclava la que la suplante al tizarla de negro. En la versión a, la envidia de las chicas del pueblo

–que la dejarán colgada en una palmera– es lo que hará que la rescate un príncipe, aunque trabajará como una sirvienta al estar sucia.

En ambos cuentos, se oculta la belleza de la protagonista (sucio o tiznado de negro), y ambas pasan a ser pastoras al servicio del príncipe o de la tribu. En ambas versiones, la madre de *Yubēna* será la encargada de buscarla y reconocerla al oír la cantar. Una vez lavada, aflorará su belleza y blancura, por lo que la madre del príncipe (en ambos cuentos) decida casarla con su hijo.

Otro cuento, en este caso, el C26, muestra el papel determinante de la madre de las hermanas casadas, representando la justicia y la sabiduría. El cuento narra la envidia que siente una hermana por la otra por los regalos que le hace su marido. La madre es la que pondrá sentido a la situación al indicarle que ella tiene amor y la otra no.

El cuento C24 destaca por presentar una situación igualitaria entre el personaje masculino y el femenino. Se trata de un matrimonio que celebra su aniversario, pero desde la pobreza. Para poder hacerle un regalo al otro, cada uno de ellos vende algo importante: uno el reloj y la otra su pelo. La cuestión es que los regalos que se hacen tienen relación directa con estos objetos: él vende su reloj para comprarle una diadema y ella vende su hermoso pelo para comprarle a él una cadena para su reloj.

Un caso excepcional es el cuento C20 en donde un hombre le narra a otro la historia de una mujer que engañaba a su marido con otro amante. Si bien muestra un personaje femenino activo, en realidad lo hace como advertencia de lo que no debe hacer una mujer.

Temática y caracterización del personaje femenino

Sobre la temática, ya apuntamos en el epígrafe relativo al análisis contextual que la tendencia predominante es que la mujer narre historias con un mayor grado de ficción que las del hombre. No obstante, la otra cuestión a tener en consideración es que la mujer dispone de un repertorio mayor de cuentos de tradición oral que el hombre. Además, los personajes, sobre todo los/las protagonistas, de los cuentos narrados por mujeres no están sujetos al propio género de estas. Sin embargo, en el caso de los hombres, sí influye su género; así, la tendencia es contar historias en los que los personajes sean héroes masculinos activos.

Cabe mencionar que suelen presentarse personajes femeninos que destacan por su belleza (C2, C5, C9a, C9b). Además, las protagonistas son mayoritariamente mujeres jóvenes (además de los cuentos anteriormente citados, también C8, C19). Solo en un caso se habla explícitamente de un personaje principal femenino viejo (C15). En el caso de los personajes masculinos, no aparecen atributos tales como belleza o edad que podemos intuir por la temática de los cuentos; en estos últimos se hace más hincapié en la sabiduría (C21), la inteligencia y valentía (C6) o en la estupidez-inteligente que está presente en el personaje de *Ûoħa*.

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Con respecto a la temática, existe una tendencia a asociar lo femenino con el matrimonio lo que está presente en gran parte de los cuentos y su importancia, todavía hoy en día, en la sociedad árabe jordano-palestina. En concreto, en el tipo de repertorio compilado, aparecen tres cuentos que hemos agrupado bajo la categoría de matrimonio (C24, C25, C26) u otros donde aparece el protagonista casado como es el caso de *Ûoħa* (C12) o el cuento C20. También hemos de mencionar la presencia de mujeres jóvenes casaderas como en C2, C4, C5, C9a, C9b, C14, C19. En el caso del C14 se trata de chicas con un defecto en la pronunciación, por lo que la madre les indica que guarden silencio para que los hombres no lo noten y puedan casarse; y en el caso del C19, quien descifre el enigma de la hija del sultán, podrá casarse con ella. Por otro lado, aparece el matrimonio concertado en tres tiempos: al inicio de los mismos (C2, C9a), en medio del relato (C4) –este cuento tiene la característica de ser acumulativo, es decir, presenta dos cuentos entrelazados por el caballito verde– o al final de estos, como premio (C9a, C9b, C5).

Por otro lado, no podemos olvidar, según los postulados de Propp (1998), que los personajes cumplen una determinada función en el relato, aunque no concuerden sus postulados funcionales con los cuentos orientales, ya que en estos encontramos heroínas mujeres (personaje activo), como ya expusimos. Además, es frecuente que estos personajes femeninos se presentan como arquetipos donde prevalecen la belleza (C9a, C9b, C2 y C5), la obediencia, (C9a, C9b, C8), la envidia (C9a, C9b, C26), el hecho de ser caprichosa, consentida o mimada (C19, C25) o su inteligencia para acometer lo que el C20 califica de argucias de mujer; en este sentido, el C20 asocia la astucia femenina como negativa y denunciada, dentro el propio cuento, por un personaje masculino. Sobre esta presentación de la mujer, lo encontramos también en el

personaje de las sirvientas de los cuentos C9a y C9b o en el C5 que le hacen algo malo a la protagonista.

No obstante, la otra lectura que podemos hacer de lo femenino en este corpus –relevante para nuestro propósito- es que nos encontramos con mujeres valientes (C2 y C4) que coinciden con ser personajes resolutivos. Desde la perspectiva de la educación literaria, la introducción de este tipo de personajes en el aula de Infantil y Primaria permite propuestas de intervención didáctica coeducativas y, al mismo tiempo, interculturales.

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Mención especial merece el papel de la madre en estos cuentos analizados. Por un lado, esta puede mostrar preocupación por la situación de su hija, hecho determinante para que emprenda un viaje hasta encontrarla (C9a, C9b) o, por el contrario, puede ser la que resuelva el conflicto entre hermanas a través de su sabiduría como es el caso del cuento C26.

6. Conclusiones

El análisis de los etnocuentos que aquí presentamos muestra el lugar de la mujer árabe jordano-palestina dentro del hecho narrativo como la principal depositaria activa; el repertorio de estas suele ser mayor y más variado que el de los hombres. No obstante, en este aspecto no podemos descartar la condición de mujer de la propia investigadora, por lo que afectaría al repertorio narrado de las mismas de manera positiva, es decir, sentirse con mayor libertad a la hora de contar cualquier tipo de cuento. Además, la edad, en relación al sexo, es igualmente determinante en el caso de las mujeres-narradoras, puesto que las mujeres mayores se presentan libres de tapujos y convencionalismos sociales, a diferencia del hombre, más pudoroso e inhibido.

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Por otro lado, los cuentos analizados manifiestan una tendencia a presentar al personaje femenino bajo tres parámetros: juventud, belleza y casadera. No obstante, no tienen siempre un rol pasivo, aunque inicialmente así pudiera parecer.

Así, los resultados de esta investigación proporcionan una información cultural y literaria que puede servir para:

1. La formación de los futuros/futuras maestras/os de Educación Infantil y Primaria desde el paradigma intercultural y teniendo en cuenta la cuestión de género. En el caso concreto del corpus analizado y su contexto, confrontan los estereotipos que se tiene sobre la cultura árabe-islámica de tipo cultural y de género.
2. Ofrecer una experiencia de investigación en el aula universitaria de LIJ que sirva para que el alumnado en formación pueda aplicarla a su aula y, sobre todo, atendiendo a la realidad del contexto socio-cultural de esta desde la coeducación.
3. Ampliar el canon literario de la LIJ desde una perspectiva intercultural y coeducativa dando cabido, por otro lado, a la posible realidad de las aulas con alumnado extranjero o, nacidos en España, pero con progenitores extranjeros. Un canon, por otra parte, en el que se fomente la inclusión del personaje femenino activo y en régimen de igualdad con el masculino que sirvan para construir sociedades más igualitarias y equitativas en línea con el objetivo 5 de la *Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible* de las Naciones Unidas (Naciones Unidas, 2015).

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How to cite this paper:

Asensio Pastor, M. I. (2020). La mujer y el personaje femenino en cuentos jordano-palestinos de tradición oral. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 112-136. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.18950

Socio-cultural Positioning of Age Identities in Picturebooks

Posicionamiento sociocultural de las identidades de edad en los libros ilustrados

Posicionament sociocultural de les identitats d'edat als llibres il·lustrats

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Abstract

This study explores literal and metaphorical narrations of age by looking closely at two picturebooks published at the turn of the twenty-first century. The evolutionary Western understanding of the child, childhood and children's literature is briefly periodized as a tension between pragmatic and philosophical concerns. Representations of age are taken to be embedded in socio-cultural positions that implicate historical periods, geographic locations, and economic structures. Ethnicity and gender are similarly discussed as immanent features. Age is presented as much a biological phenomenon as a performative social act of a given culture. The ideas, feelings and events depicted in each picturebook are approached from a structuralist and a postmodernist perspective with the aim of providing a complementary analysis of child representations in alignment with the adult presence, and not necessarily through the lens of aetonomativity. My analysis points to possible applications of the design of age narrations to current and future literacies.

Key words: African American, Children's Literature, Picturebooks, Age, Ethnicity, Aetonomativity

Resumen

Las narraciones literarias y metafóricas de la edad se exploran a través de dos libros ilustrados publicados a principios del siglo XXI. La evolución del entendimiento del niño en el mundo occidental, la infancia y la literatura infantil se muestran con un breve resumen cronológico de la tensión entre las preocupaciones pragmáticas y filosóficas. Se contemplan las representaciones de la edad en posiciones socioculturales que implican períodos históricos, ubicaciones geográficas y estructuras económicas. La etnia y el género se discuten de manera similar como características inmanentes. Se presenta la edad como fenómeno biológico tanto como acto social performativo de la cultura. Las ideas, sentimientos y eventos representados en cada libro se estudian a partir de enfoques estructuralistas y posmodernos con la intención de proporcionar un análisis complementario de las representaciones infantiles en alineación con la presencia adulta sin la necesidad de la condición de la aetonomatividad. Las implicaciones de este

análisis apuntan a posibles aplicaciones en el diseño de narraciones de edades en trabajos literarios actuales y futuros.

Palabras clave: Afroamericano, Literatura infantil, libros ilustrados, edad, etnia, Aetonormatividad

Resum

Les narracions literàries i metafòriques de l'edat s'exploren a través de dos llibres il·lustrats publicats a principis del SXXI. L'evolució de l'enteniment de l'infant al món occidental, la infantesa i la literatura infantil es mostren amb un breu resum cronològic de la tensió entre les preocupacions pragmàtiques i filosòfiques. Es contemplen les representacions de l'edat en posicions socioculturals que impliquen períodes històrics, ubicacions geogràfiques i estructures econòmiques. L'ètnia i el gènere es discuteixen de manera similar com a característiques immanents. Es presenta l'edat com a fenomen biològic tant com acte social performatiu de la cultura. Les idees, sentiments i esdeveniments representats en cada llibre s'estudien a partir d'enfocaments estructuralistes i postmoderns amb la intenció de proporcionar una anàlisi complementària de les representacions infantils en alineació amb la presència adulta sense la necessitat de la condició d'aetonormativitat. Les implicacions d'aquesta anàlisi apunten a possibles implicacions en el disseny de narracions d'edats en treballs literaris actuals i futurs.

Paraules clau: Afroamericà, Literatura infantil, Llibres il·lustrats, Edat, Etnicitat, Aetonormativitat

1. Introduction

Contemporary society constantly produces age narratives that reverberate in multiple interpretations in which ethnicity and gender are also tied to socio-cultural positionings. In doing so, some of these literal, metaphorical and intertextual interpretations foster economic activities involving experiences, goods and services. Looking at age narration offers an opportunity to gain fresh insights into the ways it may be codified and commodified in literature. Pervasive messages of when, how and where to behave according to age can be noticed readily in works of children's literature. Picturebooks are one example of a commodity that positions age, ethnicity and gender in social and cultural terms within and outside a given narrative.

This paper discusses ways in which age narration, of the child specifically, can be understood in two picturebooks. Katharine Jones (2006) notes that, "The terms 'age role,' 'age difference,' and 'ageuation' point to a cultural process, namely the age-role process ... as well as to the biological process of ageing" (p. 297). However, before those narrations of age are explored, a brief historical

review of how a child was socially conceptualized in the past and what it is currently known to be, is included as a functional layering of the complex and prevailing notions of “the child.” Once established, these fundamental ideas are challenged and assumptions of how ethnicity and gender might be plotted along the coordinates of age and activity are introduced. From this perspective, the varied performative realities of age throughout the lifespan complicate essentialist definitions of child and adult, whilst the adolescent remains a liminal figure. It is through the lens of this child-adult tension that each picturebook is analyzed, using first a structuralist interpretation based on the developmental stages widely documented in research studies by psychologists Piaget, Freud, Erikson and Vygotski. Then, critical content analysis is employed along with close reading and contextualization. Mitzi Myers (1988) adroitly defines the nature of this kind of endeavor pointing out that

A New Historicism of children's literature would integrate text and socio-historic context, demonstrating on the one hand how extraliterary cultural formations shape literary discourse and on the other how literary practices are actions that make things happen — by shaping the psychic and moral consciousness of young readers but also by performing many more diverse kinds of cultural work, from satisfying authorial fantasies to legitimating or subverting dominant class and gender ideologies, from meditating social inequalities to propagandizing for causes, from popularizing new knowledges and discoveries to addressing life issues like slavery and the condition of the working class (p. 42).

Historical overlaying of socio-cultural contexts and generalizations about the child and childhood may be complemented with data derived from digital humanities when applied to children’s literature. In this way, qualitative and quantitative analysis work in tandem with socio-cultural contexts of ethnicity and gender themes to highlight ways in which age is presented in selected texts. People are aged by culture (Gullette 1995) while suspended in their interconnecting webs of significance (Geertz 1975). The process of interactivity and interdependence among people at different life stages, as well as with diverse ethnic and gender identities create meaning within and around texts. Children’s picturebooks construct age identities through social and cultural positioning, reflective of historical periods, geographic locations, and the ways they do so are embedded in economic structures.

In this sense, it is important and necessary to make traditionally underrepresented groups visible in and around discussions about representation in children's books in practice as well as in theory. As

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a former teacher, educational entrepreneur, and current children's literature researcher, I am aware of and have access to children's books involving characters from diverse backgrounds. I participated in different purchasing programs designed especially for educators to build diversity selection among book choices for students. For me, this is a lifelong skill that always needs to be refined as time and demographics change. In order to promote selection skills for diverse books in students, diverse books must first be available to them. I have actively sought out and made significant personal investments in children's and youths' books and I am a

frequent user of public libraries. It is from this interactive relationship with children's literature built along the years that I was able to select picturebooks that showcased children from traditionally underrepresented groups. García-González and Mínguez-López (under review) reminds the critical reader that "Picturebooks appear to have a great potential to narrate diversities as "becomings" rather than as fixed and stable social identities." Each picturebook consumed by a child and adult (listener, reader, user and beholder) holds an iteration of ideas, feelings and events (Arizpe, Bagelmann, Colomer, Martínez-Roldán 2014). The purpose of this study is to look into how age is narrated in picturebooks, explore and justify the possible connotations found in their intertextual manifestations and explain why these representations and what they stand for are important. I intentionally evade the polarization of power along age narrations in my analysis and gesture toward shared, intergenerational, dynamic interdependence in and around the narratives. *Please, Baby, Please* (2002) by celebrity Spike Lee and Tonya Lewis Lee, illustrated by renowned Kadir Nelson, and *Busy Toes* (1998) by C.W. Bowie, illustrated by Fred Willingham, are the two picturebooks used to explore the ways in which age is narrated to create social and cultural positionings.

2. Theoretical Framework

Kira Mahamud-Angulo (2020) advocates the application of multimodal and interdisciplinary methods for text analysis similar in spirit to the postmethod perspective Kumaravadivelu (2003) proposes in the context of English language teaching¹. Combined methods of structuralist interpretation, critical content analysis, close reading and contextualization are employed in my study within the general theoretical framework of New Historicism. Before we begin the analysis of how the child is represented in the literary text, we must take a step back to review our own understanding and perspectives of the child, childhood and its literary representations.

Western culture has evolved in its understanding of the child, childhood and children's literature. Colin Mills (Hunt and Ray 2005) sums up ongoing tensions on the polarizing debates of child, childhood and children's literature as dichotomous oppositions involving exploitation and protection, exposure and censure, entertainment and education, and fantasy and reality (p. 377). Mitzi Myers (1988) proposes that understandings of the 'child', 'childhood' and 'children's literature' are culturally contingent, rather than empirically essentialist, and that they embody the social construction of a particular historical context;" (p. 42).

However, the first Western voice to emerge regarding the child and childhood was Philippe Ariès in *Centuries of Childhood* (1972). Harry Hendrick (1992) criticized the famous French childhood historian as having

initiated the debate [...] that 'in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist' [...]. In the sixteenth century, he continues, adults were beginning to see children as a 'source of amusement and relaxation', but not until the seventeenth century did the difference between the two ages begin to be appreciated. By the mid-eighteenth century a modern concept had emerged with the child occupying a central place in the family. (p.1)

The criticism Hendrick voiced concerned especially the historian's use of sources:

¹ In the 1990s, Kumaravadivelu presented the idea of postmethod as taking reasonable theoretical and pedagogic risks to move beyond the confines of singular or dualistic methodological approaches to teaching English. He proposed instead that each teaching context is unique as are students and learning goals. Therefore, the methods a teacher applies must be appropriate to the given reality. Kumaravadivelu insisted that academic theory and professional practicality must work in harmony. Simply put, Kumaravadivelu believed that one must use "situation-specific ideas within a general framework that makes sense in terms of current pedagogical and theoretical knowledge." (1992, p. 41)

his [Ariès'] data are [...] unrepresentative [...], takes evidence out of context, confuses prescription with practice, and uses atypical examples. [...] implicitly denies the immutability of the special needs of children, for food, clothing, shelter, affection and conversation [...] saying little of economic and political factors. (p. 1)

Ariès' vision is not incompatible with Karen Coats' historization of childhood provided in the first chapter of *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature* (2017). However, Ariès' summary is comparatively incomplete and does not include historically disenfranchised children. Coats' chronology, on the other hand does include mention of disenfranchised children and their needs. She points to the fact that children in the past were viewed as miniature adults who needed to mature as quickly as possible (p. 14-17). Yet, moving in sync with the development and spread of Judaism, Islam and Christianity, religious ideas influenced how children were seen and thus became regarded as "gifts from God" (Stearns 2006, p. 35). The flip side of this idea held that children were born with the taint of original sin and needed to develop self-control to orient properly their moral compass. The Protestant Reformation cultivated the need for children to become self-aware and repentant (Coats 2017 p. 17-21). These understandings lasted until around the Enlightenment when the French philosopher, Rousseau, and others argued that children were blank slates, "tabula rasa", neither good nor bad, but influenced by society. Following this belief, it can be easily observed how Western society moved towards the idea that children need protection. The Romantics' reaction against the long-standing pragmatics of reason and the restrictions of religions play into the inspired and enduring idea that children hold the hope of the future. It is the belief in the yet-to-be-known that children become symbolic vessels of sentiment and imagination (p. 25). Informed by "discourses of psychology, child development, educational theory, psychoanalysis and social policy," the current understanding of the child is multifaceted (Mills p. 378). Children are a diverse and unique group of individuals with various abilities, experiences and temperaments (Coats 2017 p. 34-37). Childhood is established as a life stage fundamentally distinct from adolescence and adulthood (p. 7- 46, 49-80).

Vanessa Joosen moves away from a historical understanding of the child and childhood by offering a metaphorical perspective. In the first chapter of her book *Connecting Childhood and Old Age in Popular Media* (2018), she cites the 1980s work of Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* and their explanation of root metaphors. A root metaphor, according to Lakoff and Johnson, is a

narrative structure, linking two concepts with shared entailments, complex coherences² and gestalts. Joosen argues that age is not a biological given, but rather a social performance, that is negotiated and narrated by culture, much in the way Judith Butler argues about gender performativity (1988). Margaret Morganroth Gullette (2004), is often credited with the phrase “aged by culture.” Given this paradigm, childhood and old age can be treated as a root metaphor. Children are like old people and vice versa. In Joosen’s words, media narratives ascribe interchangeable traits between the young and the old. She explains how the relational concepts of age need to take into account the “historical, international, and intermedial context” (p. 12). So, in studying the relationships and stories among different life stages in conjunction with their capitalist implications, she establishes three basic patterns of interaction: affinity, complementarity and conflict. The pattern of interaction based on conflict, as it will be shown in my paper, can be traced in one of the two picturebooks that comprise my sample while the other is based on affinity. In addition, one must keep in mind that the implied audience of a book affects the representation of youth and senescence. The interdependence among people from other stages of life creates meaning. The picturebooks used to support the nuanced and overt dimensionalities of child-adult relationships are different from, yet similar to how Joosen uses Safran Foer’s YA novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005). In (2002), the main character’s age identity is narrated through a series of situational reprimands. The voice of the adult directed toward the child establishes an age margin, but cunningly enough, the metanarrative, prefaced in the title of the book and repeated throughout, creates additional age margins for some consumers. On the other hand, *Busy Toes* (1998) is a series of affirmations of what children can do, specifically with their toes from the hidden observing adult and creates a quieter age margin. This hidden narrating adult does not intervene in the activities of the children. The physical agency of the children, although focused on their toes, encompasses a wide variety of play and learning activities. The metanarrative surrounding toes is quite complex and easily associated with Freudian understandings of development and thus marking various age categories. Anita Wohlmann in *Aged Young Adults: Age Readings of Contemporary American Novels and Films* (2014) insists that age is a metaphorical practice and as

² Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain a series of conditions for metaphorical concepts to function successfully. Among these conditions, “The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in a culture.” (p. 22) In the case of complex coherences across metaphors, they clarify that purpose and overlaying purposes of corresponding metaphorical structures signal direct connections that are contingent upon the integrity of their content. See chapter 17 for a more detailed discussion.

such has metaphorical functions which revolve around norms, ideals and expectations. In this case, later-in-age as in earlier-in-age, bodily awareness, functions and ability gain interest and priority.

Following the work of Umberto Eco, Charles Sutherland in his contribution to *Understanding Children's Literature* (2009, p. 43) explains how a plurality of codes leads to a plurality of understandings. Assuming all productions are in some way ideological, three things can happen. One, readers of a text can assume or subsume those worldviews. Secondly, readers can import their own beliefs or ignore those presented. Lastly, readers can question the text. These are important considerations because as Joosen (2018) cautions, messages about age are powerful and can influence a person's performative age identity - in other words, how people act their age. Wohlmann (2014) suggests a possible relation among young people and age awareness with their age identities being learned and internalized. Nelson and Fivush (2004) establish the emergence of autobiographical memory gradually across pre-school years in the context of socio-cultural development theory. From this perspective,

Three critical arguments underlie this theory: (a) There is a gradual emergence of autobiographical memory across the pre-school years rather than a point before which there are no auto-biographical memories and after which there are; (b) language is a fundamental social cultural tool in the development of an autobiographical memory system; and (c) there are cultural, gender, and individual differences in autobiographical memory across the life span that need to be explained. (p. 489)

Similarly, Dan McAdams (2008) investigates the internalized and ever evolving story of the self in adults. However, according to his research, the narrative identity does not coalesce until late adolescence and into adulthood (p. 242). From this perspective, age narratives for children in everyday life, as in picturebooks are not autogenerative, but are crafted and imposed by adults and adult narrators. According to the long-standing nature and nurture debate among psychologists, the expected behaviors for individuals based on their age are in part biological and in part socio-cultural (McAdams 1994, pp. 179-191, 293-295, 300-308, 353-359, 798). A person's age and the enactment of age place a person not only culturally, socially, geographically but also economically.

The depiction of the child and childhood in children's literature is highly conditioned. In discussing hybridity with regard to this tension on the age spectrum between adults and children, David Rudd (2004) argues that

The shift in emphasis that I am suggesting parallels the response that Homi Bhabha (1994) made to Edward Said's work on colonialism. In children's literature, Rose herself uses the notion of the child as a colonised being to capture the way that children's literature is imposed on the young reader, seeking to secure him or her. Perry Nodelman (1992) has also noted the parallels, showing how readily 'the child' can be substituted for 'the orient' in Said's *Orientalism* (1978). However, Bhabha gives Said's work a more psychoanalytical emphasis, suggesting that the relation between coloniser and colonised is less secure, in that the former is always troubled by the relation between the two. (chapter I, para. 2, n.p.)

The dominant expected behaviors and activities for children in Western children's literature are different and separate from the expected behaviors and activities of adults (liminal adolescents are pressured to choose or be chosen for). The dominant, modern Western aspiration or idealization of the child and childhood centers on revisiting the traditional

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dichotomies of play and education, protection and love, immediate priorities and long-term resources for all children. The Geneva declaration of the Rights of the Child, drafted in 1924 by the League of Nations, adopted by the United Nations and consequently revised, evolved into the 1989

Yet, those beautiful ideals, so readily consumed and propagated in many popular works of children's literature become standardized as the normal child, experiencing a normal childhood in a normal context. The child spouse, the child soldier, the child laborer are some examples that run contrary to this norm. Their expected behaviors, activities and experiences do not match their age: adults marry, adults fight in wars, adults toil and labor

Convention on the Rights of the Child advocating that children be "brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity." (para. 7) Yet, those beautiful ideals, so readily consumed and propagated in many popular works of children's literature become standardized as the normal child, experiencing a normal childhood in a normal context. The child spouse, the child soldier, the child laborer are some examples that run

contrary to this norm. Their expected behaviors, activities and experiences do not match their age: adults marry, adults fight in wars, adults toil and

labor. *Trabajar no es un juego* (Rivas 1997) is an anthology of various types of works that address the exploitation of child labor. *Oh Lord, I Wish I was a Buzzard* (Greenberg and Aliki 2002) is based on the real childhood experiences of Gladys Henton working in a cotton field. Children's picturebooks such as *¿Por que estas triste?* (2000) by Violeta Monreal and *Nuestros Derechos* (2003) by Maria João Carvalho, illustrated by Carla Nazareth, in the words of Clémentine Beauvais (Keyes and McGillicuddy 2014), "...can be seen as equipping the child with both the responsibility for the world and the resulting anguish to witness its limitations. Pedagogically speaking, it is, of course, an undeniably paradoxical position, ..." (p. 22).

3. Methods and materials

The selection of the two picturebooks used in my study was based on five variables: availability, different representations of age, structure of the book, closeness in publication years and representations of African Americans. One of the concerns voiced by modern socially responsive groups such as World of Words (WOW)³, We Need Diverse Books⁴, Inclusive Minds, and #OwnVoices⁵ is the availability of books involving characters from diverse backgrounds. Underrepresentation of different people as protagonists as compared to the demographics in the United States raises concerns. Carmen Martínez-Roldán (2017) explains how ethnicity and gender of protagonists largely continue to be skewed in the United States as per statistics provided by The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC)⁶ (p. 64).

Busy Toes (1998) and *Please, Baby, Please* (2002) involve story characters of different ages. Gender performance of the child characters is circumvented in both picturebooks and adult characters are almost absent. Both books maintain a list structure in terms of narrative style and a highly

³ "Worlds of Words [WOW] is committed to providing a range of resources to encourage educators at all levels to integrate global literature into the lives of children." (<https://wowlit.org/about/>)

⁴ "We Need Diverse Books™ is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and a grassroots organization of children's book lovers that advocates essential changes in the publishing industry. [Their] aim is to help produce and promote literature that reflects and honors the lives of all young people." (<https://diversebooks.org/about-wndb/>)

⁵ #Ownvoices is a movement started in 2015 online through Twitter by Corinne Duyvis, to advocate for "... kidlit about diverse characters written by authors from that same diverse group." (<https://twitter.com/corinneduyvis/status/640584099208503296>)

⁶ The CCBC has documented publishing statistics on children's and young adults' books about people of color and First/Native Nations, and by people of color and First/Native Nations authors and illustrators since 1985.

predictable, repetitive discourse. *Busy Toes* offers a list of descriptors for different kinds of toes while *Please, Baby, Please* offers a list of reprimands and directives punctuated by a final question at the end of the story. The narrative in *Busy Toes* evokes different moments throughout a day in which children can engage in different activities with their toes. One of the last illustrations shows three sets of toes cuddling. The final scene reads, "Goodnight toes," with an illustration showing two pairs of feet, drawn in muted tones, in which the toes are visually centered. *Please, Baby, Please*, provides a very similar narrative with the difference of following one child through her or his day realizing various activities. One of the last illustrations shows the mother tucking in her child after a long day full of action. The final scene ends with the mother kissing her child goodnight. Narrative closure with a goodnight scene is usually employed as an end form in picturebooks as reading before bedtime has become a common practice between a caretaker and a child before going to sleep. Both picturebooks include positive representations of African American characters.

With close readings, the units of analysis were interplayed between text and theory while connecting to how socio-cultural positioning of age identities in picturebooks is used as an indicator of the expectations of how people should act, interact and react based on their age. This study considers two ways in which the analysis of these picture books may be performed. On the one hand, a structuralist's approach is deployed to determine literary archetypes and to ascribe psychological insights to the story's characters and its participants (author, reader, listener, beholder). On the other hand, a postmodern approach to critically question the literary and non-literary discourses, intertextualities and representations within and around the story books can be applied. Using both sets of tools holds value in what cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1975) called types of subjective self-spun "webs of significance." With this understanding, Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak's (2016) warning to be cautious in one's enthusiasm to "idealize the potential of radical literary texts to empower young readers" (p. 216) and Karen Coats' (2018) warning to be cautious in "unconscious bias, masked as objectivity, [...] aris[ing] when we assume that all literary traditions have the same values, objectives and structures," (p.92) underscore how critical scholars need to be careful when questioning textual representations.

4. Analysis

Please, Baby, Please (2002) is a story about a middle-class, urban toddler and her or his relationship with the non-specified adult narrator. The gender of the child is not clearly established. Age identity is narrated by means of situational illustrations of the child along with matching reprimands from

the insinuated parent. The relationship pattern between the adult and child characters is that of conflict. It is not until the end of the story where there is an example of affinity and subversion of the power dynamic. From a structuralist approach, the child character is used as the source of the story to gain psychological insight. David Rudd (Nel and Paul 2011) observes that, "..., a child thinks in 'preoperational' terms (as Piaget argues was common before age seven), then it should appreciate characters in books who do the same." Yet, these kinds of books tend to be more popular and appreciated among adults than among children. (p. 216) Recalling Erik Erikson's eight stages of development (Erikson 1995), one must keep in mind, that "each of these growth crises give rise to certain imaginative themes or motifs that show up in cultural myths and stories..." (Coats 2017, pp. 53). More specifically, the reader can see all of the child's actions in this story coincide with stage two (between the ages of eighteen months and three years old when the child experiences the tension between autonomy versus doubt and shame being played out). In the illustration of the child eating sand with a shovel from the city's communal sandbox, the Freudian theory of development might point to a possible regression to the oral stage. Returning to the Piagetian model, in a following illustration, while there is a clear understanding of sensorimotor skills as the child uses her or his body to protest and resist leaving the playgroup, in another illustration, object permanence may still be in the process of development as the reader can observe the child character about to hide a possibly dirty diaper in the toy bin thus from the child's perspective the diaper will "magically disappear."



Fig. 1. *Please, Baby, Please*

In reading the series of these relatively relatable experiences, one option is to engage in the humor of these quotidian situations, at the same time acknowledging that the child character is learning through these rich experiences of trial and error, navigating known and unknown systems of knowledge mediated by the adult. Vygotsky (1978) identifies this cognitive process as a zone of

proximal development in which the adult engages the child as the child engages her or his environment and the adult provides necessary feedback to support the child's development. But what can these depicted situations tell the reader about the adult or adults or about the culture, society and geographic location in which this story occurs? Louis Rosenblatt's (1978) reader-response framework, allows the reader-scholar to immerse herself in the critical content analysis to arrive at a socio-cultural positioning of age identities. Starting with the child protagonist again, the researcher asks: Who is she or he? Where is she? When does this story take place? What underlying grammar about age does this story construct?

When I look at this picture book, I see a middle class, African American toddler from a two-parent, heteronormative home, in a turn-of-the-21st-century urban setting, habituating an intertextual fiction that alludes to lines spoken by a character from the 1986 film *She's Gotta Have It* by famed Brooklyn-born-and-raised, African American film director, Spike Lee. In 2002, of the 3,150 children's books the Cooperative Children's Book Center received, less than 170 were about African Americans and less than 70 were written by African Americans. In 2020, Kadir Nelson, the illustrator of *Please Baby, Please*, added several more awards, accolades and prestigious commissions to his already acclaimed repertoire of depicting positive images of African American characters in children's books. Yet, in 1963, *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats was the first picture book centering an African American child protagonist without negative stereotyping. Culturally and socially, this work forms part of a significantly bigger conversation about African American identities, place making and history making in the United States. Readers are offered a depiction of an economically comfortable African American family that reflects a basic caring parent-child narrative. In addition, there is a reasonable social and economic interpretation of the illustrations based on a disposable income indirectly shown to actively participate in the current consumer culture. Ushered into the 20th century by the great African American migrations from the rural South to the urban North and after the two World Wars, toys, books, child-specific commodities such as clothes, videos, furniture, disposable food and excess water usage became readily used, expected and available to middle class families. The established age identity of the child-character within this "web of significance" and knowledge coincides with that of the structuralists. The age identity of the adult character comes into being through the performative dimension of the authorial voice of narrated imperatives of dos and don'ts. But these understandings also can extend to the intertextual performance of the litany of pleas, "Please, baby, please," that implicate an older version of the fictional character, Mars Blackmon, from the aforementioned film. Mars Blackmon character's catchphrase, "Please, baby,

please," is used throughout the film *She's Gotta Have It* (1986) and may be an indicator that he is the child's father and adult narrator, especially if noted that this entreaty marked his desire for moments of intimacy with the female protagonist, Nola Darling. In her 1995 essay, "The wonderful woman on the pavement: middle-ageism in the postmodern economy," Gullette states, "Economic forces multiply representational forces to make any subject liable to be labeled 'aging'..." With this idea, we can turn to the age identity of the adult consumer. The adult who would purchase this book could be a grandparent who saw the aforementioned film when it first premiered, experienced the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the consequential cultural shift or all the above. The age identity of the adult consumer could also be that of other adults who ascribe to certain postmodern ideologies of diversity. The age identity of the child listener, reader or beholder is reciprocal in returning us to the meta-discourse revolving around the prescribed norms, ideals and expectations of the socio-cultural environment presented in fiction.

Busy Toes (1998) is a story about a variety of children at different ages and their physical relationships with toes. The age identities of the children in the book are heterogeneous. Clothes, toys, other objects and activities appear in the illustrations as signifiers of childhood. The illustrator's ability to show variation in the children's physicality helps to contrast ages. There is no single child as the main character, rather diverse children are clearly seen in each illustration while the adult remains unseen. Contrary to Rudd's attitudes (2004), Beauvais (2013) is concerned about

increasingly threatening derivations of the concept of power: the adult, ..., is 'repressive' (Nodelman, 1994, p. 178), 'colonialist' (Nodelman, 2008, p. 168), 'othering' (Nikolajeva, 2010, *passim*), 'dominat[ing]' (Knowles and Malmkjær, 1996, p. 44), or creating a 'subservient audience' (Hunt, 1992, p. 6), 'controlled and formed' by didacticism (Lesnik Oberstein, 1994, p. 38)—not to mention Joseph Zornado's (2001) colourfully apocalyptic depiction of adult 'abuse' on children (p. 79).

This concern would be completely unwarranted if, however, the global presence of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child did not find a need to protect children from these kinds of adult influences. These are not the only influences, understandings or realities of adult and child dynamics. Children's literature continues to provide "mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors" (Bishop 1990) to observe societies, people, and behaviors in ideal, realistic and fantastic situations. In *Busy Toes* (1998), the reader occasionally sees the child's gaze within specific contexts implicating the adult's supervision or assistance. Even the last illustration of the picturebook is suggestive of the

parental presence with two sets of feet poking out from under the bed covers. Following Joosen's classification, the relationship pattern between the hidden adult and presented child characters can be categorized as that of affinity. The reader can imagine the adult accompanying, encouraging, guiding or leading the textual and non-textual children in this list of toe activities. From this positionality comes the idea "that children's literature does indeed articulate an adult-child relationship marked by power dynamics inside and outside the book; "but that these dynamics are of a sophistication that precludes any easy attribution of "empowerment" or "disempowerment" to one or the other party." (Beauvais 2013, p. 78) A structuralist analysis of *Busy Toes* to gain psychological insight into the child characters is challenged by the lack of a singular child narrative. Erik Erikson's eight stages of development are shown throughout the book by different child characters from stage one to stage four: (1) the tensions between trust and mistrust, (2) autonomy and doubt, (3) initiation and guilt, and (4) industry versus inferiority. A similar broad stroke can be drawn with Freud's theory of development showing children from the oral stage to latency stage, as well as Piaget's stages of development from sensorimotor to concrete operational. A trusting baby can be seen with its toes in its mouth. The reader can see child toes through ripped socks, splashing puddles and drawing with its toes. The child characters are learning a range of physical and socio-emotional skills through different situational experiences indoors and outdoors that match Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development.

But how and where can we find the counterpoints between childhood and old age as root metaphors? What cultural and social associations are ascribed to feet and toes? In what ways do literal and metaphorical performances of exploration complement those of experience? By now, we should see that the narration of age identity is not only bound to the social and cultural positioning of individuals, but economic, geographic and historical positioning as well. The objective of this study was to highlight how the narration of age in picturebooks can position the characters, readers and consumers both socially and culturally. Familiarity or unfamiliarity with narrative features such as cityscape or landscapes, availability and use of specialist resources, and the subtle culturally-based messaging also position real and fictitious participants of the narrative. Before and into the first part of the twentieth century some children and older adults in America had their feet and toes exposed because they were poor and as such their exposure was a source of shame. I wonder if we could apply this axiom to the interaction of youth and senescence.

Returning to reader-response transactional theory and engaging in critical content analysis, let's

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take a moment to focus on the author. C.W. Bowie is a pseudonym for three women writers: Claudine Wirths, Wendie Old and Mary Bowman-Kruhm. Bowman-Kruhm, in addition to being a writer, has been an educator and researcher concerned with social justice. Old, no pun intended with her last name, was a children's librarian, now retired. Wirth, who died in 2000, was an educator and psychology researcher. One book in particular she wrote with co-author, Richard H. William is *Lives through the Years; Styles of Life and Successful Aging* (1965) in which the researchers document six successful styles of transition to old age. The creators of *Busy Toes* (2000) with its multi-ethnic chalk illustrations, were intentional in the socio-

cultural positioning of age identities. A major counterpoint between childhood and old age in this work concerns physical abilities, not disabilities. Agency, creativity and joy are derived from being able to control these fine motor movements and celebrate their exposure. The past cultural and social associations ascribed to exposed feet and toes are subverted from being vulnerable, shameful or punitive to redefining their intimacy. This is generational and originates in the counterculture movement of the 1960s. The literal and metaphorical performances of exploration complement those of experience within the text and among its readers. However, for teenagers navigating the liminal space of childhood and adulthood, performativity is ever more complex. There are not any adolescents depicted in the picturebook, nor is there any apparent insinuation of their presence. Some of the expected behaviors, attitudes and activities rely on the absence of and inconsistency of age performances of teenagers. When placed alongside a child they may become the de facto adult or alternatively, in the presence of an adult, they become the child. Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak quotes a sixteen-year-old reflecting on the issue of children's rights as saying, "We want to be treated like adults and we don't know why no one treats us like adults, but I realized why I wasn't treated like adult: I really wasn't one" (p. 215). Hollindale's (1997) understanding of the child includes self-awareness as such: "A child is someone who believes on good grounds that his or her condition of childhood is not yet over" (p. 30).

5. Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to bring attention to how age, specifically childhood, is narrated in modern picturebooks. Connotations found in the intertextuality elucidate why representations of various ethnicities and the dismantlement of gender roles are important. *Please, Baby, Please* and *Busy Toes* showed similar ways in which age is narrated and how it locates social and cultural positionings. Both picturebooks resist identifying or addressing any of the children depicted by name. Possible motives could be that authors wanted to avoid gender spectrum focalizations, ethnic tropes or temporal fossilizations of names. I intentionally evade the polarization of power along age narrations in my analysis and gesture toward shared, intergenerational agency and interdependence in and around the narratives. For example, I purposely did not interrogate the power dynamic of the adult narrator in *Please, Baby, Please* when addressing the child as "baby," instead of using a proper name. Entanglements of dominance and endearments become convoluted especially when taking into account the narrative influence African American blues music historically has in storytelling and the invocation of "baby" as a common lyrical and emotionally charged element. "Baby" as a term of endearment, an exaltation or a supplication on the part of the narrating adult can point to shared socio-cultural experiences beyond the immediacy of the moment and reinforce sentiments of love, not necessarily in terms of dominance, but interdependence that work within and outside of the picturebook. As Janet Evans points out,

Entanglements of dominance and endearments become convoluted especially when taking into account the narrative influence African American blues music historically has in storytelling and the invocation of "baby" as a common lyrical and emotionally charged element. "Baby" as a term of endearment, an exaltation or a supplication on the part of the narrating adult can point to shared socio-cultural experiences beyond the immediacy of the moment and reinforce sentiments of love, not necessarily in terms of dominance, but interdependence that work within and outside of the picturebook

This fusion [of music and storytelling] allows the reader/viewer/listener to become deeply immersed in a picturebook whilst at the same time drawing on their personal thoughts and experiences, thus rendering the meaning of the book even more powerful. (p. 47).

I apply a combination of methods to support the advantages of using two kinds of literary interpretations. Structuralist and postmodernist approaches are complementary tools of analysis. This was particularly useful in analyzing *Busy Toes* with a postmodern perspective as a way to bring critical attention to the historical social and cultural importance of toes. Karín Lesnik-Oberstein's (Lesnik-Oberstein 2005 p. 17-29) constructivist approach to recognize frameworks, divisions, political and economic forces in which the universality of the existence of the child, childhood and children's literature if at most are elusive, yet ultimately, inexistent or imaginary remain helpful in guiding the inescapable subjectivities of age. Trites (2018) calls for critical attention to distinguish between "literature" and historical "background" which would significantly inform, "the particular cultural meanings codified in particular aesthetic expressions, for formal properties can't be sealed off from their social and historical matrix." (p. 42) Nikolajeva (2019) considers the alternatives of cognitive poetics and evolutionary literary criticism which must take into consideration biological aspects of human existence. Joosen (2018) claims that age is not a biological given, but rather a social performance, that is negotiated and narrated by culture and therefore can be evaluated metaphorically. If childhood and old age can be treated as a root metaphor both objectively and subjectively through what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) identify as reason and imagination, then one can engage age and ethnicity in metaphorical thought. Here is where multiple theoretical structures need to engage in disturbing ongoing historical peculiarities and injustices.

If one evaluates the root metaphor of age and ethnicity, can an interpolation of performative age eradicate ongoing racist sentiments of African Americans being viewed infantile by some and perpetuated in popular narratives? In a similar way, can age and gender be engaged in metaphorical thought to eliminate the bias some have concerning the childishness of women? Or are we to brush off the root metaphorical construct of the child and the woman as one and the same as paternalistic humor? Aetonormativity, a term coined by Nikolajeva (2009), misrepresented, creates lines of thinking that positions the adult as more powerful than the child in the same way male European imperialists are more powerful than certain ethnic groups and women. (Rudd 2004, Beauvais 2013) Without discounting the dynamics of age completely, I do not fully concur that, "Taken together, intersectionality and aetonormativity help us consider the unique forms of oppression that occur in the matrix of age and other forms of difference." (Trites 2018, p. 32) This assertion is empirically flawed with regard to the adult and child's relationship. The child cannot independently survive and thrive without the presence of the adult. Negligence or absence to attend to the child could be in most, if not all situations, legally deemed criminal. This is not a direct parallel for an individual who

has been systematically disenfranchised based on ethnicity, gender, geography and economic status. The oppressor can be removed along with its structural and systemic machinations of persecution, and the subaltern (Spivak 1988) individual can survive and thrive. Although following this line of research and broadening the debate about root metaphors in action with intersectionalities, a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), and aetnormativity would be interesting, doing so is beyond the scope of this study.

6. Conclusions

Age narration does not happen in isolation. Age narrations in picturebooks document pre-existing iterations of attitudes, expectations and experiences along the age spectrum that confirm as much as reject or question the socio-cultural positioning of individuals in historical periods, geographic locations and economic structures. The literal and figurative interplay of the child, the adolescent and the adult gently anchor understandings, meanings and experiences of life both in lived and narrated forms. The behaviors and experiences expected from a child are different from the expected behaviors and experiences of an adolescent or an adult. The notions regarding children are contrived historically and geographically as these beliefs evolve over time, yet ethnicity, gender and class fragment into boundaries which some scholars sometimes choose to ignore in an attempt to uphold ideals of Eurocentric capitalist middle-class hegemony. Contrary to fabricating impossible and biased ideals of children and their childhoods, modern publications of children's literature recast these representations of age to coalesce more effectively with the varied realities of children.

Please, Baby, Please and *Busy Toes* are two examples of picturebooks that narrate childhood experiences through ethnic visualizations, which were previously negated, excluded or misrepresented. These stories are experienced while suspended among interactions of historical periods, geographic locations and economic structures that attempt to bypass gender and indirectly question the hegemony of prevailing views. Children's literature overtly and subliminally sends powerful messages about age, ethnicity and gender and these factors influence one's position in the world at large. Picturebooks are an example of products involved in a network of activity, that commodifies to a certain extent childhood, ethnicity and gender while interacting with the historical understandings and cultural implications each hold. In this study, we observe the agency of the child, the positive representation of ethnicity and the flattening of gender. The two picturebooks served as "mirrors" (deriving the metaphoric terminology from Rudine Sims Bishop) for African American readers, "windows" for readers who engage diversity and "sliding glass doors" for the ageless,

critical and empathetic reader. (Bishop 1990, Chenoweth 2019). Even though I was able to use the combined methods of structuralist interpretation, critical content analysis, close reading and contextualization for two picturebooks, greater insights may have been possible with the application of digital humanities software. Firstly, computer analysis, in complementing and enriching my observations, may reveal hidden themes, not necessarily detected by me and secondly, a significantly larger corpus could be examined. The implications of this study point to possible applications in the design of age narrations in current and future literacies, especially in the emerging field of digital humanities.

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How to cite this paper:

Murray, J. I. (2020). Socio-cultural Positioning of Age Identities in Picturebooks. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 137-159. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.17415

L'abito immaginato. Abbigliamento e identità nell'albo illustrato moderno

**The imaginary dress. Clothing and identity in modern children's
picture books**

**El vestido imaginado. Ropa e identidad en el libro ilustrado
moderno para niños**

**El vestit imaginat. Vestit i identitat en el modern llibre il·lustrat
per a nens**

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Extended abstract

The essay focuses on the examination of a selection of children's picture books exploring the relationship between childhood and clothing as an identity element, as a means of transformation and as a resource for the imagination. The gender stereotype has always deprived children of the freedom to imagine themselves different from the imposed social model. Modern quality literature aims to free childhood from these constraints through stories that encourage the free expression of one's personality. "Clothing and childhood" is one of the binomial in which these themes appear most evident. While developing different plots, each selected book tells a story enriched by several levels of reading, more or less evident, and this is also due to particularly accurate illustrations, capable of adding further nuances to the text. Furthermore, even if characterized by the symbolic presence of clothes, these picture books do not make them the narrative fulcrum. The case studies examined in this essay are a concrete example of the potential of the picture book as a vehicle to transmit complex concepts and stratifications of complementary or parallel meanings that emerge from the dynamic relationship of the text with the image. Each double page opens multiple, free interpretative paths that can be taken at each reading as the eye catches new aspects and the thought opens up to new discoveries. The imaginary dress is one of the many parallel paths that it was possible to explore with these books to explore the possible interpretations of clothing in children's literature, highlighting above all how much garments are objects charged with metasignification or with projections of an identity in formation such as the one of children. In the traditional children's literature, directly or indirectly, the theme of identity is strongly linked to clothes like in the *Emperor's new clothes*, where wearing or removing a dress symbolizes a social role, a personality, a state of mind, a defeat or a victory. It is an indispensable part of oneself. A self-projection. The modern children's literary production tries to free the children from the yoke of the role and stereotypes, encouraging them to explore and interpret reality through the most familiar items around them: what they wear or what adults around them wear. The case studies in the essay prove how clothing becomes a symbol of a journey of self-discovery and affirmation of one's individuality in the world.

Keywords: Children picture books. Identity, clothes

Riassunto

Il saggio analizza una selezione di albi illustrati per l'infanzia sul tema dell'abito come elemento identitario e come mezzo di trasformazione personale e sociale. Lo stereotipo di genere priva da sempre i bambini della libertà di immaginarsi diversi dal modello sociale imposto. La moderna letteratura di qualità si propone di liberare l'infanzia da questi vincoli attraverso storie che incoraggiano la libera espressione della propria personalità. "Abbigliamento e infanzia" è uno dei binomi in cui appaiono più evidenti queste tematiche. Pur sviluppando temi differenti, ciascuno di essi racconta una storia arricchita da più livelli di lettura, più o meno evidenti, anche grazie a delle illustrazioni particolarmente accurate, capaci di aggiungere ulteriori sfumature al testo. Inoltre questi albi illustrati presi in esame, pur essendo caratterizzati dalla presenza simbolica di abiti, non ne fanno il fulcro narrativo. In ognuno di questi case studies l'abbigliamento diventa un pretesto per un percorso di scoperta di sé e di affermazione della propria individualità nel mondo. Questi libri sono un esempio concreto delle potenzialità dell'albo illustrato come veicolo di concetti complessi e di stratificazioni di significati complementari o paralleli che emergono dal rapporto dinamico del testo con l'immagine. Ogni doppia pagina offre molteplici, liberi percorsi interpretativi che possono essere intrapresi ad ogni rilettura man mano che l'occhio coglie aspetti nuovi e il pensiero si apre a nuove scoperte. L'ipotesi di questa ricerca tende quindi a dimostrare che l'abito immaginato è uno dei percorsi paralleli che è stato possibile fare con questi albi, con cui si è voluto scandagliare le possibili interpretazioni dell'abbigliamento nella letteratura per l'infanzia, mettendo in luce soprattutto quanto gli indumenti siano oggetti carichi di metasignificati o di proiezioni di un'identità in formazione come quella infantile.

Parole chiave: abbigliamento, identità, libertà, immaginario, albi illustrati per l'infanzia.

Resumen

El ensayo se centra en el examen de una selección de libros ilustrados para niños sobre el tema de la ropa como elemento de identidad, como medio de transformación personal y social. El estereotipo de género siempre ha privado a los niños de la libertad de imaginarse a sí mismos diferentes del modelo social impuesto. La literatura moderna de calidad tiene como objetivo liberar a la infancia de estas limitaciones a través de historias que fomentan la libre expresión de la personalidad. "Vestimenta e infancia" es uno de los binomios en los que estas temáticas parecen más evidentes. Mientras desarrollan diferentes temas, cada uno cuenta una historia enriquecida por varios niveles de lectura, más o menos evidente, también gracias a ilustraciones particularmente precisas, capaces de agregar más matices al texto. Además, estos libros ilustrados tomados en consideración, aunque caracterizados por la presencia simbólica de la ropa, no la convierten en el punto de apoyo narrativo. En cada uno de estos estudios de caso, la ropa se convierte en un pretexto para un viaje de autodescubrimiento y afirmación de la individualidad en el mundo. Estos libros son un ejemplo concreto del potencial del libro ilustrado como vehículo de conceptos complejos y estratificaciones de significados complementarios o paralelos que emergen de la relación dinámica del texto con la imagen. Cada página doble abre múltiples caminos interpretativos gratuitos que se pueden tomar en cada lectura a medida que el ojo capta nuevos aspectos y el pensamiento se abre a nuevos descubrimientos. El vestido imaginado es, por lo tanto, uno de los muchos caminos paralelos que fue posible hacer con estos libros, con los cuales queríamos explorar las posibles interpretaciones de la ropa en la literatura infantil, destacando sobre todo la manera en la que la ropa es un objeto cargado de metasignificados o de proyecciones de una identidad en formación como la infantil.

Palabras clave: libros ilustrados para niños, libertad, identidad, ropa.

Resum

Aquest assaig se centra en l'examen d'una selecció de llibres il·lustrats per a infants sobre el tema de la roba com a element d'identitat, com a mitjà de transformació personal i social. L'estereotip de gènere sempre ha privat els infants de la llibertat d'imaginar-se a si mateixos diferents del model social imposat. La literatura moderna de qualitat té com a objectiu alliberar a la infantesa d'aquestes limitacions a través d'històries que fomenten la lliure expressió de la personalitat. "Vestimenta i infantesa" és un dels binomis en els quals aquestes temàtiques semblen més evidents. Mentre desenvolupen aquests temes, cadascú conta una història enriquida per diversos nivells de lectura, més o menys evidents, també gràcies a il·lustracions particularment precises, capaces d'afegir més matisos al text. A més, aquests llibres il·lustrats presos en consideració, encara que caracteritzats per la presència simbòlica de la roba, no la converteixen en un punt de suport narratiu. En cadascun d'aquests estudis de cas, la roba es converteix en un pretext per a un viatge d'autodescobriment i afirmació de la individualitat al món. Aquests llibres són un exemple concret del potencial del llibre il·lustrat com a vehicle de conceptes complexos i estratificacions de significats complementaris o paral·lels que emergeixen de la relació dinàmica del text amb la imatge. Cada pàgina doble obri múltiples camins interpretatius gratuïts que es poden prendre amb cada lectura a mesura que l'ull capta nous aspectes i el pensament s'obri a nous descobriments. El vestit imagina és, per tant, un dels molts camins paral·lels que va ser possible realitzar amb aquests llibres, amb els quals volíem explorar les possibles interpretacions de la roba en la literatura infantil, tot destacant, sobretot, la manera en la qual la roba esdevé un objecte carregat de metasignificats o de projeccions d'una identitat en formació com la infantil.

Paraules clau: llibres il·lustrats per a infants, llibertat, identitat, roba.

1. Perché interrogarsi sul ruolo dell'abito negli albi illustrati moderni

Diversi albi illustrati pubblicati negli ultimi anni ruotano direttamente o indirettamente attorno al tema dell'abbigliamento. Gli esempi che vengono indagati in questo contributo sono quelli che maggiormente sollevano l'interrogativo del ruolo dell'abito nella letteratura per l'infanzia contemporanea, ossia in che modo questi libri riescono a restituire il punto di vista del bambino nel suo modo di rapportarsi con l'abito. Se nella visione dell'adulto l'abbigliamento viene generalmente ridimensionato alla sua funzione strumentale e sociale, questo non accade secondo il punto di vista del bambino, il quale attraverso la dimensione del gioco o della lettura è capace di amplificare la sua percezione della realtà dando libero corso al proprio immaginario, fondendo armoniosamente reale e fantastico, visibile e invisibile, mondo interiore ed esteriore. L'abito si connota dunque come un linguaggio a tutti gli effetti, "un sistema di segni attraverso cui gli esseri umani delineano la loro posizione nel mondo e il loro rapporto con esso" (Calanca, 2002, p. 10). Questo è il potere che esercita l'abbigliamento sull'infanzia: il vestito investe il

corpo di significato, lo espone ad una trasformazione, sia dal punto di vista estetico che psicologico. E' un mezzo per creare una relazione tra l'individuo e il mondo esterno.

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Non a caso, il primo elemento interessante che emerge dal confronto degli albi illustrati presi in esame, accomunati dall'oggetto-abito come pretesto narrativo, è la dicotomia tra i vestiti imposti e quelli desiderati, tra il mondo degli adulti che utilizza gli indumenti come convenzione per comunicare un ruolo professionale, sociale o economico e il mondo dell'infanzia che invece vede nell'abito un mezzo per esprimere la propria personalità e i propri desideri. Da questa premessa deriva il termine "abito immaginato", ossia quell'oggetto ordinario e convenzionale che nell'immaginario infantile si trasforma in un catalizzatore di emozioni dove proiettare la parte più intima di sé, a volte tenuta nascosta, altre repressa, molto spesso ignorata dagli adulti.

Negli anni Settanta, il libro che per eccellenza ha incarnato la relazione tra l'abito convenzionale e opprimente e quello immaginario desiderato dall'infanzia è stato *Rosaconfetto*, dove si racconta la storia di un'elefantina grigia, ancora oggi pubblicata spesso in molti paesi europei per la validità e attualità dei suoi contenuti. Questa elefantina, infatti, è simbolo di una trasgressione liberatoria verso i ruoli sociali imposti: la piccola non diventa rosa come le sue compagne, nonostante i vestiti rosa fatti indossare dai genitori per "incoraggiare il color rosa a venire", malgrado tutte le peonie e gli anemoni mangiati, con il risultato di deludere le aspettative della sua comunità. La svolta verrà quando l'elefantina diversa esce dal recinto e raggiunge i maschi per prendere finalmente in mano la sua vita. In seguito anche le altre amiche seguiranno il suo esempio, recuperando così la loro epidermide grigia. Al di là della tematica sugli stereotipi di genere implicita nella storia¹, c'è un altro aspetto sul quale vale la pena soffermarsi: il ruolo dell'abito come elemento identitario nell'infanzia. Il momento catartico della storia di *Rosaconfetto* è quello in cui Pasqualina corre felice fuori dal recinto spogliandosi dei suoi abiti rosa. Un vero e proprio colpo di scena. E' la metafora di una bambina che rinuncia ad un vestito bellissimo ma pensato e confezionato da adulti che non hanno mai tenuto in considerazione i suoi desideri, né la sua vera indole.

¹ Le Edizioni dalla Parte delle Bambine, che pubblicarono il libro nel 1975, proponevano temi difficili che fino ad allora non avevano avuto spazio nella letteratura per l'infanzia italiana.

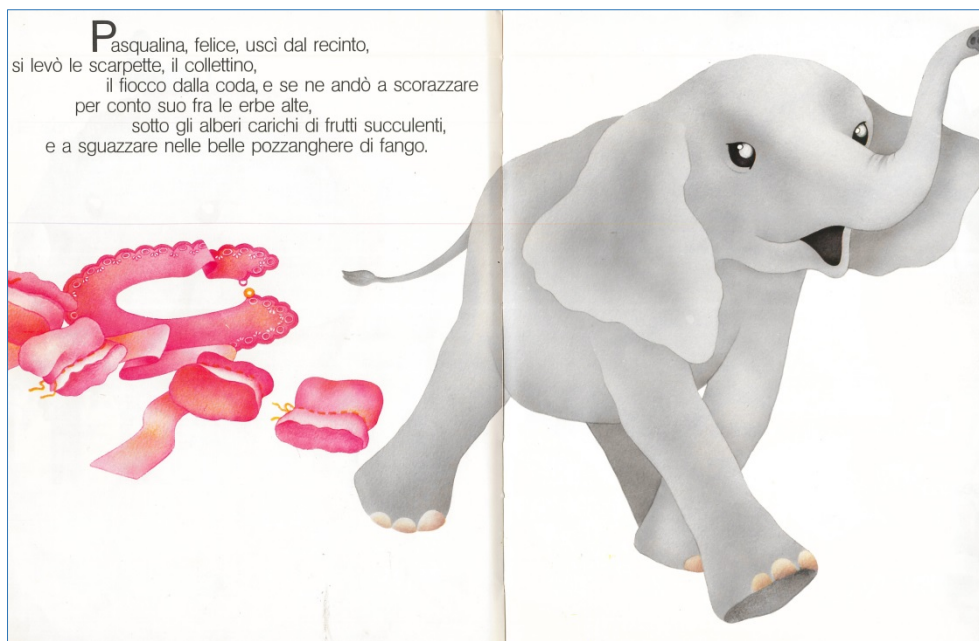


Figura 1. Pasqualina si libera dei vestiti rosa e esce dal recinto. Illustrazione di Nella Bosnia per Adela Turin, Rosaconfetto, Giunti Editore, 2016

2. L'abito come costrizione o l'abito come atto di ribellione?

Per secoli, bambini e bambine, indistintamente, sono stati abbigliati allo stesso modo con vesti lunghe bianche almeno fino ai 6 anni per poi indossare gli stessi indumenti degli adulti. Una prima distinzione cromatica tra i generi apparve già intorno al 1910 ma fu stigmatizzata soltanto nel secondo dopoguerra in America in base all'interpretazione che i produttori e i negozi di abbigliamento dell'epoca dettero all'infanzia, ritenendo il rosa colore adatto alle bambine e il blu ai bambini, invertendo di fatto la tendenza opposta che si era sviluppata ad inizio secolo. Naturalmente, la suddivisione di genere degli indumenti per l'infanzia consentiva maggiori vendite.

In un' interessante indagine sulle vendite delle maschere per bambine in Inghilterra, Annabella Pollen (2011) ha dimostrato che quelle di genere neutro sono rare e che i costumi femminili in commercio sono stereotipati e riguardano principalmente la magia, il matrimonio, i mestieri tipicamente femminili, riflettendo un'infanzia idealizzata e manipolata dall'adulto, non corrispondente alla realtà. Di conseguenza, la scelta riduttiva delle maschere per bambine proposte in commercio limita le possibilità del gioco performativo e inibisce la possibilità di esplorare altre modalità di vivere la femminilità. Da questa ricerca emerge un'interessante similitudine tra l'attitudine del mercato e quella degli elefanti adulti in Rosaconfetto che imponevano abiti rosa per incoraggiare lo sviluppo della femminilità nelle elefantine. L'atto del travestimento in età infantile rappresenta più di un semplice gioco. Fa parte del processo

attraverso il quale il bambino prende consapevolezza della propria identità di genere interpretandola, esplorandone le molteplici sfumature. L'elefantina Pasqualina, significativamente, rifiuta i vestiti rosa imposti e stereotipati perché limitano la sua femminilità e non la rappresentano. E' necessario quindi partire dall'assunto che non esiste un'unica infanzia valida per tutti, ma molteplici.

Daniel Thomas Cook (2011) spinge oltre la riflessione dell'influenza del mercato sull'infanzia partendo dall'analisi della storia dell'abbigliamento infantile. Una storia determinata nei secoli dalla tensione tra due dinamiche socio-culturali: da una parte l'oppressione di abiti costringenti imposti dagli adulti, inadatti alla libertà di movimento necessaria ai piccoli; dall'altra, l'emancipazione da questa pratica, attraverso il riconoscimento fisico e sociale del bambino, investito di una nuova interpretazione da parte dell'adulto e quindi dotato di nuovi vestiti, più dinamici e confortevoli, rispettosi delle esigenze della giovane età. Fino all'avvento del XX secolo, la moda infantile ha quindi alternato lunghe fasi di ostinato immobilismo a fugaci momenti di apertura verso uno stile più libero e confortevole. Nei grandi magazzini degli anni Venti, in America ed Inghilterra, viene finalmente definito uno spazio apposito per i prodotti per l'infanzia realizzato per assecondare i desideri del bambino e non del genitore. Per la prima volta, produttori, designer, negozianti, pubblicitari lavorano per integrare il punto di vista infantile nelle pratiche commerciali, dando spazio in questo modo alle molteplici declinazioni dell'infanzia fino ad allora represses. Per Cook è la volontà del bambino-consumatore ad orientare le scelte del mercato e le scelte del genitore. Il mercato attuale, dal suo punto di vista, rappresenta il motore indispensabile che rende visibile le molteplici infanzie esistenti, o almeno, quelle socialmente e storicamente connotate².

Il passo successivo alla ricerca della propria identità attraverso l'abito è la manifestazione dell'esigenza del bambino di affermare nel mondo la propria individualità che si estrinseca spesso nella produzione letteraria attuale attraverso l'opposizione alla repressione dell'adulto con un atto trasgressivo liberatorio, sull'onda della ridda selvaggia di Max, celebre personaggio di Maurice Sendak. Giordana Piccinini in un suo recente articolo sul fenomeno letterario delle bambine ribelli, descrive l'incontenibilità tipica dell'infanzia come una "sovversione radicale ma non premeditata" (Piccinini, 2017, p. 76), una vera e propria trasgressione contro le aspettative e le categorie astratte dell'adulto che si manifesta nella forma del nascondimento, del

² Come acutamente osservato da Gail Murray (2005), la storiografia dell'infanzia attuale è schierata su due poli opposti: da una parte ci sono i sostenitori dell'infanzia come prodotto socialmente e culturalmente costruito, dall'altra si tenta di restituire all'infanzia il suo ruolo di attore protagonista e di dargli voce.

travestimento, della fuga avventurosa. Non è un caso che gli albi illustrati per bambini più riusciti siano quelli che raccontano con maggior onestà l'aspetto dirompente, autentico, sovversivo dell'identità infantile; basti pensare all'insuperato *Nel paese dei mostri selvaggi* di Maurice Sendak che, a distanza di cinquant'anni dalla sua prima pubblicazione negli Stati Uniti, è ancora oggi un successo planetario. L'aspetto selvaggio dell'infanzia ritorna con forza in un albo attuale *Il Signor Tigre si scatena* di Peter Brown³.

In un'ordinata grigia città dove tutti vivono uniformati, civilizzati e felici un solo abitante è scontento, l'unico che ha mantenuto il suo brillante colorito naturale, il Signor Tigre, che invece sente sempre di più il bisogno di lasciarsi andare, finché un giorno ha "un'idea selvaggia": riprendere a camminare a quattro zampe, poi a ruggire, fino a spingersi oltre, togliendosi i vestiti eleganti ma costrittivi, rimanendo nudo sotto gli occhi sgomenti e disgustati degli altri concittadini. Trasformandosi in un selvaggio, in un diverso, il Signor Tigre viene respinto dalla comunità e si trasferisce in una verdeggiante foresta riappropriandosi definitivamente della sua vera identità. Sentendo la nostalgia di casa, un giorno torna in città e sorprendentemente la trova cambiata: chi veste abiti casual, chi eleganti, chi cammina su due zampe, chi su quattro. Il suo atto trasgressivo aveva aperto la strada all'accoglienza delle diversità. Così il Signor Tigre riprende la sua vita libero di essere se stesso, vestendosi come meglio ritiene, libero dal peso del giudizio altrui perché il suo pensiero e le sue scelte sono condivise ed accettate. All'inizio della storia i vestiti rappresentano una maschera sociale, un'ipocrisia collettiva, una costrizione per poi diventare una forma di libera espressione individuale, di molteplici stili di vita e molteplici identità che possono essere racchiuse nella stessa persona. Cos'è cambiato nel percorso di trasformazione? L'interpretazione dell'abito negli occhi di chi lo guarda. La trasgressione del Signor Tigre-bambino alle regole civilizzanti degli adulti-concittadini innesca il cambiamento dello sguardo sull'abito e sulla persona. Seppur il Signor Tigre presenti diversi punti di contatto con *Rosaconfetto*, gli epiloghi delle due storie portano ad esiti diversi. Mentre le elefantine abbandonano definitivamente i restrittivi abiti rosa in nome di una libertà non negoziabile, ne *Il Signor Tigre*, dopo un iniziale rinnegamento, essi vengono recuperati, ma non passivamente.

³ Il titolo dell'edizione originale, *Mr Tiger goes wild*, pone maggiormente l'accento sul ritorno alla natura selvaggia del personaggio e lo stesso Peter Brown si ritrae nella sovraccoperta e invita i lettori a "trovare il tempo per tornare un po' selvaggi".



Figura 2. L'abbandono degli abiti delle elefantine. Illustrazione di Nella Bosnia per Adela Turin, *Rosaconfetto*, Giunti Editore, 2016

Oltre al classico completo elegante, il vestiario si amplia con indumenti più pratici ed informali che si possono alternare. Il mondo convenzionale può essere rinnovato, modulato, trasformato con un atto di "trasgressione naturale". L'abito-etichetta sociale di cui disfarsi diventa, attraverso un percorso di metamorfosi, un linguaggio pieno di possibilità con cui esprimere se stessi. Persino la nudità può diventare un vestito da indossare come antidoto all'ipocrisia.



Figura 3. *Il signor Tigre si scatena*, Peter Brown © 2017 Editrice Il Castoro Srl; Titolo originale: *Mr. Tiger Goes Wild*, Copyright © 2013 Peter Brown

Nessun racconto, in tal senso, è più trasgressivo della celebre fiaba di Christian Andersen, *I vestiti nuovi dell'Imperatore*. Il racconto parla di un imperatore con una passione smodata per i vestiti che ingaggia senza saperlo due finti sarti per confezionare un vestito fatto con una stoffa magica, invisibile alle persone mediocri. Pur non vedendo niente, tutti ipocritamente fanno finta di vedere il vestito, anche il sovrano. Giunto il momento di sfilare in città con il prodigioso indumento un bambino spezza l'omertà degli adulti gridando "Il re è nudo!". L'incantesimo si spezza e l'imperatore realizza di essere stato ingannato. E' interessante notare come anche in questa storia sia ancora una volta lo sguardo altrui a connotare il significato dell'abito. Il rapporto dialettico tra ciò che si vede e ciò che non si vede, tra verità e finzione, tra superbia e umiliazione è dettato da un bambino, dalla trasgressione naturale dell'infanzia al mondo codificato e limitante degli adulti. Laddove i sudditi vedono nella nudità dell'imperatore una stoltezza inconfessabile, un semplice ragazzino vede l'insopportabile menzogna collettiva che prontamente smaschera. Molto diversa la nudità del Signor Tigre che ritrova in essa oltre alla libertà anche la verità, ritornando in contatto con la sua natura selvaggia. L'imperatore, invece, viene denudato con l'inganno, privato della sua dignità, esposto al ridicolo, al pettegolezzo, al giudizio altrui. Nel suo caso togliere l'abito non è un atto liberatorio ma rivelatorio: tolti pizzi e merletti, pietre preziose ed ogni altro *status symbol*, il re è un essere umano come tutti gli altri, fatto di debolezze come la sua vanità mortificata. Senza l'abito emerge la parte più autentica ma anche quella meglio nascosta, perché socialmente sconveniente.

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3. Immaginare un abito per cambiare il mondo

L'abito immaginato a volte, quando è molto desiderato, può diventare anche un commovente mezzo per cambiare, nel proprio piccolo, la storia, la propria ma anche quella con la S maiuscola. E' questo il caso di *Avec trois brins de laine (on peut refaire le monde)*. Questo libro si basa su una storia vera, accaduta alla fine degli anni Sessanta durante la dittatura di Salazar in Portogallo: una famiglia portoghese decide di vivere in esilio e si stabilisce in diversi paesi stranieri, tra cui la Cecoslovacchia, negli anni della cosiddetta Primavera di Praga, termine con cui viene definito un breve tentativo di liberalizzazione politica nel 1968, prontamente soppresso dai sovietici. Nella nuova città tutto è ben ordinato ma grigio e monotono; tutti i bambini vanno a scuola ma indossano dei maglioni dello stesso modello, disponibili in soli tre

colori. Con l'avanzare dell'inverno, la nostalgia del paese natio inizia a farsi sentire e la madre dei ragazzi esiliati ha un'ispirazione: riappropriarsi dei colori mediterranei, ricreare ciò che è stato disfatto, cambiare prospettiva. Sì, è possibile ricostruire il mondo partendo da un filo di lana: disfando tre maglioni monocromi e rilavorandone la lana a maglia, la donna crea un nuovo maglione a strisce, un altro a losanghe e uno a scacchi. Indossando i maglioni multicolore, i tre bambini portoghesi destano scalpore in città. Determinata, la madre continua a lavorare a maglia nel parco, davanti a tutti. Un gesto di rottura delle regole imposte che sarà presto seguito dagli altri genitori. Gradualmente, la città cambia colore, viene invasa da maglie vivaci indossate da piccoli e grandi, seppur utilizzando i soli tre colori imposti. Il maglione colorato diventa un messaggio di speranza, un atto di resilienza: nessuna privazione materiale, nessuna forma di oppressione può scalfire la capacità individuale di intrecciare relazioni, di valorizzare quello che si ha in qualsiasi condizione, di vivere in pienezza la propria umanità. *Avec trois brins de laine* è un esempio efficace di come sia possibile affrontare diverse tematiche, anche molto delicate, attraverso il *medium* dell'abito: dal dramma dell'immigrazione all'incontro fecondo tra culture diverse, dal conformismo alla libertà individuale, dalla storia scritta sui libri a quella vissuta sulla propria pelle.



Figura 4. *Avec trois brins de laine (on peut refaire le monde)*, Cristina Henriqueta e Yara Kono ©Les Editions des Elephants, 2016

Sulla stessa linea ma con sfumature diverse è *Filo magico*. Di quest'opera è piuttosto significativo il titolo originale, *Extra yarn*, ossia "filo in più". Si tratta quindi di una storia che parla di abbondanza, di filo come di cuore. Anche questa, come in *Avec trois brins de laine*, è ambientata in una città fredda, dove tutto è bianco o nero. Un giorno una bambina vestita di grigio trova

una scatola al cui interno c'è un filo di tutti i colori. Un altro filo con cui cambiare il mondo. Annabelle lo usa per farsi un bel maglione colorato e scopre che le avanza il filo. Ne fa quindi un altro per il suo cane. E di nuovo avanza la lana. Gli ombrosi abitanti della città non reagiscono bene alla novità. Hanno il cuore indurito. Il suo amico Nate la prende in giro, in realtà è geloso. Annabelle gli fa un maglione. Il filo avanza ancora. Il maestro Norman la rimprovera perché i colori del suo maglione distraggono gli altri alunni e la bambina ne fa altri per tutti. Mentre il filo continua a non esaurirsi, l'aspetto del villaggio cambia, si trasforma, si arricchisce di colori, di bellezza.

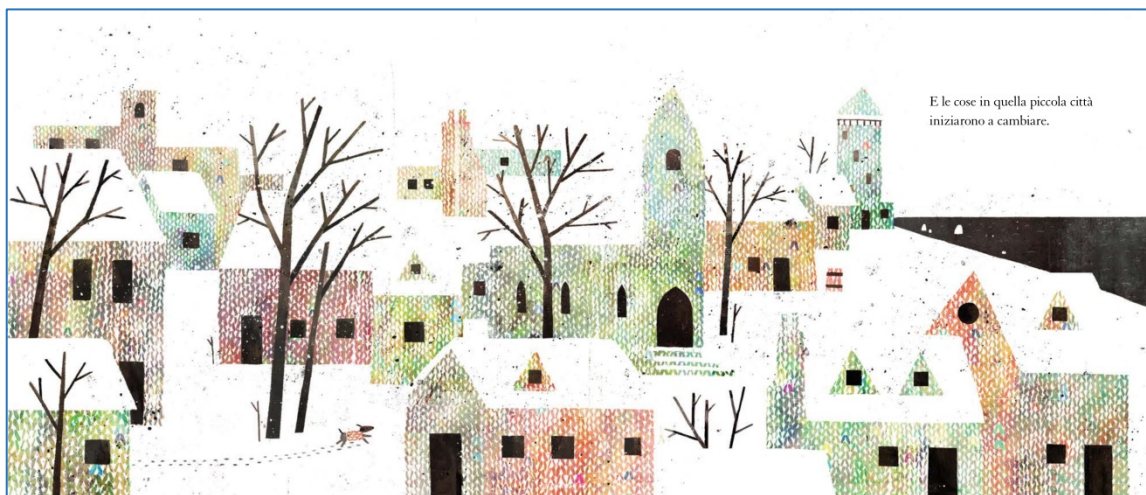


Figura 5. *Filo magico*, Mac Barnett e Jon Klassen, ©Terre di mezzo Editore, 2016

La fama di questo prodigio attira l'attenzione di un arciduca che ha una grande passione per i vestiti, come l'imperatore di Andersen, ma non riuscendo a farsi vendere il filo magico, fa rubare la scatola; quando la apre la trova vuota, la getta in mare e maledice la sua proprietaria. Il cofanetto però torna indietro e la bambina continua a rivestire tutto di colore. Cosa c'era realmente in quel contenitore? Qualcosa che non si può comprare: l'empatia. Un bene invisibile capace di legare le persone tra di loro e di toccarne il cuore, capace di trasformare l'impossibile in possibile; qualcosa che si moltiplica solo se condiviso ma che non può essere colto da chi vive per se stesso. In un mondo feroce, dove tutto è bianco o nero, l'antidoto per sopravvivere è quel di più che si può dare: prendere un'iniziativa, fare un passo in più verso l'altro anche se dovesse suscitare resistenze tra i conformisti. Il gesto rivoluzionario, sorprendendo l'altro, ne disinnescava paure e pregiudizi e il disappunto iniziale si trasforma in curiosità, ammirazione, gratitudine, colore. Per iniziare basta davvero un filo: un cuore aperto all'incontro. La magia sta in quell' "extra yarn", nello scoprire che dare con generosità non toglie nulla a chi dà, anzi produce sempre un misterioso, inesauribile avanzo che poi è il segreto di quella felicità che nemmeno la

maledizione dell'arciduca riesce ad intaccare. In entrambi i libri è un indumento a scatenare il processo di catarsi nel cuore di chi lo indossa, come se il maglione fatto a mano, intriso della premura e dell'arditezza di chi lo ha confezionato, avesse un contagioso potere rigenerativo.

4. Immaginare un abito per esplorare il proprio mondo interiore

L'oggetto-abito nella vita interiore di un bambino si declina in tanti modi diversi: oltre ad essere uno stimolo per andare alla ricerca della propria identità e un mezzo per affermare la propria

L'abito immaginato ritorna in questo albo come strumento di trasformazione ed esplorazione di altre identità e il museo diventa un luogo magico dove è possibile cambiare prospettiva, conoscere cose nuove, meravigliarsi, emozionarsi, sognare, ma soprattutto è il posto ideale dove proiettare il proprio mondo interiore e riconoscersi.

originalità nel mondo, con o senza atti liberatori e oppositivi, si rivela essere anche un pretesto giocoso per esplorare nuove possibilità di vita, nuovi mondi da esplorare attraverso l'immaginazione. *Clara Button a Londra. Una giornata magica* è un libro che mostra l'abito in un'altra veste: al di fuori del suo contesto ordinario e della sua funzione un indumento può diventare opere d'arte e, in quanto tale, essere conservate nei musei. Clara Button è una bambina appassionata di cucito e ama i cappelli, soprattutto quello della defunta nonna modista. Purtroppo il prezioso oggetto viene rotto dal fratello e per consolarla, la madre porta entrambi al *Victoria & Albert Museum* di

Londra⁴. La fanciulla decide di portare con sé il cappello rotto nella speranza di incontrare qualcuno che possa ripararglielo. Lungo la strada, mentre la madre le indica negozi e altre attrazioni della città "Clara non vedeva altro che cappelli". L'oggetto del desiderio in questo libro, oltre ad avere un valore affettivo, viene investito anche di un potere speciale: è allo stesso tempo un legame con la nonna perduta e la chiave di accesso per il proprio mondo immaginario. Entrando nel museo, la bambina vede un abito di seta ricamato, scarpette da ballo e si immagina nei panni di una modella o di una principessa. L'abito immaginato ritorna in questo albo come strumento di trasformazione ed esplorazione di altre identità e il museo diventa un luogo magico dove è possibile cambiare prospettiva, conoscere cose nuove, meravigliarsi, emozionarsi, sognare, ma soprattutto è il posto ideale dove proiettare il proprio mondo interiore e riconoscersi. Tornata a casa, suggestionata dagli accadimenti della sua magica giornata⁵ immaginerà nel sonno un "cappellarium" tutto suo, ossia una vera e propria galleria d'arte intrisa

⁴ Gli oggetti con cui i personaggi della storia interagiscono sono effettivamente opere d'arte custodite nel Victoria & Albert Museum e sono tutte riprodotte in fondo al libro.

⁵ Il titolo originale del libro, *Clara Button and the magical hat day*, con un gioco di parole mette in evidenza sia il potere di fascinazione quasi soprannaturale che il cappello ha sulla protagonista sia la giornata fantastica che vive grazie ad esso.

di magia. Un cappello è un oggetto ordinario, ma può diventare straordinario negli occhi di chi lo guarda. Vedere l'invisibile nel visibile è la magia che compie lo sguardo di Clara Button. Il cappello è il catalizzatore che scatena il processo di trasformazione e il museo il luogo privilegiato dove questo può accadere.



Clara seguì il cappello oltre una porta che dava in un'altra sala e si ritrovò nel mezzo di un enorme guardaroba che traboccava di cappelli! Certi sembravano ceste, altri dei mazzi di fiori o dei pacchi regalo con nastri e fiocchi. In cima a uno se ne stava appollaiato un uccello verde che fissava Clara coi suoi occhi a palla.

«Certo che una volta i grandi portavano dei cappelli PROPRIO strambi...», pensò Clara.

Figura 6. Clara Button a Londra. Una giornata magica, Amy De La Haye e Anne Lacoux © Donzelli Editore srl, 2012; Titolo originale *Clara Button and the Magical Hat Day* ©V&A Publishing

5. Un abito, molteplici implicazioni di significato

Cosa accomuna questi cinque libri? Pur sviluppando ciascuno temi differenti, ciascuno di essi racconta una storia arricchita da più livelli di lettura, più o meno evidenti, anche grazie ad un apparato iconografico particolarmente accurato, capace di aggiungere ulteriori sfumature al testo. Inoltre questi cinque albi illustrati presi in esame pur essendo caratterizzati dalla presenza simbolica di abiti non ne fanno il fulcro narrativo. In ognuno di questi *case studies* l'abbigliamento diventa un pretesto per un percorso di scoperta di sé e di affermazione della propria individualità nel mondo. In *Rosaconfetto* il tema è l'emancipazione femminile, la libertà di essere se stessi; il testo narrativo descrive anemoni e peonie, l'epidermide rosa dei pachidermi femmina e accenna all'abbigliamento rosa solo marginalmente e in chiave strumentale al messaggio che la storia veicola, mentre nelle illustrazioni di Nella Bosnia emergono continuamente in primo piano, di pagina in pagina, proprio le cuffiette e le scarpette rosa che diventano un vero e proprio *leit motif* estetico del libro, sempre presente, fino al punto da diventare una sorta di alter ego dell'elefantina che prende vita e che segue di pari passo l'evoluzione delle vicende raccontando una silenziosa storia parallela: prima le vediamo indossate diligentemente, poi gettate a terra dall'elefantina mentre scappa via e infine

afflosciate e abbandonate in una suggestiva doppia tavola in cui diventano tragiche protagoniste, in una distesa di stoffa rosa ravvivata solo da qualche animaletto curioso che fa capolino.

Ne *Il signor Tigre si scatena* già dalla copertina si evidenzia la dicotomia civilizzato/selvaggio che caratterizza il racconto: il protagonista è vestito di tutto punto con un completo scuro elegante e tuba in testa nel mezzo di una florida foresta tropicale. Ancora una volta l'abbigliamento non è il punto centrale della narrazione, non viene nemmeno menzionato, eppure nelle illustrazioni di Peter Brown, che è anche autore del testo, gli indumenti si caricano di una forte valenza narrativa: dapprima, nella grigia città si vedono animali di ogni specie, anche cuccioli, vestiti con vestiti raffinati ma anche costrittivi che riecheggiano la moda ottocentesca, tutti rigorosamente neri. Gettando via gli indumenti imposti, il signor Tigre si spoglia anche del ruolo sociale e del condizionamento del giudizio sociale, arrivando a conquistare una libertà di espressione che si traduce nelle illustrazioni nel brillante color arancio della sua pelliccia riscoperta che non a caso diventa la nota cromatica dominante dell'albo. L'evoluzione dell'abbigliamento del signor Tigre dal rigido smoking, allo scandaloso nudo integrale fino allo stile casual, mostrata unicamente nelle immagini e mai descritta nel testo, rivela un secondo livello di lettura della storia che può essere liberamente colto dal lettore oppure no. È un arricchimento narrativo e semantico che apre a nuovi interessanti ambiti di interpretazione e di riflessione, come appunto quello del tema dell'abito immaginato qui discusso, inteso come abito desiderato, ossia un'identità da conquistare o riconquistare con un atto di coraggio e di autoaffermazione. Anche in *Avec trois brins de laine (on peut refaire le monde)* il contrasto tra omologazione e originalità viene affidato al cromatismo simbolico adottato nelle tavole illustrate dell'albo: la cittadina cecoslovacca è grigia come i suoi abitanti, tutti vestiti con lo stesso identico maglione monocromo. A spezzare il piattume del pensiero unico imposto dal regime sovietico vigente all'epoca, interviene il colore: l'arancio, il verde e il grigio dei maglioni monocromatici imposti vengono recuperati e i fili intrecciati e mescolati tra loro in nuove combinazioni cromatiche e in grande varietà di motivi decorativi permettono alla famiglia immigrata protagonista della storia di riconquistare la dignità perduta attraverso un contributo originale che sovverte la percezione della diversità dell'altro in un valore aggiunto per la società. La ribellione al sistema in questo caso passa non attraverso una trasgressione liberatoria come nel caso dell'elefantina Pasqualina e del signor Tigre, ma attraverso un atto creativo in cui viene recuperata e valorizzata la tradizione artigianale del paese natio, un'iniziativa unica nel suo genere che poteva prendere solo quella famiglia straniera, con le sue radici diverse e con il suo punto di vista non omologato. L'abito in questo libro si fa interprete del patrimonio culturale che ogni individuo porta con sé, della sua

unicità e insostituibilità, ribadendo al contempo l'irrinunciabile diritto alla bellezza e all'arte, intesa come sapienza del fare, insiti in ogni essere umano.

A questa arte del fare come stile di vita e come visione del mondo si connette in modo complementare *Filo magico* dove il contrasto tra il contesto grigio in cui si svolge la storia e il colore che invece porta la divesità della bambina protagonista della storia pone maggiormente l'accento sul grigiore interiore individuale più che su quello sociale esterno: quando la vista e il cuore vengono induriti dal giudizio o da una lettura negativa dei fatti, di se stessi e degli altri, l'unico atto risolutivo per reagire è costruire, fare cose belle. Di nuovo, ciò che la bambina fa a maglia, dai maglioni ai cappelli fino alle coperture per alberi ed edifici, non è rilevante. Non è l'abito a costruire la storia eppure la sua presenza scenica nelle illustrazioni materializza l'invisibile: il cambiamento della società grazie ad un atto d'amore che non si esaurisce mai perchè riesce a trovare in se stesso la forza per rigenerarsi ogni volta. In questo libro l'abito immaginato non è quello da indossare ma è quello da donare; qui non c'è un'identità da affermare o da difendere perchè è già pienamente posseduta e salda, essa non vacilla di fronte al disprezzo e non ha paura di venire derubata: la bambina infatti è raffigurata sempre in un atteggiamento sereno, gioioso e laborioso. L'arciduca non potrà rubarle il filo magico perchè lei ce lo ha nel cuore. Non ha bisogno di atti trasgressivi liberatori perchè ha trovato in se stessa le risposte per vivere senza condizionamenti esterni. Lei infatti risponde ai suoi detrattori non a parole ma agendo, seminando ovunque segni di audace speranza, rispondendo al male con il bene, proiettando la sua bellezza interiore all'esterno e così facendo cambia il mondo con piccoli atti di disarmante gentilezza.

Non da ultimo, l'abito immaginato può incarnare una bellezza puramente estetica capace di tradursi in fascinazione ed emozione, in un'esperienza di scoperta e amplificazione del proprio immaginario, come evidenzia l'albo *Clara Button a Londra. Una giornata magica*. L'avventura nasce da un cappello rotto accidentalmente che diventa il pretesto per un primo approccio con il mondo dell'arte: la bellezza di oggetti preziosi e antichi è proposta come una risposta consolatoria ma si rivelerà qualcosa di più. L'oggetto antico, pur nella sua difficoltà decifratrice per lo sguardo infantile, paradossalmente stimola la curiosità e porta allo stupore. L'abito immaginato in questo caso è un vestito strambo, mai visto, che viene dal passato. Eppure bello ed evocativo. Fatto di una bellezza che incanta e apre l'animo ad un dialogo più intimo con se stesso, senza più filtri né paure di scendere nella parte più profonda di sé. Come se fosse un libro illustrato, l'abito antico si rivela pieno di pagine da sfogliare, di dettagli da osservare, di sogni da coltivare. Una porta aperta verso nuovi mondi in cui l'immaginazione riesce a dare voce ai desideri più importanti e forse più nascosti e, perché no, a portare nuove consapevolezza. Clara

un giorno farà la modista come la nonna? Il sogno di un cappellarium tutto suo sembra quasi suggerirlo. Non a caso, il museo è il luogo dove Clara ritrova l'entusiasmo e ne esce con il cappello e, forse, anche il cuore riparato.

I titoli esaminati in questo saggio sono un esempio concreto delle potenzialità dell'albo illustrato come veicolo di concetti complessi e di stratificazioni di significati complementari o paralleli che emergono dal rapporto dinamico del testo con l'immagine. Ogni doppia pagina apre molteplici, liberi percorsi interpretativi che possono essere intrapresi ad ogni rilettura man mano che l'occhio coglie aspetti nuovi e il pensiero si apre a nuove scoperte. L'abito immaginato è uno dei tanti percorsi paralleli che è stato possibile fare con questi albi per scandagliare le possibili interpretazioni dell'abbigliamento nella letteratura per l'infanzia, mettendo in luce soprattutto quanto gli indumenti siano oggetti carichi di metasignificati o di proiezioni di un'identità in formazione come quella infantile.

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How to cite this paper:

Pazzini, C. (2020). L'abito immaginato. Abbigliamento e identità nell'albo illustrato moderno. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 160-175. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.17235

Psychometric evaluation of recall and recognition tasks for the measurement of young spectators' theatrical memory

Evaluación psicométrica del recuerdo y el reconocimiento de tareas para la medida de la memoria teatral de jóvenes espectadores

Avaluació psicomètrica del record i el reconeixement de tasques per a la mesura de la memòria teatral de joves espectadors

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is the construction and psychometric evaluation of seven categories of recall and recognition tasks for the measurement of young spectators' theatrical memory, based on the respective theatre codes of a specific performance for young audiences. The aim of those tasks is the evaluation of the young spectators' mnemonic recordings on a level of a) the actors' representation of the characters on stage (acting), b) the visual frame of the performance, c) the audio code, d) the lights, e) the dramatic text, f) the plot/action and g) the Shadow Theatre technique.

The recall and recognition tasks were constructed according to the *Classical Test Theory of Question Analysis* on a sample of 5th Grade Primary School pupils, who had seen this specific performance addressed to young spectators and were evaluated with the Factor Analysis method. For the evaluation of the quality of the questions, we took into consideration the difficulty coefficient of each question, the discriminant coefficient and the evaluation of the correlation level of expert

judges. For the psychometric control of the tests we examined the validity of their conceptual construction via inquiry factor analysis and the internal validity coefficient.

The result of the above tasks was the creation of seven reliable and valid measurement tools, in which no gender effect is inferred.

Key words: Classical Test Theory of Question Analysis, Theatrical Memory, Young Spectators, Recall Tasks, Recognition Tasks, Psychometric Evaluation.

Resumen

El objetivo de esta investigación es la construcción y evaluación psicométrica de siete categorías de tareas de recuerdo y reconocimiento para la medición de la memoria teatral de jóvenes espectadores, basadas en los respectivos códigos teatrales de una representación específica para audiencias infantiles. El propósito de estas tareas es la evaluación de los recuerdos mnemónicos de los jóvenes espectadores recordando el nivel de a) las representaciones de los personajes en el escenario (actuación), b) el marco visual de la representación, c) el código auditivo, d) las luces, e) el texto dramático, f) la trama/acción, y g) la técnica del teatro de sombras.

El recuerdo y reconocimiento de tareas se construyeron de acuerdo al *Classical Test Theory of Question Analysis* en una muestra de alumnado de 5º grado de Educación Primaria, quien vio esta representación específica dirigida a un público infantil, y fue evaluada con el método de Análisis Factorial. Para la evaluación de la calidad de las preguntas, consideramos el coeficiente de dificultad de cada pregunta, el coeficiente discriminador y la evaluación del nivel de correlación por jueces expertos. Para el control psicométrico de los test examinamos la validez de sus construcciones conceptuales a través del análisis factorial y el coeficiente de validez interna.

El resultado de las tareas expuestas fue la creación de siete herramientas de medida fiables y válidas, en las cuales no se infirieron efectos en la variable de género.

Palabras clave: Classical Test Theory of Question Analysis, memoria teatral, jóvenes espectadores, tareas de recuerdo, tareas de reconocimiento, evaluación psicométrica.

Resum

L'objectiu d'aquesta recerca és la construcció i avaluació psicomètrica de set categories de tasques de record i reconeixement per a la mesura de la memòria teatral de joves espectadors, basades en els respectius codis teatrals d'una representació específica per a audiències infantils. El propòsit d'aquestes tasques és l'avaluació dels records mnemònics dels joves espectadors tot recordant en un nivell de a) les representacions dels personatges a l'escenari (actuació), b) el marc visual de la representació, c) el codi auditiu, d) la llum, e) el text dramàtic, f) la trama/acció, i g) la tècnica del teatre d'ombres.

El record i reconeixement de tasques es van construir d'acord amb el *Classical Test Theory of Question Analysis* en una mostra d'alumnat de 5é grau d'Educació Primària, el qual ha vist aquesta representació específica adreçada a un públic infantil, i va ser avaluat amb el mètode d'Anàlisi Factorial. Per a l'avaluació de la qualitat de les preguntes, considerarem el coeficient de dificultat de cada pregunta, el coeficient discriminador i l'avaluació del nivell de correlació per jutges experts. Per al control psicomètric dels tests vam examinar la validesa de les seues construccions conceptuales a través de l'anàlisi factorial i el coeficient de validesa interna.

El resultat de les tasques exposades va ser la creació de set eines de mesura fiables i vàlides, en les quals no s'hi van inferir efectes en la variable gènere.

Paraules clau: Classical Test Theory of Question Analysis, memòria teatral, joves espectadors, tasques de record, tasques de reconeixement, avaluació psicomètrica.

1. Introduction

The notion and function of the young spectator's theatrical memory has concerned Theatre Studies research because of the interest concerning the reception and perception/acceptance of a theatre performance by the spectators' conscience. Memory as a function of the preservation of information of the past, refers to a sum of physical functions, with which humans may activate impressions, images and situations that even if they took place in the Past, they may be recollected as if they were present (Schacter, 2001). This activation and re-creation of the Past into the Present, is accordingly adapted to the individual or collective needs and expectations of the Present.

The establishment of information in the Long-term Memory and its successful retrieval, depends on the successful encoding (process, organization, relevant encoding and retrieval frame) and storage in the equivalent brain regions. The loss of information is usually ascribed to its depreciation or to the intervention of other information.

(Radstone & Schwarz, 2010). The multi-dimensional notion of memory, together with its respective content is depicted in its various representations, i.e. individual recollection, collective memory and tradition. In the same way, the angle and its approach differs at times, as it emphasizes on its intent or random, on its private or public, on its conscious or subconscious character. (Olick, 2007: 111-112, Casey, 2000).

Memory demands all the information that comes from the exterior surrounding world and is sensorially recorded, first to be encoded, then stored and finally retrieved. In the first stage of sensory recording, the information is not accurately identified; only some of its characteristics (size, color, position etc.) are identified. The sensory recordings are analyzed into optical, tangible, audio ones and so on. They have a very short retention span. A very small part of it passes to the Short-term Memory (Working Memory), which has very small capacity and retains the encoded informative elements in order to perform certain processes essential for the survival and transmission to the Long-term Memory (Multi-store Memory) (Bablekou, 2003). If the information is retained there for more than a few seconds, it is then transmitted to the Long-term Memory, where it may remain infinitely. According to Roussos (2011), what is stored to Long-term Memory is defined by the type of process (encoding, revision, attention) that takes place in the Short-term Memory. Long-term Memory has unlimited capacity of quantitative and time information retention and may be divided into fact, episodic, semantic and procedural memory. The establishment of information in the Long-term Memory and its successful retrieval, depends on the successful encoding (process, organization, relevant encoding and retrieval frame) and storage in the equivalent brain regions. The loss of information is usually ascribed to its depreciation or to the intervention of other information.

2. Theatre codes and the young spectator's memory

A plethora of semiotic systems is involved in the field of Theatre Studies. These represent a wide range of functionality and mobility of the individual elements, with an equivalent wealth of decoding abilities and possibilities that are easily adjusted to the various subjective and objective,

measurable and non-measurable factors that affect the spectator's reception (Elam, 2002). The spectator's view on theatre (for a specific performance or in general) is probably a result of all the incongruous and the relevant elements that directly or indirectly derive from the notion of memory (Grammatas, 2017). However, how does memory -especially the young spectators' memory-function? Which is the relation between memory and the event itself (Schacter, 2001)? How does the subject proceed to categorizations, with which criteria and for what reasons? Especially for the juvenile audience, what is it that remains in the memory after a performance? Of course, there is no question that the performance on stage as a vehicle of intense emotions, reinforces mnemonic recordings and activates memories. Excitation increases the possibility of memory consolidation during the encoding phase and the storing of information phase (Bablekou, 2011). Theatrical memories derive from the spectator's constant intervention on the elements of the spectacle that s/he chooses, constructs, interprets, connects and reconstructs.

According to Balme (2008), the plethora of the cognitive and emotional reactions, along with the mental actions and interpretative interventions that appear when someone sees a performance, are affected by a number of differentiating factors that define the way spectators receive a performance. Some of those are the age, the educational level, the span of attention, the collective experiences, the gender, the nationality, or even the venue that action takes place. Thus, apart from the objective reception conditions, the subjective ones (expectations, interests, attitudes, experiences, pre-existing knowledge and so on) affect the function of the young spectator's memory. The spectator's emotional identification with the character/hero or the experiential methexis, his/her kinesthetic involvement with the action on stage, the adaptation of the imaginary scenic world to his/her own illusory condition, are also elements that lead to the activation and development of mnemonic mechanisms. At this particular phase of the development of his/her personality and because of the peculiarity of the shaping of his/her psychic mechanism and social conscience, the young spectator focuses on those elements of the performance that attract his/her interest and are closer to his/her mentality. These specific elements reinforce the interactive communication that functions during the performance between the audience and the stage, challenge the attention and excitement and eventually manage to activate mnemonic recording. The actors' speech, the phrases and notions with their content of values, activate the audience's conscience and in combination with the auditory and visual stimuli challenged by secondary theatre codes (such as scenography, décor, costumes), are the elements that may activate function, which leads to the creation and storage of memory, on a micro and a macro-level (Grammatas, 2011).

Theatre codes act drastically on the spectator's memory and intensify or weaken the oblivion caused by time distance of the acting persons' dramatic and scenic space and time on the one side and the objective space and time on the other

Theatre codes act drastically on the spectator's memory and intensify or weaken the oblivion caused by time distance of the acting persons' dramatic and scenic space and time on the one side and the objective space and time on the other [...]. Apart from that, the dramatic elements of the play also affect mnemonic recording

(Grammatas, 2011). Apart from that, the dramatic elements of the play also affect mnemonic recording. The topics of the play (folk tradition, modern thematic area, ancient Greek literature, children's literature and so on), the kind/type (dramatic play, devised theatre, intertextual assemblage, adaptation and so on), the language, the style of writing, the ideological/value system of the play, the reference to the Present, the structure of the plot, the element of "adventure", also activate the mnemonic mechanism. It is unquestionable that the actor's presence as the living power of the performance and crucial point of the spectacle on stage, is strongly depicted on the young spectator's memory. Acting is a highly complex method that consists of a variety of individual elements. Those elements are certain to affect the creation of memories, depending on the way and the dynamics with which they are involved in the scenic venture. Thus, kinesiology, voice quality, mimicry, the use of paralinguistic features etch their traces on the young spectator's memory, by underlying and promoting the heroes' characteristics and creating intense emotions, with a predisposition to empathize and participate in what is happening on stage (Papakosta, 2010). Other basic acting elements such as artful innocence, expressiveness, authenticity, resourcefulness, extroversion, immediacy, and eagerness for communication, play a very important role in theatrical communication and subsequently in mnemonic recording. The spectator's emotional identification with the hero (-with the actor being a mediator-), challenges the experiential methexis of what is happening on stage to a high degree and functions as the driving force for the creation and development of memory. Some other mnemonic traces may be etched by the actors' appearance and concern the costumes, the make-up, the hairstyling, the masks and so on), the speech on stage (direct, simple-not simplistic, experiential, vivid and so on).

Moreover, some characteristics on stage direction, such as the use of theatre techniques (alienation effect, corporality, new technologies, participation, dramatic narrative, Shadow Theatre figures, which are very popular in Greece and so on), the aesthetic line (view), the "mise-en-scène", (i.e. the arrangement of the scenery props on the stage of a theatrical performance-the setting) and other elements of children's play (familiar to young spectators) such as animation, the "unforeseen", contradiction/contrast, repetition, imagination and surprise, may contribute to the creation of memories. Also, the element of the "unforeseen", the unexpected, the "different", stirs the child's imagination, stimulates his/her interest and activates mnemonic recorder.

The quality of the visual arts frame (costumes, stage design, stage objects and mechanisms etc.), and the way all these are realized on stage, (resourcefulness, imagination, innovation, flexibility, ability to change, non-mimic aesthetics, unpredictable combinations and unusual materials, loans from children's play and so on), is also another factor of successful mnemonic recording. The adaptation of the artistic frame according to textual, kinesiological, spatial, aesthetic, pedagogical and psychological needs, the modulation with the aesthetic identity of the performance, also affects the creation of memories. We take for granted that "the distance between the stage object and what this represents, its ability to challenge different situations, is a factor that contributes to the establishment of memory" (Deldime, 1996: 102-103). Unconventional costumes, innovative and resourceful solutions concerning the development, transformation and creation of intertextual

assemblages may cause surprise, curiosity, excitement, stir the young spectators' imagination and activate their mnemonic recording.

The way secondary theatre codes such as lights and music are exploited, which may easily be transformed into primary codes and become the foremost exponents of stage direction, is possible to create strong memories. In this particular type of theatre, music and lights may create a unique atmosphere, emotionally charge or defuse action, comment on persons and circumstances, fascinate and thrill with their intense emotional power, challenge concentration, interest, curiosity and surprise. They may activate and reinforce the mnemonic recorder when they act corroboratively, explanatorily, additionally and emphatically on the stage action, thus causing emotional and physical reactions. Moreover, lights and music in combination with the actor's kinesiological and mimic code, may create indelible mnemonic traces.

When the use of new technologies is orientated and functionally aligned towards the director's basic target, then it may arouse the young spectator's interest and via familiar codes manage to etch its elements on memory. The projections in particular, may modify the scenic image, denote emotions or the heroes' deeper thoughts, make time/spatial transitions in the play much easier for the young spectators to perceive, undermine, reinforce or even reverse the scenic action, thus developing and reinforcing mnemonic recording.

Shadow Theatre is a technique that may contribute to the activation and creation of memories by participating in the director's attempt in an auxiliary or primary way: the Shadow Theatre figures may be projected on a panel at the background of the stage and create a scene that explains or adds extra information to what is already happening in the foreground, thus creating a unique atmosphere. With its strong semiotic function, it supports the direct access to the young spectator's world of senses and emotions, thus creating a fertile land for mnemonic traces. It activates the young spectator's imagination and interest, challenge him/her kinesthetically, while it simultaneously broadens the acting abilities and emphasizes on theatricality. It may substitute or modify the scenic image, intervene on the time/spatial flow and the sound environment of the performance, replace, complete or continue the action. More than that, it may reinforce participation or alienation according to the director's view.

3. Method

3.1 The aim of the research

The present study aims at the construction and psychometric evaluation of seven recall and recognition tasks for the measurement of the spectator's theatrical memory, based on the respective theatre codes of a specific performance for young spectators. Particularly, the study aims at the evaluation and selection of the items that will constitute each test, according to the Classical Test Theory (Alexopoulos, 1998). The aim of CTT is (generally speaking) to understand and improve the reliability of psychological tests and was

codified as we know it today by Novick (1966) and described in classical texts such as Lord & Novick (1968) and Allen & Yen (2002). Based therefore on this theory, we are going to evaluate the items' difficulty and differentiation index, along with the degree of accordance of expert judges for every task of the test. Also, we are going to examine the Factorial validity of the tasks that will emerge, and the reliability of their internal consistency.

The ultimate purpose of those tasks is valid and reliable quantitative evaluation of the mnemonic recording on a level of a) the (actors') acting, b) the visual frame of the performance, c) the audio code, d) the lights, e) the dramatic text, f) the plot/action and g) the Shadow Theatre technique.

3.2 Participants

The selection of the participants for the construction of the recall and recognition tasks for the measurement of the spectator's theatrical memory took place in the School Year 2018-2019 on 5th Grade Primary School pupils (i.e. 10 year old pupils) that attended the performance "Boy with a suitcase" (by British playwright Mike Kenny, "Boy with a suitcase", Plays for young audiences, 2008, 120 pages), translated and adapted in Greek by Xenia Kalogeropoulou (actress and pioneer in Children's Theatre in Greece for years on) and directed by Elias Karellas in Kappa Theatre (Athens, Greece), within the frame of their cultural visits program. With this play, the playwright is aspiring to raise the awareness of the major refugee problem and the issue of forced and violent migration. It is the story of a 12-year-old boy, Naz, who undertakes a long and dangerous journey abroad, because his homeland is destroyed by war, to make way to his elder brother's home. He carries a small suitcase and a treasure of stories from his childhood and fancies himself like Sinbad-a man of many voyages and endless stories. Despite the fact that his life is not "heaven on earth" after all, Naz realizes that happiness will always exist as long as he keeps his stories alive. The specific performance was selected with clear pedagogical and artful criteria, for its aesthetic line and the director's view, the use of certain techniques, and the wealth of systems and communication channels. Another criterion that counted, was that it balanced harmoniously between artistic awareness and pedagogical aim.

In this research 58 Primary School pupils in Athens participated. 27 of them (46.6%) were boys and 31 (53.4%) were girls. Pupils with severe developmental problems or sensory/mental disorders were excluded. Their participation came after their teachers' desire to contribute to the realization of this research, with the pupils' involvement in it and their parents' written informed consent. The selection of the specific age group was not random. We chose pupils that had entered pre-adolescence, partly because it is an important, sensitive period and a stage of human development

following early childhood and preceding adolescence: therefore, at that particular age pupils may well view human relationships differently, notice the flawed human side and begin to develop a sense of identity. The most important reason, however, is that at that particular stage there are fewer time influences concerning the quality of the stored information (Siegler, 2013). 5th Grade pupils have broader mnemonic capacity in comparison with younger pupils and exploit more satisfactorily higher and basic mnemonic recording processes. Also, they exploit mnemonic strategies in a more flexible way and have a greater cultural awareness concerning the handling of memory (Siegler, 2013).

Also, members of the Academic staff of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens with relevant experience took part in this research as expert judges for the conceptional validity of the structural elements of recall and recognition tasks. Those too, had also seen the performance mentioned above.

3.3 Instrument

In order to construct the recall and recognition tasks, we initially formed a sum of 62 items based on the dramatic text and the theatre codes of the performance “Boy with a suitcase”. Every item was accompanied by three alternative answers, of which only one was correct and referred to a) the (actors’) acting, b) the visual frame of the performance, c) the audio frame of the performance, d) the lights, e) the dramatic text, f) the plot/action and g) the Shadow Theatre technique. Initially, on a pilot phase, the items were handed out to ten 5th Grade pupils in order to check the content from a linguistic point of view and then to the participants of the study in the form of a questionnaire. Every correct answer of the participants was marked with one (1) point, whereas every wrong one with zero (0) points. The final version of the tasks, based on the results of statistic and factor analysis that followed, included 32 elements structured on seven thematic factors. Indicative items for each thematic factor are included in the Appendix of the study.

3.4 Process

The total of the initial items that included the recall and recognition tasks was handed out to the participants of the study the day after the performance, by the teacher of the class together with the researchers. Before completing, the pupils were encouraged to read them carefully and choose the ones that they considered correct, based on what they remembered from the performance. The average time needed for the completion of the questionnaire was 45 minutes. After the completion, the questionnaires were gathered, listed, graded by the research team and analyzed quantitatively with SPSS 21 (Field, 2013).

Simultaneously to the above process, three freelance experts were called to evaluate the questions one to one and classify them according to their content to *a priori* defined thematic factors/theatre codes.

3.5 Analysis

The construction of the seven recall and recognition tasks was formed according to the Classical Test Theory of Question Analysis and the Factor Analysis method (Kline, 1999). As a process, it included the evaluation per each code for a) the difficulty index, b) the differentiation of each initial question index, c) the evaluation of the freelance experts' degree of agreement for each question, d) the examination of the validity of each task and finally e) its reliability (Hinkin, Tray & Enz, 1997).

More specifically, there was a check conducted for the degree of difficulty (DIF) of each question in order to evaluate how each one responded to the level of the persons examined. This was calculated per question by the quotient of the correct answers to the number of the examined that answered that particular question, with ideal value for triple choice answers, from .46 up to .86 (Aiken, 1994, Alexopoulos 1998, Gregory, 1992).

Consequently, we calculated the differentiation index (DEF) of each question via the quotient between the number of those with high and low total score on the test and have answered the question correctly to the number of the persons asked. Thus, we evaluated the contribution of each question to the differentiation of the measurement of the theatrical memory of the participants with values higher than .20 to be considered acceptable (Alexopoulos, 1998).

As for the evaluation of the freelance experts' degree of agreement concerning the categorization of each question according to its thematic content to the thematic axes/theatre codes of a) acting, b) visual frame, c) audio frame, d) lights, e) dramatic text, f) plot/action and g) Shadow Theatre technique, the Fleiss' kappa index (Fk) of agreement was exploited. Values close to 1 denote total agreement between the experts, whereas values close to 0, total disagreement (Falotico & Quatto, 2015).

Within a range of explanatory factor analysis (EFA), we attempted to evaluate the Factorial validity of the recall and recognition tasks per theatre code (Clark & Watson, 1995; De Vellis, 2003; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). During the EFAs in order to define the number of factors, we used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criterion, based on which factors with eigenvalue lower than 1, are not considered statistically important and questions with loading $\geq .5$ were considered important variables for the formation of the factor (Biassuti & Frate, 2017).

Finally, we used the Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficient in order to check the reliability of the tests (Cortina, 1999). Also, we evaluated the existence of gender differences on the tests with the Mann-Whitney criterion on a 1% level of statistical significance ($p < .001$)

4. Results

4.1 Component matrix for the (actors') acting elements

The data analysis of the five items concerning the (actors') acting code resulted in a difficulty index between .22-.91 and a differentiation index between .16-.57. It was thus decided to remove the tenth item because the values in the difficulty and differentiation index and the Fleiss' kappa

(Fk=.33) were not satisfactory. Also, with the removal of this item the Cronbach α index would be considerably improved (see: Table 1).

Item	DIF	DEF	Fk	α if item deleted
10	0.22	0.16	0.33	0.81
14	0.91	0.50	1.00	0.56
17	0.89	0.43	1.00	0.62
38	0.76	0.57	1.00	0.60
50	0.72	0.55	1.00	0.56

Table 1. Item analysis for the (actors') acting code

By removing item 10, the corrected item-total correlation fluctuated from .59 to .73, the squared multiple correlation between 37% and 63% and the Cronbach α index was found equal to .81. The above index values are considered satisfactory.

Item	Loadings	M	Sd	h^2
14	0.88	0.84	0.37	0.78
50	0.81	0.79	0.41	0.66
17	0.79	0.91	0.28	0.63
38	0.75	0.74	0.44	0.56

Table 2. Component matrix for the (actors') acting factor template

Bartlett's sphericity test was statistically important ($\chi^2(6) = 89.79$, $p < .001$ and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO)=.73, a satisfactory value according to analysis patterns (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). One factor that explicates the 65.50% of Total Variance explained of the variables under analysis was selected by taking into consideration the Kaiser criterion. The communality h^2 values of the elements of the univariate model fluctuated from .56 to .78 with an average value of .66 points, an eigenvalue of 2.62 and loadings fluctuating from .75 to .88 (see: Table 2).

4.2 Component matrix for the visual frame of the performance

From the data analysis of the 16 items concerning the visual frame theatre code, it came out that the difficulty index of the items fluctuated from .59 to 1.00 and the differentiation index from .40 to .60. It was decided to remove items 4, 6, 16, 28, 40, 52 and 56 because of the low value in the Fleiss' kappa index. Items 9, 20, 28, 31 and 52 were also removed because they presented a high value in the difficulty index. Finally, item 57 was removed too because it presented a low differentiation index (see: Table 3).

Item	DIF	DEF	Fk	α if item deleted
2	0.69	0.60	1.00	0.64
4	0.71	0.40	0.00	0.71
6	0.98	0.53	0.33	0.65
9	0.98	0.50	1.00	0.68
16	0.94	0.50	0.33	0.69
20	1.00	0.52	1.00	0.68
21	0.97	0.59	1.00	0.64
28	0.98	0.53	0.33	0.65
31	0.98	0.53	1.00	0.65

32	0.91	0.59	1.00	0.64
40	0.65	0.45	0.33	0.69
41	0.76	0.60	1.00	0.63
45	0.78	0.60	1.00	0.63
52	0.93	0.55	0.33	0.66
56	0.59	0.45	0.33	0.68
57	0.64	0.13	1.00	0.67

Table 3. Item analysis for the visual frame of the performance code

After the removal of the above items, the corrected item-total correlation fluctuated from .48 to .72. Also, the squared multiple correlation was calculated between 29% and 60% and the Cronbach's α index was found equal to .82. The above index values are considered satisfactory according to analysis patterns.

Item	Loadings	M	Sd	h^2
2	0.71	0.81	0.40	0.49
21	0.64	0.93	0.26	0.41
32	0.82	0.90	0.32	0.68
41	0.84	0.74	0.44	0.71
45	0.82	0.78	0.42	0.67

Table 4. Component matrix for the visual frame factor template

Bartlett's sphericity test was statistically important ($\chi^2(10) = 118.41$, $p < .001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) = .75, a satisfactory value according to analysis patterns (KMO > .6). One factor that explicates the 59.12% of Total Variance explained of the variables under analysis was selected by taking into consideration the Kaiser criterion. The fluctuation of the elements of the univariate model that emerged, fluctuated from .41 to .71 with an average value of .59 points, an eigenvalue of 2.96 and loadings fluctuating from .64 to .84 (see: Table 4).

4.3 Component matrix for the audio code of the performance

The results of data analysis for the five items concerning the audio code of the performance, showed that the difficulty index of the items fluctuated from .59 to .86 and the differentiation index from .24 to .55. Item 11 was decided to be removed for the considerable improvement of the Cronbach α index (see: Table 5).

Item	DIF	DEF	Fk	α if item deleted
11	0.62	0.24	1.00	0.77
24	0.59	0.55	1.00	0.49
25	0.76	0.45	1.00	0.51
26	0.74	0.45	1.00	0.53
37	0.86	0.34	1.00	0.63

Table 5. The audio code of the performance item analysis

After the removal of item 11, the corrected item-total correlation fluctuated from .39 to .69. Also, the squared multiple correlation was calculated between 18% and 50% and the Cronbach's α was found equal to .77. The above index values are considered satisfactory according to analysis patterns.

Item	Loadings	M	Sd	h ²
24	0.86	0.66	0.48	0.73
25	0.84	0.79	0.41	0.70
26	0.78	0.76	0.43	0.61
37	0.59	0.86	0.35	0.35

Table 6. Component matrix for the audio code factor template

Bartlett's sphericity test was statistically important ($\chi^2(6) = 64.95$, $p < .001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) = .74, a satisfactory value according to analysis patterns (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). One factor that explicates the 59.83% of Total Variance explained of the variables under analysis was selected by taking into consideration the Kaiser criterion. The fluctuation of the elements of the univariate model that emerged, fluctuated from .59 to .86 with an average value of .77 points, an eigenvalue of 2.39 and loadings fluctuating from .59 to .86 (see: Table 6).

4.4 Component matrix for the lights of the performance

The results of data analysis for the five items concerning the lights of the performance, showed that the difficulty index of the items fluctuated from .13 to .62 and the differentiation index from .16 to .38. It was decided to remove item 47 for the considerable improvement of the Cronbach α index and because of the fact that it presented a low differentiation index (see: Table 7).

Item	DIF	DEF	Fk	α if item deleted
7	0.62	0.38	1.00	0.46
12	0.29	0.26	1.00	0.45
47	0.64	0.16	0.33	0.73
55	0.13	0.29	1.00	0.35

Table 7. Item analysis for the lights of the performance

After the removal of item 47, the corrected item-total correlation fluctuated from .46 to .64. Also, the squared multiple correlation was calculated between 23% and 43% and the Cronbach's α was found equal to .73. The above index values are considered satisfactory according to analysis patterns.

Item	Loadings	M	Sd	h ²
7	0.73	0.59	0.50	0.53
12	0.82	0.33	0.47	0.67
55	0.87	0.29	0.46	0.75

Table 8. Component matrix for the lights factor template

Bartlett's sphericity test was statistically important ($\chi^2(3) = 38$, $p < .001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) = .64, a satisfactory value according to analysis patterns (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). One factor that explicates the 65.26% of Total Variance explained of the variables under analysis was selected by taking into consideration the Kaiser criterion. The fluctuation of the

elements of the univariate model that emerged, fluctuated from .53 to .75 with an average value of .65 points, an eigenvalue of 1.96 and loadings fluctuating from .73 to .87 (see: Table 8).

4.5 Component matrix for the dramatic text

The results of data analysis for the eleven items concerning the content of the performance, showed that the difficulty index of the items fluctuated from .71 to .98 and the differentiation index from .57 to .76.

Item	DIF	DEF	Fk	α if item deleted
1	0.98	0.67	1.00	0.64
5	0.94	0.67	1.00	0.60
8	0.89	0.76	1.00	0.53
15	0.95	0.74	1.00	0.56
18	0.96	0.72	1.00	0.57
23	0.95	0.71	1.00	0.54
39	0.86	0.72	1.00	0.58
46	0.95	0.67	1.00	0.60
48	0.71	0.57	0.00	0.66
49	0.93	0.72	0.33	0.61
53	0.91	0.67	0.33	0.64

Table 9. Item analysis on the scenario of the performance

It was decided to remove items 1, 48, 49 and 53 for the considerable improvement of the Cronbach α index. Especially for items 49 and 53 the expert judges' low agreement index (Fk), and the high difficulty index for item 1 (see: Table 9). After the removal of the above items, the corrected item-total correlation fluctuated from .37 to .60. Also, the squared multiple correlation was calculated between 21% and 44% and the Cronbach's α was found equal to .73. The above index values are considered satisfactory according to analysis patterns.

Bartlett's sphericity test was statistically important ($\chi^2(21) = 82.50, p < .001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) = .73, a satisfactory value according to analysis patterns (KMO > .6). One factor that explicates the 40.60% of Total Variance explained of the variables under analysis was selected by taking into consideration the Kaiser criterion. The fluctuation of the elements of the univariate model that emerged, fluctuated from .32 to .49 with an average value of 0.41 points, an eigenvalue of 2.84 and loadings fluctuating from .57 to .75 (see: Table 10).

Item	Loadings	M	Sd	h^2
5	0.57	0.95	0.22	0.32
8	0.64	0.90	0.31	0.40
15	0.64	0.95	0.22	0.41
18	0.75	0.97	0.18	0.56
23	0.70	0.95	0.22	0.49
39	0.58	0.86	0.35	0.34
46	0.57	0.95	0.22	0.32

Table 10. Component matrix for the scenario factor template

4.6 Component matrix for the plot and action elements

The data analysis for the eleven items concerning the elements of the plot and the action of the performance, showed that the difficulty index of the items fluctuated from .66 to .95 and the differentiation index from .16 to .36.

Item	DIF	DEF	Fk	α if item deleted
19	0.66	0.28	1.00	0.72
29	0.83	0.28	1.00	0.64
30	0.95	0.16	1.00	0.68
33	0.83	0.28	1.00	0.65
35	0.95	0.19	1.00	0.70
42	0.83	0.24	1.00	0.71
51	0.91	0.22	1.00	0.66
52	0.93	0.21	0.33	0.66
58	0.81	0.33	1.00	0.63
59	0.84	0.29	1.00	0.65
60	0.74	0.36	1.00	0.60

Table 11. Item analysis on the plot and the elements of action of the performance

It was decided to remove item 52 because of the low expert judges' agreement and items 30 and 35 because of the low differentiation grade they presented (<.2). Also, for the considerable improvement of the Cronbach α index (see: Table 11), items 19 and 42 were removed. After the removal of the above items, the corrected item-total correlation fluctuated from .36 to .62. Also, the squared multiple correlation was calculated between 24% and 52% and the Cronbach's α was found equal to .78. The above index values are considered satisfactory according to analysis patterns.

Item	Loadings	M	Sd	h^2
29	0.74	0.83	0.38	0.55
33	0.77	0.83	0.38	0.60
51	0.51	0.91	0.28	0.26
58	0.70	0.81	0.40	0.48
59	0.60	0.84	0.37	0.35
60	0.77	0.74	0.44	0.60
29	0.74	0.83	0.38	0.55

Table 12. Component matrix for the plot and action factor template

Bartlett's sphericity test was statistically important ($\chi^2(15) = 97.33$, $p < .001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) = .65, a satisfactory value according to analysis patterns (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). One factor that explicates the 47.35% of Total Variance explained of the variables under analysis was selected by taking into consideration the Kaiser criterion. The fluctuation of the elements of the univariate model that emerged, fluctuated from 0.26 to 0.60 with an average value of .47 points, an eigenvalue of 2.84 and loadings fluctuating from .51 to .77 (see: Table 12).

4.7 Component matrix for Shadow Theatre technique

The data analysis for the eleven items concerning Shadow Theatre, a part of the visual spectacle of the performance, showed that the difficulty index of the items fluctuated from .49 to .96 and the differentiation index from .16 to .38.

Item	DIF	DEF	Fk	α if item deleted
3	0.47	0.36	0.33	0.52
13	0.95	0.33	1.00	0.45
22	0.84	0.33	0.00	0.49
27	0.66	0.38	0.00	0.48
34	0.84	0.36	0.33	0.52
36	0.50	0.26	1.00	0.60
43	0.96	0.31	1.00	0.49
44	0.96	0.31	1.00	0.49
54	0.67	0.33	0.33	0.52
61	0.71	0.33	0.33	0.49
62	0.90	0.16	1.00	0.49

Table 13. Item analysis on Shadow Theatre elements

It was decided to remove items 3, 22, 27, 34, 54 and 61 because of the low expert judges' agreement, item 36 for the considerable improvement of the Cronbach α index, together with element 62 because of the low differentiation grade they presented (<.2), (see: Table 13). After the removal of the above items, the corrected item-total correlation fluctuated from .38 to .79. Also, the squared multiple correlation was calculated between 22% and 42% and the Cronbach's α was found equal to .79. The above index values are considered satisfactory according to analysis patterns.

Item	Loadings	M	Sd	h^2
13	0.60	0.95	0.22	0.36
43	0.96	0.96	0.19	0.93
44	0.97	0.97	0.18	0.94

Table 14. Shadow Theatre elements factor template

Bartlett's sphericity test was statistically important ($\chi^2(3) = 39.52, p < .001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) = .61, a satisfactory value according to analysis patterns (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). One factor that explicates the 55.26% of Total Variance explained of the variables under analysis was selected by taking into consideration the Kaiser criterion. The fluctuation of the elements of the univariate model that emerged, fluctuated from .36 to .94, with an average value of .75 points, an eigenvalue of 2.24 and loadings fluctuating from .60 to .97 (see: Table 14).

4.8 Gender influence and additional analyses evaluation

Based on the exploitation of the Mann-Whitney criterion of individual samples for the examination of possible gender differences on the values of individual recall and recognition tasks, no statistically considerable difference was noticed, concerning gender in relation with the (actors') acting code ($z = -.61, p = .54$), the visual code ($z = -1.05, p = .30$), the lights ($z = -.96, p = 0.34$), the information of the dramatic text ($z = -1.59, p = .11$), the plot and action elements ($z = -1.06, p = .29$) and the Shadow Theatre elements ($z = -.56, p = .58$). It was observed that the average grading for the girls was higher ($M = 34.21$) for the task concerning the audio code than that of the boys ($M = 24.09$) ($z = -2.37, p = .02$). Finally, the total score of the scales for the overall evaluation of theatrical memory from the theatre codes point of view, does not present gender differences ($z = -1.70, p = .09$). Therefore, no gender influence is inferred.

The overall score of each one of the above seven recall and recognition tasks is positively and strongly related with the overall score of them. The correlation values fluctuate from .34 to .78 and are statistically important ($p=.00<.001$). Also, the Cronbach α index for the 32 items that the seven tasks include, presented a value equal to .82.

5. Discussion

The study aimed at the structure and the psychometric evaluation of seven individual categories of recall and recognition tasks, based on the exploitation of the theatre codes of Mike Kenny's "Boy with a suitcase" performance, translated by Xenia Kalogeropoulou (Kappa Theatre, Greece 2017-2019). Those tasks were addressed to 5th Grade Primary School pupils and aimed to the quantitative evaluation of the young spectator's theatrical memory.

The criteria for the selection of the items that consist each task were the difficulty index of each item, its differentiation index and the evaluation of the expert judges, degree of agreement, concerning thematic content. Of the initial 62 elements to be evaluated, only 32 were eventually kept because they presented ideal values on an index level, thus denoting that they could come up to the expectations of the examined persons and could therefore contribute to the measure of the theatrical memory of the participants per each theatre code level. Especially, as far as the evaluation of their difficulty index is concerned, it fluctuated between 46-86, an ideal value for cases of triple choice answers (Aiken, 1994; Alexopoulos, 1998; Gregory, 1992). As for their differentiation index, this was more than .20, an acceptable value according to analysis patterns for psychometric research (Alexopoulos, 1998). Finally, as for the expert judges' agreement degree, every item that was kept presented a high degree of agreement between the judges, an element that contributes to the structural validity of the items.

With the elements that were kept, seven categories were named/selected via inquiry factor analyses, seven categories of univariable evaluable tasks concerning a) the (actors') acting, b) the visual frame, c) the audio code, d) the lights, e) the dramatic text, f) the plot and action elements and g) the Shadow Theatre technique of the specific performance, with satisfactory reliability, internal coherence and conceptual structure validity. The first task that referred to the (actor's) acting, included items concerning spatial placement, kinesiology, vocals, mimicry and scenic interpretation in general. The second task, concerning the visual frame theatre code, included items about the stage, the scenic mechanisms and objects and costumes. The third task concerning the audio code, included items on the audio environment of the performance, such as live music, songs, musicians and sound effects. The fourth task concerning the lights,

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included items about the function of the lights in that particular performance (focusing attention, the coloring of the stage, the creation of a certain atmosphere and so on) and its cooperation with the other codes (e.g. the visual frame). The fifth task concerning the information of the performance content, included items about the content of the dramatic text as this was interpreted by the actors on stage. The sixth task that concerned the plot and the action of the play, included items that were focusing on the content of climax scenes of the action, interchanges, reversals and conflicts. Finally, the seventh task concerning Shadow Theatre technique, consisted of items about the involvement of this specific technique in the development of the action, the boxed stories and the characters categories of tasks could support the validity and efficiency of a tool that measured the pupils' theatrical memory.

6. Limitations and proposals for future research

The basic limitation of the research originates from the non-probabilistic selection of the participants. Despite the fact that chi-square tests showed that the size of the sample used in the research was efficient/satisfactory, a sample originating from non-probabilistic types of sampling and especially representative of the population of 5th Grade pupils would be desirable.

It is important that the research we are to develop after the pilot study, will focus on the exploration of the theatrical performance factors that are etched on the pupils' memory for a longer period, and will also give prominence to the theatre codes that create (and for what reason too) strong memories, thus facilitating the pedagogical role of theatre.

In the expectations of this research, we must also mention the highlighting of the individual elements that spectators recall and recognize and may be exploited for the overall evaluation of the pupils' theatrical memory based on the semiotic analysis of the performance and the reception theories.

7. Acknowledgments

We wish to express our gratitude to Associate Professor of Cognitive Psychology and Director of the Experimental Psychology Laboratory (NKUA), Dr. Petros Roussos, whose ideas and general contribution to our research were of great importance. The present research is being conducted by the authors of this article within the frame of the research program under the title "Theatrical memory of 5th Grade Primary school pupils" in the Department of Primary Education of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece with Professor Theodore Grammatas being the Principal Investigator, Invitation ΕΔΒΜ 34 "Support to researchers with emphasis on young researchers" MIS 5006824.

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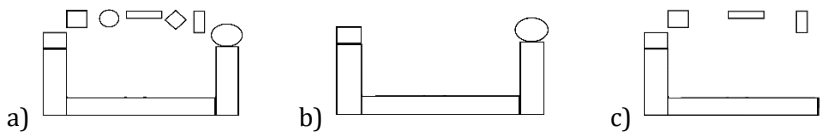
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How to cite this paper:

Papakosta, A. Mastrothanasis, K., Andreou, A. & Blouti, I. (2020). Psychometric exploration of recall and identification tasks for the evaluation of the young spectators' theatrical memory. *Journal of Literary Education*, (3), pp. 176-196. doi: 10.7203/JLE.3.14835

9. Appendix

Indicative items of recall and recognition tasks per thematic unit

Thematic task	Item example
Acting	<p>How did the mother speak before the boy got on board the bus?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Smiling, encouraging him and telling him jokes b) Stammering, shaking and emotionally moved c) Angrily and coldly
Visual frame	<p>Choose the correct description of the fixed scenery.</p> 
Audio code	<p>What sounds were heard in the story of the stingy man?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Breathing and bubbles b) Waves and birds c) The wind and children's laughter
Lights	<p>What happened every time the boy wrote a letter to his mother?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The moon lit up b) It was dark c) The lights went red
Dramatic text	<p>What did the father tell the boy the moment they were abandoning their hometown?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Look at the city for the last time b) Never look back c) See what disaster the war brings
Plot/Action	<p>How did Krysia fall into the sea?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) By mistake b) She wanted to swim c) The Captain pushed her
Shadow Theatre	<p>The wolves in the boy's story appeared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) On a video on stage b) As figures on the screen white sheet c) As paintings

Issue 3 - 2020

Reviews

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