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# Language and Oppression

PHILOSOPHY, SOCIAL AND HUMAN DISCIPLINES SERIES

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# RESEARCH PAPERS



# Anti-Oppressive Oppression: A Reaction to Leadership Recklessness in the Congo Space

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## Abstract

*Just like Sartre's anti-racist racism may be interpreted as the racism engendered by an original racist conduct, anti-oppressive oppression too may be interpreted as a reaction to the oppression instituted by the oppressive rhinos in power. Both cases have to do with the subaltern physically and verbally struggling to overturn the oppression imposed upon them by their "superior" other. This paper demonstrates how, in L'Etat Honteux and La Vie et Demie,<sup>1</sup> Sony Labou-Tansi has attempted to deconstruct and reconstruct the image of leadership through the carnivalesque with the express purpose of extracting consent from it for relocation to a new locus of respect for democratic values.*

**Keywords:** *subaltern, relocation to a third space, public/organic intellectual, carnivalesque, naming and shaming.*

It seems vital to broach this study with the excogitations of Jean-Paul Sartre and Joseph Ki-Zerbo who, it can be assumed, believe that the fight for the extermination of kakistocratic regimes requires the dogged determinacy of the public intellectual. This can be taken to mean that it is incumbent upon the credentialized followers to bear in mind that silence is not always golden particularly when the community they belong to is made to squirm under the iron boots of military dictators, to recast Jack London's "Iron Heel", in addition to being subjected to probably the most heinous types of socio-economic exploitation. There is probably no contesting the point that Labou-Tansi is aware of the incriminating silence Sartre, Joseph Ki-Zerbo and many other organic scholars seem to strongly condemn in their various styles.

It is probably pertinent to declare here that the choice of Labou-Tansi as an organic intellectual challenger is not fortuitous; it is noted that he is probably among the most outstanding Congolese satirists who believe that the truculent version of the carnivalesque is the most appropriate weapon of negotiation with

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<sup>1</sup> The two works shall henceforward be referred to as *L'Etat* and *La Vie*.

the rhinoceroses. He seems to believe, just like Soyinka is to later demonstrate in his struggle with the Nigerian military dictators, that this is not the time for the intellectual writer “to indulge in palliatives” (Soyinka, 1996, p. 56).

It is to be noted that the two novels catalogue a non-Horacian type of satire; what this means is that, Labou-Tansi does not succumb to the temptation of mocking his dictator victims gently. What he rather does is to adopt what Hibbard and Thrall refer to as the Juvenalian type of satire – the caustic type – to expose the lunatic aberrations of people-in-power with a certain bitterness accompanied with spite (Holman, 1960, p. 477). But more significantly, it is tempting to project that Labou-Tansi seems to have been mainly influenced by the writings of Mikhaïl Bakhtine. Thus, this essay shall be hinged on the carnivalesque – a literary mode popularized by Mikhaïl Bakhtine – and how it meshes with Labou-Tansi’s narrative style.

An attentive reading of both *L’Etat* and *La Vie* makes it reasonable to suggest that Labou-Tansi may not have been unacquainted with the four categories of the carnivalesque proposed by Mikhaïl: the first category (familiar and free interaction between people) brings together people of antipodal social belonging and makes them interact on common terms; the second category (eccentric behaviour) provides for the said combination of people to behave in the most abnormal way possible; the third category (carnivalistic misalliances) allows for everything that may be generally separated to reunite, for instance heaven and hell, or young and old; and the fourth category (sacrilegious) caters for sacrilegious events to take place without the need for punishment. One can venture to suggest that these four categories are given more leverage by Phe-bot et al in their article titled *Le carnivalesque chez Mikhaïl Bakhtine* where they argue that:

*(...) le carnaval au Moyen Age, loin de n’être qu’une manifestation folklorique, était une des expressions les plus fortes de la culture populaire, en particulier dans sa dimension subversive. C’était l’occasion pour le peuple de renverser, de façon symbolique et pendant une période limitée, toutes les hiérarchies instituées entre le pouvoir et les dominés, entre le noble et le trivial, entre le haut et le bas, entre raffiné et le grossier, entre le sacré et le profane. (Mikhaïl Bakhtin, 2011)*

The views presented above gain validity based on what Bakhtin himself writes about the carnivalesque as an exclusive moment during which people enjoy complete freedom and everything is turned upside down:

*[Le carnivalesque] est marqué, notamment, par la logique originale des choses “à l’envers”, “au contraire”, des permutations constantes du haut et du bas (“la roue”), de la face du derrière, par les formes le plus diverses de parodies et travestissements, rabaissements, profanations, couronnements et détronements*

*bouffons. La seconde vie, le second monde de la culture populaire s'édifie dans une certaine mesure comme une parodie de la vie ordinaire, comme "un monde à l'envers." (p. 19)*

Bakhtine goes farther afield to make language (in relation to who is not socially qualified to say certain things) a prominent component of the carnivalesque:

*(...) la subversion du système des valeurs passe d'abord par celle du langage. Il existe un langage officiel comme celui de l'église, du pouvoir, de l'élite qui se plie à des normes de courtoisie, de bienséance, de respect et de considération. Et il y a en contrepartie le langage populaire qui est caractérisé par les imprécations, injures et jurons, qui constitue le revers des louanges de la place publique. (...) des phénomènes tels que les grossièretés, les jurons, les obscénités sont les éléments non officiels du langage. Ils sont et étaient considérés comme une violation flagrante des règles normales du langage, comme un refus délibéré de se plier aux conventions verbales: étiquette, courtoisie, piété, considération, respect du rang. (Bakhtine, 1972, p. 190).*

It is important to project that Labou-Tansi employs all the theoretical elements on the carnivalesque mentioned above in deriding the two leaders (Martillimi Lopez and the Providential Guide) on the one hand, and Maman Nationale (Martillimi Lopez's mother) on the other. In the pages ahead, attempts shall be made to demonstrate the application of the theoretical elements mentioned above to the two character groups captured above. The analysis shall be pursued in three phases namely, *The Leadership Carnavalesqued by the Subaltern*, *The Leadership Subalternizes itself* and *Maman Nationale in Carnavalesque Mood*.

#### *Phase One: The Leadership Carnavalesqued by the Subaltern*

It is tempting to project that an even casual reading of *La Vie*, but particularly of *L'Etat*, cannot but make the reader feel that indeed Labou-Tansi has written about States plunged into shameful conditions as a result of undisciplined leadership, and therefore, the only way to write about producers of this shame is to use a language perverted in both syntactic and semantic terms. It is against this backdrop that one may argue further that the burlesque has a place in the struggle for relocation to a third locus. *L'Etat* is interspersed with a surfeit of foul language against the political establishment and everyone around it, thus creating the impression that the subaltern writer is really writing to herald a beyond, a third space beyond, where leaders must be mindful about moral rectitude. Right from the first sentence of the novel, the reader is warned that the biography is a stinger and has nothing in common with the glorification of a leader whom the writer probably believes has nothing in common with glory: "Voici l'histoire de mon-

colonel Martillimi Lopez fils de Maman Nationale, venu au monde en se tenant la hernie, parti de ce monde toujours en se la tenant...” (*L’Etat*, p. 7). It is perhaps important to underline at this point that “hernie” and “palalie”, two derogatory vocables employed to shame Martillimi Lopez, are present more than once in almost every page of the novel.

The early pages of *L’Etat*, it is also to be noted, contain a catalogue of unsavoury details not just to evoke the rustic origins of Martillimi Lopez –

*Nous le conduisîmes du village de Maman Nationale à la capitale où il n’était jamais venu avant, jamais de sa vie. (...) Nous étions tous sûrs que cette fois rien à faire nous aurions un bon président. Nous portions ses ustensiles de cuisine, ses vieux filets de pêche, ses machettes, ses hameçons, ses oiseaux de basse-cour, ses soixante et onze moutons, ses quinze lapins, son seau hygiénique, sa selle anglaise, ses trois caisses de moutarde Benedicta, ses onze sloughis, son quinquet, sa bicyclette, ses quinze arrosoirs, ses trois matelas, son arquebuse, ses claies...* (*L’Etat*, p. 8)

- but to also portray him as a complete ignoramus as is revealed in this dialogue between him and Carvanso:

- *Qu’est-ce que c’est?*
- *C’est la carte de la patrie monsieur le Président.*
- *Ah ! d’accord ! Et qu’est-ce que c’est que ces serpents bleus ?*
- *Les rivières monsieur le Président.*
- *Ah ! d’accord. Et ces serpenteaux ?*
- *Les routes nationales monsieur le Président.*
- *Et ces serpentements-ci ?*
- *Les frontières monsieur le Président. (L’Etat, p. 10)*

Conceivably, the first scenario is meant to remind Martillimi Lopez that, as an erstwhile peripheral citizen, it is not expected of him to be one of those leaders who will choose to be unmindful about the paramount task of upgrading the lives of the poor. It is equally conceivable that he is being reminded of his humble past in order to rebuke and ridicule him for what seems reasonable to construe as short memory on his part. What is more, it can be argued that it is in that conversation that Labou-Tansi is seen to have dented the image of Martillimi Lopez all the more, in that, a president is expected to know the country over whose political affairs he is presiding. The seemingly asinine questions he asks Carvanso, who functions more or less as a tourist guide to the Guide, magnifies the irony entailed in seeing an ignorant Martillimi Lopez arrogate to himself the status of a guide and a father of the nation.

It seems vital to further project that the humiliation and demoralization of Martillimi Lopez is taken to a baser level when the novelist hires the services of

Merline, a prophet endowed with extraordinary clairvoyance, as well as the power to cure all forms of illnesses and to unravel all forms of mysteries. As the narrative reveals, it is by virtue of these powers that he (Merline) is invited by Martillimi Lopez to his presidential palace not to cure his “hernie”, but to tell him what the future holds for him:

*Il lui montre mes sept kilos de testicules mais ce n'est pas pour cette raison que je t'ai fait venir, dis-moi plutôt comment les choses vont finir. (...) Tu auras ta case de fonction, ta voiture de fonction, tu auras un corps de fonction, et ta mère sera une maman de fonction. Mais dis-moi comment, quand et qui... ma hernie je ne veux pas qu'on m'en guérisse, je n'ai qu'elle au monde. (L'Etat, p. 94)*

On the balance of probabilities, the soothsayer, Merline, is expected to move to the camp of Martillimi Lopez in a hurry and not subject him to a four-tier prestige-depleting ordeal. First, he is made to bring a ten coustrani coin that seems to be out of circulation and which the enemy camp (the people) refuses to provide. Next, he is made to swallow the coin (when he eventually gets it from the bank) and bring it back later to Merline for the soothsaying activity to be done. Thirdly, he is made to fall into coma for two months after swallowing it; he is made to sniff and fiddle with his «merde puante» in search of the coin. And finally, he is made to purge his «hernie» thinking that the coin might have hidden itself there, yet, the coin does not resurface (*L'Etat*, pp. 95-99). It can be posited that the just-mentioned ordeals that Martillimi Lopez is made to undergo unarguably illustrate the degree and intensity of hatred and low esteem the people have for their president.

It is deemed vital to add that, in an effort to sustain the minimization of Martillimi Lopez, Merline makes him literally do what evangelists may term as “speaking in tongues”:

*Merci monsieur le Président, maintenant dites cinq cent fois la parole du prophète: “Coulchi, coulcha poumikanata”, ensuite vous direz autant de fois la réponse des dieux: “Kalmitana mahanomanchi lusata.” (L'Etat, p. 95)*

One might argue that the minimization is not so much in making the leader succumb to his (Merline) orders, but in the fact that he subjects him to a long-drawn repetition of apparent idiocies. By so doing, it can be further proposed, he succeeds in making Lopez an idiot, at least temporarily. The same can be said about the Guide when he is also made to speak in tongues, in a language that seems unintelligible to the reader:

*A la naissance de Patatra, le Guide Jean-Cœur-de-Père fit adopter par référendum une constitution à deux articles (...) Gronaniniata mésé boutouété taoutaou, moro metani bamanasar larani meta yelomanikatana. (La Vie, p. 28)*

By making the leadership speak in a language that probably no one understands apart from them, it can be projected that Labou-Tansi's leader characters have lost the power to make themselves relevant in the spaces they are ruling.

On a similar note, probably writing with the same objective of humiliating his presidential characters, Labou-Tansi evokes the rustic origin of the Providential Guide, a rustic origin stained with an ignominious practice as a former livestock thief. It is probably reasonable to assume that he presents him as a thief to suggest that once a thief, one will always be a thief, and therefore, he neither deserves the mantle of leadership nor does he deserve respect. More to that, it is tempting to suggest that individuals with skeletons in their cupboards may very likely condone evil and therefore not able to shepherd the masses to a third space where poverty and unemployment levels are seen dwindling; and where the gaping inequalities between the core and the periphery are also seen being attenuated.

The idea can be floated that the enlightened members of the society are aware of the incompetence and insincerity of the leadership and since it is not likely that such leaders can be put under gun point, they can at least be put under pen point. With this in mind, it can be speculated that Labou-Tansi buckles himself down anew to the business of annoying, degrading and unsettling the political leadership of the Central African space in *La Vie*. It can be argued that his surest weapon of leadership debasement is to burlesque their proclivity to lechery. This is noticed in the manner he paints the superlative virility of the Providential Guide; he does not just give him the power to have carnal knowledge of fifty virgins at a go, but to also have the power to impregnate all of them in that single go.

Traditional ethics demand that sex-related issues be treated as sublime and that the name should not even be mentioned crudely, particularly when this has to do with magnates in authority. Additionally, in societies of yesteryears matters of this nature are taboo topics for the subject. It is discovered that in *La Vie*, Labou-Tansi respects the second obligation and therefore chooses to refer to the act of love-making by the President of the Republic as "faire la chose-là" or "il y a match ce soir". In this way, it is observed that Labou-Tansi injects laughter into the sublime. But like Ayi Kwei Amah in *The Beautiful Ones Are not yet Born*, Labou-Tansi makes the burlesque appear to trespass propriety when he glosses it with a Juvenal veneer of vulgarity as can be seen in his portrayal of the Providential Guide as a leader that is incapable of managing his sexual cravings to the point of becoming insensitive to the presence of his guards:

*(...) et quand les reins du Guide avaient posé leur problème, on remplaçait les peaux-collants directs par des êtres du sexe d'en face, les gardes assistaient alors aux vertigineuses élucubrations charnelles du guide Providentiel exécutant sans cesse leur éternel va-et-vient au fond sonore aux clapotements fougueux des chairs dilatées. (La Vie, 1979, p. 20)*

Labou-Tansi also makes the Providential Guide appear as a leader who does not deserve respect because he apparently does not respect his obligation to portray himself as an expected paragon of morality. Thus, Labou-Tansi demonstrates the mental alertness to steadily minimize him in the eyes of the reader by injecting vulgarity into the burlesque. Demonstrably not being satisfied with his presentation of the Guide's natural endowment as an "énorme machine de procréation" (*La Vie*, p. 54), he buckles down to the task of giving details about the preparations the Guide undertakes for something Labou-Tansi probably considers frivolous:

*Le guide Henri-au-Cœur-Tendre voulut recevoir son épouse en mâle, et pas comme un mâle d'eau douce. (...) Des masseurs de talent le travaillaient: c'étaient deux Toubabes originaires de la puissance étrangère (...); on lava longuement sa bouche, on nettoya ses oreilles et ses narines, on vérifia tous les orifices. Il se débarrassa du poids de sa vessie, aéra son gros intestin pendant deux quarts d'heure. (La Vie, p. 125)*

The foregoing makes it tempting to posit that Labou-Tansi is determined to annihilate the fake aura of sanctity the Guide has been surrounded with. It is equally tempting to observe that Labou-Tansi is seen taking the punishment or demoralization of the Guide to another level by denying him the opportunity to consummate his relationship with Chaïdana like a "vrai mâle"<sup>2</sup> in spite of all the preparations captured above. Instead of receiving the diva of a Chaïdana whom he saw before the preparations, he is now made to see a ghost Chaïdana covered in blood. His debasement, it is observed, seems to be heightened when, out of fright, he runs out naked as done earlier by the original Providential Guide at the Hotel la Vie et Demie.

In view of the various humiliating episodes highlighted in this section, it is probably reasonable to suggest that when the subaltern speaks or writes to register disgust with the head of the local committee of rhinoceroses for having reduced the fictionalized Central African space to the shameful state in which it is, they do not just do so to annoy and degrade him, but also to render him increasingly abnormal. This probably explains why insults and other deprecatory forms of naming have been resorted to by the socio-economically deprived.

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that "mâle" is normally reserved for animals of lower rank.

*Phase Two: The Leadership Subalternizes itself*

This portion surveys the direct participation in and contribution made by the leadership apparatus to the carnivalesque. It is obvious that they do not in real life belong to the subaltern class but, as demand the principles of the carnivalesque such as captured above, the leadership is momentarily “subalternized”, that is, they voluntarily reduce themselves to subaltern status or are reduced to it. What this means is that, people of a “noble cast” are seen exhibiting a behaviour that is not in keeping with their social standing.

It can be argued that the burlesque (in carnivalesque terms) in Labou-Tansi’s works further strikes a chord with Mikhaïl’s cogitations particularly in regard to the liberty enjoyed by the author – who belongs and speaks on behalf of the outcasts of the Congolese society under review – to punish the people in the topmost echelon of society’s ladder. Minimal elements of this have already been seen above where the world is turned upside down, thus making the objects assume authority to transform the subject leader into a helpless obedient object. While in the previous component, the task of deriding the leader is undertaken by the followers, it is crucial to note that the current component aims at exhibiting how the leader participates in the destruction of the honour reserved for people of his category.

On repeated occasions, the mighty are made to fall by having them participate in the carnivalesque. Martillimi Lopez participates in a mud-smearing feast and renders himself completely unrecognizable or perhaps identical with his subjects but in ridiculous terms (*L’Etat*, pp. 42-49). He even animates the carnival by acting as the lead vocalist, and sings the refrain, together with his disgruntled youth, of a song that aims at ruining his prestige:

*Si j’étais une petite souris  
j’irais creuser dans sa grasse hernie  
si j’étais un petit petit chat  
j’irais chasser dans sa hernie  
si j’étais une petite petite chique  
je choisirais sa hernie ... (p. 42)*

His prestige seems to be ruined not only by the words he pronounces, but by the observation that “sa lourde machine se balance dans sa musette au rythme de [la] cadence” (*L’Etat*, p. 42), a description repeated in *La Vie* as “son énorme machine de procréation” (p. 34). There is probably no gainsaying the point that the song is reminiscent of the raï music, a syncretized brand of music combining “elements of western rock, disco, and jazz, and West African music, together with songs from such spaces as Latin America and Bollywood – a range of sources that

has no formal limit (Young, 2003, p. 73), created by the Algerian adolescent found at the periphery of society, who lives in deprived conditions of poverty, poor housing, and unemployment. It is observed, that the said adolescents have been able to make themselves heard in a significant way about the injustices brought to bear on them by the French as well as by their traditional leaders. It can further be argued that in keeping with carnivalesque principles, the debasement is taken to another appalling level by having Martillimi Lopez himself deal a twist of the knife in his own rotten vitals. Conceivably, there is no need to employ the services of a Kim Chi Ha who, backing his words with concrete action, will not hesitate to do the same against people-in-power, including their legions of obedient cogs (Berrigan, 1977, p. 21).

More significantly, he is made to demonstrate a high sense of camaraderie with his otherwise inferior Others, in that, even after being gravely injured – prestige-wise – by “un gaillard bien musclé [qui] le renverse dans la glaise” (*L’Etat*, p. 43), he does not take umbrage.

It is perhaps useful to add that like Martillimi Lopez, the Providential Guide temporarily abandons his status as leader to mingle with the common people in a musical jamboree. Apparently, Labou-Tansi does not use the occasion to increase the value of the Guide in the eyes of the people, but rather, to devalue him. This is what is evidenced when, after making himself crowned as the “plus grand poète de son temps” for having written a poem that could best be classified as verbiage, the Guide joins the band of the famous musician, Mapou-Anchia:

*L’orchestre perdit son prestige en deux mois du fait que le guide Jean-Cœur-de-Père voulut chanter tous les morceaux avec sa voix qui donnait plutôt à rire et son physique maltraitant qui lui valut son petit nom de Jean Baleine. (La Vie, p. 127)*

The episodes above seem to bolster the argument that the people can be taken in for quite a number of times but once the frequency attains unacceptable limits and they become deeply disillusioned, no show of camaraderie by the leader can have them see him in positive light.

It is a truism that when important people associate themselves with a ceremony, the expectation is for them to add grandeur to such a ceremony or “to grace the occasion», as is often expressed. But the argument Labou-Tansi probably intends to advance is that, when the activities of such important people lead them to a significant drop in prestige, whatever they do is interpreted by the public as shameful and that they only remain important as objects of ridicule. Thus, instead of “gracing” occasions, they disgrace them. And as Bakhtin makes it obvious, praises will give way to obscenities.

Apparently, in keeping with another principle of the carnivalesque that entails having noble characters resort to the use of a language that is inconsistent with their social standing, both Martillimi Lopez and the Providential Guides are made to lock horns with their subjects in a battle of invectives. Lopez demonstrates this voluntary moral fall in so many ways. He is, in fact, seen ignoring the etiquettes of his class when he brazenly declares, “il faut hurler avec les loups” (*L’Etat*, p. 135). In demonstrating this, he issues out a barrage of vituperative pronouncements against his subaltern or inferior tormentors. If he is not heard promising vengeance on his underground subaltern torturers in dirty language: “[p]endant six mois la ville est envahie par ce caca de vos mamans mais moi je me vengerai” (pp. 86-7), he is heard openly insulting a pleading victim: “[c]’est trop tard nom d’un bordel” (p. 88); if he is not heard berating his incompetent soldiers in crude language: [m]ais qu’est-ce que foutent les tirailleurs? (...) Mais je comprends: au lieu de garder la patrie, ils montent les femmes. Maintenant vous me consommerez comme vous m’avez foutu ... (pp. 89-90) or “Que de cons : vous êtes tous des cons : les militaires, les civils, tous. Dans ce pays il n’y a que ma hernie qui raisonne” (p. 103) ; if he is not seen arguing with his subordinates: “Icuzo national quelle hernie t’a piqué : tu me parles comme tu parles à tes femmes” (p. 90), he is seen disguising himself as an Arab (together with Vauban, probably his aide de corps) trading tantrums with one of his subjects over a woman:<sup>3</sup> “Tu veux te mesurer à ma hernie? d’accord: comme tu voudras” (p. 134). It is vital to note that a similar exhibition of sleazy behaviour is put up by the Providential Guide, although not comparable in frequency to that of Martillimi Lopez. For instance, in a fit of apoplexy over the foreign envoy’s inability to understand his coded speech, Jean Coriace explodes: “Ne me forcez pas à croire que dans les vieux pays, les ministres sont de vieux cons qui ne comprennent pas.” (*La Vie*, p. 179)

The self-debasement of the leadership, particularly of Lopez, is capped with the confessions he makes. He is made to repeatedly denounce the actions of his predecessors, arguably with the intention of increasing his leverage. To demonstrate his “patience”, for instance, a quality he is not known for in the work, he will castigate Darbanso and Manuel Lansio as follow:

*Faites vite! ah si j’étais Darbanso qui vous fusillait pour un oui ou pour un non! si j’étais Manuel Lansio qui en faisait cuire deux pour être sûr que le troisième va s’y*

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<sup>3</sup> Specifically over the beautiful dancer and wife of late Yambo-Yambi whom he killed in order to possess her.

*mettre! mais je suis un bon président et vous en profitez pour entrer dans mes culottes (L'Etat, p. 39).*

Further to this, he denies being Alto Maniania who hangs his victims like monkeys or Sardosso Banda or Manuêlo de Salamatar whom he portrays as sanguinary leaders (p. 40); he denies being Dimitri Lamonso whom he berates for taking the capital to his mother's village (p. 52); or Lazo Lorenzo whom he accuses of coercing the people of Yam-Yoko to support his yellow party (p. 52). He denies being Lan Domingo whom he accuses of embezzling state funds (p. 52); or Cornez Caracho whom he besmirches for his homosexual inclinations (p. 52). He denies being like the other presidents on the other side of the river whom he accuses of sleeping with the wives of his ministers (p. 56); or like Sarnio Lampourta whom he condemns for revelling in alcohol and cannabis (p. 70). He denies being like Dartanio Maniania whom he blames for leaving the country insolvent owing to his indulgence in hedonistic pursuits (p. 70). He rejects being like Tistano Rama or Larabinto whom he condemns for entrusting power with unintelligent successors (p. 75); or like Zalo "qui donnait des ordres par le cul" (p. 80).<sup>4</sup> He denies being Toutanso "qui a mis tout le pognon de la patrie en Suisse (p. 107)»; or Carlos Dantès "qui a tué la moitié de la tribu des Khas" in just two years of rule. He denies being Tonso, Matos, Juarioni or Dartanio Diaz whom he accuses of pandering to the whims and caprices of Western powers. To cite one more case of denunciation of his predecessors, he denies being Luis de Lamoundia whom he accuses of taking the country as his personal property (p. 148).

It is vital to posit that the decision to draw this elaborate canvas of examples stems from the importance of understanding the magnitude of the human and economic damage the Congo space has been plunged into. The irony surrounding the various disclosures, basing one's argument on his (Martillimi Lopez) actions, is that, he is just as guilty as he has charged his predecessors. The narrative demonstrates that he incarnates all the attributes he has imputed to his predecessors, plus more others. Thus, he is seen validating the argument that politicians do not always mean what they say. For it is observed that in repeated fits of apoplexy, he is quick to exterminate the lives of his victims in the most horrendous manner. And apparently, by seeing Lopez boasting "toujours de ses 37 ans au pouvoir sans tuer une mouche" (p. 131), he unwittingly burlesques himself. Additionally, by directly revealing or confessing to their shortcomings, he

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<sup>4</sup> Pronouncements made before this make it tempting to assume that he is talking about not being prepared to embark on anal sex.

becomes his own Kim Chi-Ha and deals a twist of the knife in his own rotten vitals, to echo the words of Berrigan (1977, p. 21).

Additionally, based on the episodes of sexual obsession by the leadership adduced in the two works, it can be posited that Labou-Tansi seems to be intent on presenting leaders in the Congolese space as non-starters and absolute cases of failure. This seems to be unequivocally demonstrated in the case of the Martillimi Lopez who, in the middle of presumably serious matters, will stray into rhapsodies over the beauty and succulence of women. If he is not seen fetishizing one young lady as “Flora et la Joconde réunies” (*L’Etat*, p. 27), or as “belle comme quatre” (p. 141), he would evoke the intoxicating and incendiary capacity of others: “cette fille est *terrific* (...) elle incendie tes boyaux” (p. 81) or, “mon Dieu comme elle est belle. Elle me chauffe les entrailles. Elle allume mon sang” (p. 102). And if he is not heard singing or reciting panegyric poetry about one (p. 102), he would extoll the unmatched voluptuousness of another: “Qu’est-ce qu’elle est belle nom de Dieu qu’est-ce qu’elle est charnue” (p. 113). It is observed that he does not stop at making adulatory pronouncements about his divas; he also endeavors to consummate his cravings, to borrow Platon’s expression (Pascal, 1986, p. 11).

And, arguably, it can be projected that the economically wasteful part of Lopez’ hedonistic pursuit attains its apogee when, right in Paris, he does what follows in pursuit of a white whore trying to run away from him:

*Il la poursuit en pyjama, avec son inséparable mallette de billets (...). Reviens! Ils arrivent au marché aux fleurs et alors qu’il allait l’attraper il est tombé et cette vieille chipie lui barre la route parce que monsieur vous allez me les payer! il ouvre sa mallette et lui lance un gros billet entre tes dents gâtées. Il veut la rattraper mais monsieur tu vas me les payer et encore et encore.*

*Bon d’accord je vous achète votre marché et ne m’emmerdez plus, il leur lance des billets partout, mais laissez-moi la rattraper. Lopez de maman tout fleuri cette fois mais ma belle sois bonne après ce bouillon de billets au marché de leurs mamans. (Ibidem, p. 154)*

Conspicuous in the above is the syntactic havoc Labou-Tansi resorts to arguably with the intention of depicting Lopez as a human mistake. Also conspicuous in it is his penchant to financial wastefulness. On account of the foregoing, it is crucial to argue that beyond the surrealist presentation of the episode, the reader is expected to be more interested in its symbolic representation, which is, diverting the Congolese riches to the opulent North, but specifically Paris.

*Phase Three: Maman Nationale in Carnavalesque Mood*

*Fou du roi, folle à la marotte, dervé, histrion, jongleur, sot, bouffon, Zanni de la commedia dell'arte, Arlequin, Scapin, Pierrot, saltimbanque, clown: de nombreux visages comiques désignent sur scène celui qui possède le "savoir-faire rire." Néanmoins, malgré son inépuisable réserve de costumes et d'accoutrements fantasques, définir le bouffon est une entreprise difficile. A l'origine, ce mot remonte à l'italien buffone dont la racine buffo signifie comique. Il semble qu'on accepte donc le bouffon en tant que masque comique, comme on accepte Arlequin, Sganarelle ou Polichinelle. Le public ne se pose pas de questions sur son état civil, sa biographie ou sa situation familiale ou sociale: sa présence suffit et sa grimace rassure. Le bouffon est là sur scène pour faire rire: il est le ressort comique de la comédie. (Buchler, 2003, p. 1)*

It is deemed imperative to reproduce Buchler's words in the above epigraph as are used in the opening chapter (*Le carnavalesque, le dialogisme, la ménipée*) of her thesis for they seem to perfectly mesh with Labou-Tansi's carnavalesque treatment of Martillimi Lopez' mother, Maman Nationale. It is also probably pertinent to observe that when the disillusioned subaltern writes or speaks, they go to unimaginable lengths to render the humiliation of the people-in-power total. Thus, it can be projected that in the deconstruction and reconstruction of the leadership image in the Central African space, Labou-Tansi knows no sacred cows. Otherwise stated, no one that has an organic link with the leadership is exempted from embarrassment. It is observed that this has been the fate of Martillimi Lopez' mother, Maman Nationale, who, in the audit of the masses, should be smeared with the dirty paint remaining in Labou-Tansi's carnival brush for being the biological source of the apparent misfortune that the peripheral populations are dealing with.

Thus, in addition to quibbling over, singing and jibing at the president's "hernie", his mother receives an avalanche of opprobrious treatments from the people. The people openly "insultent Maman Nationale qui [leur] a donné un fils aussi honteux, Maman Nationale qui fornique au lieu de considérer son âge" (*L'Etat*, p. 42). Conceivably, what may be estimated as a transgression of the bounds of propriety is when Maman Nationale is burlesqued as a mentally deranged person displaying acts unbecoming of a president's mother:

*Maman folle nationale chante les chansons de chez nous. Elle imite les bêtes. Elle jette ses pagnes à la face de son fils: que je te montre d'où tu es venu. Maman! Elle se calme. Et plus personne ne se souvient qu'elle est folle. Sauf à cette heure du diner ou elle met sa patte dans son plat. (L'Etat, p. 100)*

The above presentation of the president's mother, not just as an individual incapable of observing moral values but also as a clownish mad woman, makes it

tempting to assume that the president's mood will be vacillating between anger and shame for having a mother that seems to be irreversibly out to compound the already catastrophic situation he is made to live in by the followership.

Arguably, the carnivalesque attains its paroxysm when, as typical of carnivals during the Medieval period or the Middle Ages, the mad person is brought on stage not just to amuse the other participants, but to deliver the keynote address where the source of the social conflict between the followership and the leadership is exposed as Buchler summarizes: "Le bouffon au théâtre n'est pas seulement un masque comique, comme il a été si souvent défini, mais au contraire un personnage clé qui sert à cristalliser l'esprit de contestation du moment historique" (2003, p. 19). It is crucial to observe that this is what is made evident in *L'Etat* when the general's wives (Armando Liz Agonashi, Sobra Ikesse, Laura Paltès, Lavinia, Flaura Nantès, Mryama...), revenging themselves on Maman Nationale for the sexual abuse they suffer from her son (*L'Etat*, p. 108), they momentarily transform her into a mad woman. It is observed that the burlesque is injected into the carnivalesque when the wives of the generals evidently transgress ethical boundaries; they do not just kidnap Maman Nationale, but they also dress her in military gadgets, make her sing and dance, have her wash their dirty menstrual linen and above all, examine "le chemin qui a donné un fils aussi honteux" and make her deliver the keynote address to narrate the "shameful history of her son" (*L'Etat*, pp. 108-109).

It is vital to note that what has been labelled as transgression above is, in fact, in keeping with the carnivalesque spirit such as is expounded by Bakhtine. Labou-Tansi's peculiarity however seems to reside in the decision to punish the Congolese nobility twice: he subalternizes this class and at the same time chooses a key figure from among them to deliver the satirical speech which, in medieval carnival festivals, was done by someone from the abused class. It is tempting to argue that selecting someone from an inferior social class to play the role of the buffoon might not generate the right volume of anger and madness Labou-Tansi wants to see his victim in. This argument is validated by the reaction of Martillimi Lopez when, livid, he makes the probably mad decision of subjecting his culprits to a sexual punishment: "Il fait venir six cent tirailleurs six cent d'entre nous les travailleurs du palais et pour laver ma honte je vous en prie, là, devant moi, dormez-moi ces chiennes. Chauffez-les à blanc: je vous donne une semaine." (p. 110).

Departing from the observation that Le Guide Providentiel and Martillimi Lopez seem to have attained incorrigibility, and that they now seem to be

impervious to reason, Labou-Tansi's resort to verbal violence against them can be considered appropriate. Its possible appropriateness stems from the argument that in a system where orthodox checks and balances are absent, unorthodox verbal violence can be used by the disembedded followership to fill this gap. It seems pertinent to close this essay by positing that Labou-Tansi's use of the carnivalesque to deride the pitfalls of the leadership can be considered successful in that it produced the desired degree of disturbance in the minds of his political victims. That is to say, although he uses Spanish names for his characters, and writes in fictional terms, he was in real life denied the opportunity by state authorities to travel out of his country to seek for a cure to the illness that he eventually died from. This reaction by state authorities consolidates the speculation that although the carnivalesque cannot overthrow bad governments or create the right impetus for the derided leadership to immediately accept relocating to a third space of freedom and prosperity for all, the future leadership of the Labou-Tansi's space might not indulge in degrading acts for fear of being torn apart by the pens of organic intellectual writers.

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# Women's Suffrage Movements Around the World

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## **Abstract**

*Comparing and contrasting different countries on each continent, the article explores the history of women's suffrage. Initially, the leading opinion was that women's influence in political life should come through the men in their lives and it must happen behind closed doors. Gradually, we see more countries turning to the idea that women can have direct action in politics and that they can participate in public life in a variety of roles. We present the history of women's suffrage around the world, focusing on women's roles and their relationship to suffrage.*

**Keywords:** *right to vote, history of women's suffrage, women's movements.*

## *Introduction*

The chance to vote and participate in politics is closely aligned with the fundamental values of liberty, equality, and democracy. The association of political participation with these important values has encouraged the extension over the years of the right to vote as well as the effectiveness of political protests. The right of women to vote is a matter of fact today, but at the time when it was proposed it was a revolutionary demand. Women's organizations have worked hard all over the world to gain access to the political system.

This article aims to present the history of women's suffrage around the world. I intend to provide a broad overview of the debates surrounding the topic, focusing on women's roles and their relationship to suffrage. The United States, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, France, Poland, India, Saudi Arabia, Cameroon, Liberia, Australia and New Zealand are inspiring case studies for the evolution of women's franchise on each continent. They embraced different approaches to voting regulation and thus, constitute an interesting sample for case comparison through the method of difference.

*United States*

When the United States of America was establishing itself as a new nation, the framers of the Constitution did not “remember the ladies<sup>1</sup>,” and actively sought to exclude women from political participation in national and state legislatures.<sup>2</sup> Women were pushed into the domestic sphere with few rights as “citizens” of this new nation. Despite this, they still found ways to be present in the public sphere, particularly through the Abolitionist Movement.

Within the American Anti-Slavery Society, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton became leading figures in the fight to end slavery, but were limited by their gender. In 1840, after experiencing discrimination at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, these women were motivated to place their efforts in women’s suffrage. Many historians mark the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention as the origin of the Women’s Suffrage movement in the United States. Other essential figures, including Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Sojourner Truth, would soon join the national suffrage movement, giving speeches around the country advocating for federal legislation granting women the right to vote.

The Civil War (1860-1865) and the following years caused some division, in part due to the 15th Amendment, which granted U.S citizens the right to vote regardless of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Both Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony rejected this because it did not include gender, therefore still allowing women to be excluded from the right to vote. In 1869, the same year the 15th Amendment was ratified, the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association were founded by the two factions. Suffragists began to focus on state legislation, specifically looking westward, inspired by the territory of Wyoming, which had just granted suffrage to women. Over the remaining course of the nineteenth century, American suffragists also took tactics from their English counterparts, who were starting to use more militant tactics. They saw success in several Western territories and states, and by 1896 Colorado, Idaho, Utah had all also granted women full suffrage. After uniting in 1889, the National American Woman Suffrage Association attracted more and more women, particularly those involved with other social movements like temperance and child welfare. By 1912,

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<sup>1</sup> Famously, in a letter to her husband, John Adams, Abigail Adams asked him to “remember the ladies” when establishing laws in the newly independent country. He viewed these sentiments as a joke.

<sup>2</sup> The distinction between federal and state in the United States is essential to understanding how Women’s Suffrage would develop and eventually succeed.

under the leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt, NAWSA decided to press for a national amendment once again. It had been sixteen years after either chamber in Congress issued a report on women's suffrage. They used mass media (newspapers, pamphlets, etc.) and other publicity like marches, picketing, and publicity stunts to gain the attention of the country. The largest of these events was the 1913 Woman Suffrage Procession in Washington, the day before President Wilson's inauguration.

Some more "radical" suffragists led by Alice Paul split and formed another organization, the National Women's Party. These "suffragettes" would picket in front of the White House, commit civil disobedience, and go on hunger strikes.<sup>3</sup> These actions would lead to "The Night Terror," a crucial turning point for national opinion. Alice Paul and 30 other women picketing Wilson at the White House were arrested and detained at Occoquan work camp where they received physical mistreatment, including force-feeding through tubes, and lived in filthy rat-infested conditions.<sup>4</sup> Finally after seven months, on November 14th the inmates requested better treatment only to be met with fierce brutality. These events gained the suffrage movement sympathy and support across the country. Both political parties publicly announced support, and even Wilson announced his support, citing women's participation in WWI as reason.<sup>5</sup> The national amendment passed by two votes in the House of Representatives in January 1918, only to come one vote short in the Senate. The following year, a second attempt easily won both the House and the Senate. Over the next several months, three-fourths of state legislatures needed to ratify the amendment. The final battle came down to the Tennessee state legislature, which was passed by one vote. Harry Burns, a young representative, had received a strongly worded telegraph from his mother urging him to vote in favor of Women's Suffrage. On August 26th, 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment was signed into law.

This was a huge victory for Women's rights; however it is important to acknowledge that the Women's Suffrage was focused on upper and middle class white women. Black suffragists, such Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, and Nannie Helen Burroughs, often faced discrimination from white movement leaders, prompting the creation of the National Association of Colored

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<sup>3</sup> Suffragette, a term originally coined in England, was meant to belittle/demean female suffragists were seen as troublesome and unladylike. These women embraced the term instead.

<sup>4</sup> Officials at the prison tried to get Alice Paul declared legally insane, so she could be indefinitely detained at a sanitarium.

<sup>5</sup> Wilson was the target of much of the suffragette's picketing, referring to him as "Kaiser Wilson".

Women (NACW) in 1896. These women also deserve remembrance in the fight for equality. Unfortunately, it would not be until the Voting Rights Act in 1965, Black women would receive full franchise.

### *Canada*

Prior to 1885, in Canada suffrage was, under the British North America Act, in the hands of the provinces. Back then, the right to vote was restricted to white males only. The Women's Suffrage Movement became prominent in the late 19th century. This struggle was led by white, middle-class women who saw suffrage in terms of class rather than gender. Among the earliest supporters of women's suffrage were black abolitionists and socialists who, similarly to the US, saw their opportunity to further their cause.

Unlike the suffrage movement in the US and the UK, Canadian women embraced peaceful means of protesting. Only a very small minority followed the likes of Emmeline Pankhurst and the suffragettes by using violence. By the early 1900s, some propertied women had been granted the right to vote in the municipal council and school board elections

The first provincial victory for women took place in Manitoba. Among the leaders of the movement in Manitoba were author Nellie McClung and Margret Benedictsson. Through the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Political Equality League, they fundraised, protested and petitioned for an extension of voting rights. Finally, after submitting a petition with 40,000 signatures, the Political Equality League (which included both men and women) succeeded in amending the Manitoba Elections Act.

Soon after Manitoba, the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta followed suit, experiencing pressure from women's movements such as the WCTU and the farmers' movement. Though both groups wanted suffrage for women, the WCTU saw it as a way to enforce prohibition while the farmers' movement saw it as a basic democratic right. Despite the initiative taken by the different provinces, all women were not given the right to vote in federal elections until 1951.

In 1917, the federal government granted WWI nurses and the relatives of military personnel only the right to vote. Later on, in 1940, Québec was the last province to give women the right to vote. Asian women wouldn't be allowed to vote until 1948 and indigenous women until 1951.

*Mexico*

It is believed that the Women's Suffrage Movement in Mexico gained prominence during the late 19th century, as evidenced by the creation of *Las Violetas del Anahuac*, the first feminist magazine. The suffrage movement in Mexico took the center stage during the Mexican Revolution. This period of political turmoil and instability allowed women to take on an important role in society, and as a consequence to demand for their fair share in society.

The first General Women's Gathering to discuss the issue of suffrage took place in Yucatan (located in Southeastern Mexico) in 1916. During this Congress, Women demanded equality, education and citizenship. As a result of the First Feminist Congress, women were granted the right to vote in Yucatan in 1923 and Elvia Carrillo became the first Mexican woman elected to the local congress. However, she was forced to resign soon after due to political and social pressure. The political pressure to grant women the right to vote kept increasing, however, and several Mexican presidents took initiative to carry the policy forward. In 1937, Lázaro Cárdenas promoted a policy that would grant women full citizenship and got it passed by both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, yet it was never enacted or published.

In 1946, Miguel Alemán would seek to amend the constitution in order to grant women the right to vote in municipal elections. However, by this time there was an enormous pressure to grant women suffrage in federal elections. It was finally Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, who ran under the premise of extending suffrage to women, that fulfilled his campaign promise and granted all Mexican women the right to vote in 1953.

*Argentina*

During the 1800s, the Argentine elite ruled the country virtually unopposed. This monopoly over the government was, in part, due to electoral fraud and an antiquated voting system. In 1912, Argentine president Roque Sáenz Peña passed a bill making the voting process secret and mandatory for all men aged 18 and older. Though the Sáenz Peña law excluded women from voting, a suffrage movement demanding equality under the law had begun to consolidate.

Alicia Moreau de Justo, a college graduate with a medical degree and later wife to former Argentine president Juan B. Justo, founded in 1907 the Committee for Women's Suffrage.

Julieta Lanteri, an Italian-Argentina physician, was another one of the early women pushing for voting rights. In 1911, arguing that she met all the

requirements for suffrage, she became the first woman to vote in South America. Later on, during the 1919 elections, she would run for deputy under the party Feminist Nacional Union. She received 1700 votes (all from men). Thanks to women like Moreau, Lanteri, and Elvira Rawson the societal pressure to extend suffrage to women continued to increase. However, during times of political instability all proposals were rejected or ignored.

Finally, during Juan Domingo Peron's first term in office, the national government passed the law granting all women the same political rights and obligations that men had. It was Peron's second wife, Evita, who would address the crowd on September 23rd, 1947 to make the news public.

### *Brazil*

The Feminist/Women's Suffrage Movement in Brazil was heavily influenced by similar movements taking place abroad. One of those movements was the one happening in the United States, with the ratification of the 19th amendment in 1920. The Women's Suffrage Movement in Brazil differs from the ones in the United States and the United Kingdom in that the latter was propelled by mass movements and protests.

In Brazil, the Women's Suffrage Movement was led by elite white women and is famously known as "well behaved feminism". This term comes from the sharp distinction in Brazilian society at the time between the public and domestic spheres. Brazilian society believed that the role of women was in the home, and that allowing women to vote would affect their ability to perform their domestic duties. Another fear in Brazilian society was that giving women the right to vote would result simply in duplicating the vote of their husbands.

This widely accepted notions heavily influenced the movement, as women approached the movement with the ultimate objective of proving that the right to vote would not affect their domestic life. A key figure in the Brazilian Women's Suffrage Movement was Bertha Lutz, a biologist and human rights activist. Lutz became a famous figure for the Pan American feminist movement and led the push for change in Brazil and elsewhere. Like in many other places, the first places to grant women the right to vote were states or local municipalities. In 1927, Rio Grande do Norte amended its election laws allowing women to vote.

A year later, the municipality of Lajes elected a female mayor. The movement's first major victory came in 1932, when president Getulio Vargas signed a new electoral code allowing women to vote. Although this was a huge step in the right direction, the 1932 electoral code still restricted women's

## *Women's Suffrage Movements Around the World*

participation in political life. This new code allowed married women to vote only with permission from their husband, or (for widowed women) if they had property. It was finally in 1945 when women were granted equal political rights to those of males.

### *France*

The French Revolution was one of the most influential events of the 18th century. In a nutshell, it brought the ideals of liberty, freedom and equality under the law to the forefront of French society. One of the outcomes of the French Revolution was the establishment of universal male suffrage briefly in the 1790s and later on in 1848 during the second French revolution. These revolutionary republic ideals, however, left women out of the picture.

The earliest Women's Suffrage Movements in France began in the 1830s, as women advocated for equal political rights. Early on, the arguments for women's suffrage varied. From the advantages of having maternal and nurturing participants in public life, to the need to outlaw alcohol, prevent wars and eliminate slums. The most famous Women's associations of the 20th century include the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWFA), created in 1904. And the Union Française pour le Suffrage des Femmes (UFSF)

The Women's suffrage movement in France was considerate moderate and significantly less militant than the movements in the US and the UK. Women's goal was to earn the right to vote solely through legal means. Within the UFSF, and the greater suffrage movement, some French women disagreed over who should get the right to vote. While a minority argued for a restricted vote for middle-class, educated women, a majority supported the idea of universal female suffrage.

The outbreak of WWI in 1914 saw the UFSF, and women in general, take a step back and support the war effort. Their work was vital in the fight against Germany and its allies. Yet after the war was over, the Senate blocked a bill that would have granted women the right to vote in 1919. Time and time again, throughout the 1920s & 30s, bills were introduced to the Chamber of Deputies and blocked by the senate. The outbreak of World War II saw the UFSF pause its activities and the movement dissipate. However, the effort continued after the conflict (though the UFSF was dismantled in 1945). After the expulsion of Germany from France, the new Government of General Charles de Gaulle granted women the right to vote in 1944.

### *Poland*

The story of Polish women and the right to vote must be understood in the context of Poland's political development. Throughout most of its history, Poland was occupied and ruled by outside powers. This occupation came in the form of partitions, as outside power would split the territory apart and claim different parts of it. Despite the oppression that Polish nationalists suffered, a Polish national sentiment survived centuries of external control. It was finally following WWI in 1918 that Poland was able to combine three of its territories and form a cohesive and independent state.

The role of women in Poland dates back to the years of revolution and fighting against occupants. The earliest Women's Suffrage Movement in Poland was mainly propelled by the desire to grant women access to education. Many Polish suffragettes organized underground schools for women. The fight for Political rights came alongside access to education and better pay. In fact, many Women fought for their rights at the same time that they fought to become an independent state. Some of the most influential Women in Polish history include suffragist Maria Dulebianka, and famous physicist Marie Curie. After Poland gained its independence in 1918, all women were granted the right to vote.

### *India*

The Women's Suffrage Movement in India, like many others around the world, was influenced heavily by the movements in the UK, as well as others. As the movement in Great Britain became more prominent, two English women of Indian heritage became key catalysts. These were Sophia Singh & Madam Bhikaji, two women that would influence many others to fight for the right to vote. The Women's movement in India coincided with the national struggle for independence from the British. During this conflict, women were relegated to smaller roles such as local protests and support of their male relatives. However, the movement took a giant leap forward in 1917 with the creation of the Women's India Association which brought Women's issues to the forefront of Indian political society.

It was in 1919 that things started to turn for women, as the British passed the Government of India Act. Though this act did not give women the right to vote, it gave provincial legislatures the agency to choose. By 1930, some women were allowed to vote and stand for legislative elections. In 1935, the movement earned a new victory with the passing of the second Government of India Act. This act gave wives and widows of male voters the ability to vote, along with women with literary qualifications. Though this greatly expanded the number of women

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allowed to vote, the number remained relatively small. By the 1940s, Women's Suffrage was a major political issue in India & with independence from Great Britain in 1950 came universal suffrage for all adults regardless of sex.

### *Saudi Arabia*

The story of Women's Suffrage in Saudi Arabia is quite peculiar. We are used to referring to the 20th century as the time period were women finally gained the right to vote and become equal (in theory) to men under the law. However, this does not apply to all countries around the globe. Saudi Arabia is one of those exceptions

The restricted role of women in the social and political life of Saudi Arabia has been heavily influenced by the country's political and religious context. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932 following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Since its creation, the country has been ruled by an autocratic and hereditary monarchy propelled by the alliance between Ibn abd Al- Wahhab & Muhammad bin Saud. The most well-known restrictions for women include the inability to drive and vote.

Informally, there has been a Women's movement in Saudi Arabia since the 1960s, however, many historians argue that this movement became prominent in the 1990. During that year, a group of 47 women went driving and broke the country's law that forbids them from doing so. This rebellious act brought the issue of women's role to center stage. In 2011, after many years of demanding political rights, Women were granted the right to vote by King Abdullah. In 2015, women voted for the first time in municipal elections. Many activists and outside observers believe that this act sent an incredibly powerful message to Saudi society and will lead to further change.

### *Cameroon*

The Women's Suffrage Movement in Cameroon, as in much of Africa, has been heavily influenced and impacted by the continent's history of imperialism. Cameroon was originally "colonized" by Germany in the late 19th century and exploited for its banana, cocoa, and rubber plantations. Following Germany's defeat in WWI, Cameroon came under French and British joint control. This was one of the many "mandate territories" of the League of Nations.

French Cameroon consisted of almost all of the territory previously controlled by the Germans while the British claimed a small part in Western Cameroon bordering Nigeria. The Women's Suffrage movement in French

Cameroon was heavily influenced by the French law that granted women the right to vote in 1944. This raised several questions and sparked debates on Women's right to vote outside of continental France. The expansion of suffrage in Cameroon took place from 1946 to 1956.

In 1946, French authorities in Africa granted male and female "évolués" the right to vote. This meant that only individuals such as chiefs, ministers, civil servants, etc could vote. At that time, very few women could access such positions. Later on in 1947, France extended suffrage to all those inhabitants who were literate in French or Arabic. Once again, few women met these requirements due to the restrictions on education. Another expansion to suffrage took place in 1951 where all heads of households, taxpayers and mothers of at least 2 children were allowed to vote. This significantly increased the number of female voters. Finally in 1956, with the passing of the loi-cadre, all adults 21 and older were granted the right to vote.

British Cameroon took a slightly different path to Women's Suffrage. Prior to the passing of any British law regarding Women's right to vote, the participation of these in politics varied across the board. In some communities only men were allowed to vote, others restricted this right to taxpaying women, and some others appointed a few women to councils. Despite this "autonomy", few women participated of the political process across the territory. In 1957, the British authorities adopted the Southern Cameroons Electoral Regulations which indicated that women could vote and stand for election. This act also created a category within the legislature that was filled by one women appointee.

### *Liberia*

In 1822, the American Colonization Society began sending freed slaves from the United States to the territory now known as Liberia. The arrival of the former slaves created tension with the native population, and the "Americo-Liberians" mainly intermarried. Soon after, in 1847, the Americo-Liberians declared independence and established a system of modern slavery with the native population. Following the end of World War II, Liberia began a serious modernization effort funded mainly by the US. It also became more involved in International Affairs and was one of the founding members of the United Nations.

In 1946, the Liberian Government amended the previously adopted Constitution and granted all women the right to vote. Despite this victory for Liberian Women, the latter half of the 20th century was marked by political turmoil and military violence. The first Liberian Civil War lasted until 1997 and

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the Second Civil War spanned from 1999 to 2003. After the end of the Civil War, a strong Women's Movement was created led by Nobel Prize Laureate Leymah Gbowee. This group of women launched non-violent protests and demanded peace and an end to human rights violations. In 2005, during the first post-conflict elections, Liberians elected the first female president in all of Africa.

### *Australia*

In 1902, the Australian Parliament passed the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 law enabling women (except those who were “aboriginal natives”) to vote. Women’s suffrage in Australia was one of the earliest objectives of the movement for gender equality in Australia.

It began to be socially and politically accepted and legislated during the late 19th century, beginning with South Australia in 1894 and Western Australia in 1899.

In 1902, the newly established Australian Parliament passed the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902, which set a uniform law enabling women (except those who were “aboriginal natives” of Australia, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Islands, unless excepted under section 41 of the constitution) to vote at federal elections and to stand for the federal Parliament. This removed gender discrimination in relation to electoral rights for federal elections in Australia. By 1911, the remaining Australian states had legislated for women’s suffrage for state elections. It took longer before women could stand for parliament throughout Australia and even longer before they were actually elected.

### *New Zealand*

The story of New Zealand is well-known as the first ever territory to grant women the right to vote. Though New Zealand was a pioneer in Women’s Rights, during the early stages of colonial life women were restricted to the domestic sphere of influence. Like in most other countries, the movement for Women’s Suffrage was influenced by movements in Northern Europe, the UK and the US.

Also similar to other Women’s movements around the world, women sought equal political rights in order to deal with the issues of alcohol and other “moral” conflicts. The ideas that fueled this early Women’s movement were those of British philosopher John Stuart Mill who strongly believed in granting Women the right to vote and choose over their destiny. Another very influential force was the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, a group that became influential in many parts of the world. Although the fight for Women’s Suffrage saw great resistance from

different groups of society such as men, the liquor industry and politicians such as Henry Smith Fish, they were granted the right to vote in 1893.

### *Conclusion*

The right of women to vote is a matter of fact today, but at the time when it was proposed it was a revolutionary demand. Comparing and contrasting different countries on each continent, we review the history of women's suffrage focusing on the important question that circulated starting with the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "Could and should women obtain the right to vote?" The question expanded in time as part of a general debate about women's political power and civil rights. Initially, the leading perception was that women's influence in political life should come through the men in their lives and that it must happen behind closed doors. Gradually, we see more countries turning to the idea that women can have direct action in politics and that they can participate in public life in a variety of roles.

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# Benito Pérez Galdós, a new Cervantes in the Spanish Literature

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## Abstract

*Many novelists all over the world have been thoroughly affected by Cervantes' work, particularly Quixote. It has served as a lecture for the modern narration. Literature continues and keeps alive many of the lessons from Cervantes' work, for example: irony, parody, the conflict between the hero and the world that does not understand him, the essence of antithetic through imagination, fiction and reality, the reflection of reality in fiction, etc. From Cervantes, Galdós got a realistic, transparent, straightforward style; a language that includes all the linguistic books from that vulgar, popular and intellectual, standard and dialect; the vividness of events; the characters of various social strata, whose lives are intricately intertwined, etc. Galdós's characters dialogue is Cervantine, for the remarkable sensitivity it transmits; characters change, grow, are transformed through the dialogue; they are analyzed through dialogue and not meditation or description; he also avoids rhetoric pursuing naturalism and realistic esthetic; his dialogue is embodied with ironic humor of Cervantes's model. Cervantes's work is a direct influence on Galdó's pleasant ironic humor.*

*Galdós's characters are quixotic, for the remarkable sensitivity it transmits. Galdós's narration is free, his reader is free, the freedom that literature has acquired with Cervantes's modern novel.*

**Keywords:** *modern narration, Cervantine dialogue, quixotic characters, ironic humor.*

## Modern Novel

Many novelists all over the world have been thoroughly affected by Cervantes' work, particularly *Quixote*. It has served as a lecture for the modern narration. Beyond Cervantes's desire to end an old fashionable genre, that of cavalry, begins his ambition for the genesis of a new genre. "Quixote took a distinct place among European classics, found at the foundations of the modern novel, and was therefore destined to figure in the formation of all novelists." (Levin, 1973, p. 388) The essayist Rene Girard asserts: "There is no idea of the western novel where it cannot be found the gene of Cervantes." (Levin, 1973, p. 388).

Literature continues and keeps alive many of the lectures from Cervantes' work, for example: irony, parody, the conflict between the hero and the world that does not understand him, the essence of antithetic through imagination, fiction and reality, the reflection of reality in fiction, the reflection of life in literature, the reflection of literature on literature itself, the principle of an irregular structure of a literary work, etc. These are some of the lessons that literature gained from *Quixote* and practiced in the works of many well-known authors such as: Gogol, Dickens, Flaubert, Galdós, Joyce, etc.

Suffice it to recall the dialogue of the iconic characters of Quixote with Sancho, or between them and other characters, which is not a formal dialogue, but a real conversation about the world, love, life, ideas, visions, dreams and ideals, about the past, the present and the future. This dialogue between the two characters and their behavior toward each other and others is called Cervantine by literary critics, and was taken as a model by many authors, including Galdós.

In the last years of his creativity, Galdós has written various novels in which the dialogue is dominant, or it's entirely dialogue with a minimalist description, building an aesthetic view on the dialogue:

*The dialogue system, adapted to realistic literature, is the laboratory where free and concrete characters are built... The author's overview, his narration or description on general terms, are not so efficient and do not convey the essence of spiritual truthfulness. The dialogue's mysterious ability makes us see and hear without having to meditate on the events and characters, or the author's voice, which does not disappear even when it is hidden. (Galdós, 2001, p. 7)*

The novel *Fortunata and Jacinta* is built on the dialogue technique, even though its structure is alike a theatrical play, the author calls it a novel without hesitating, followed by other novels with the same narrative structure, "With the great aspiration to stay away from schemes, cataloged classifications of genres and forms... The greatest dramatic works today seem to us as dialogues... for example Richard III by Shakespeare." (Galdós, 2001, pp. 8-9)

The dialogue of Galdós's characters is Cervantine, for the remarkable sensitivity it transmits; characters change, grow, are transformed through the dialogue; they are analyzed through dialogue and not meditation or description; he also avoids rhetoric pursuing naturalism and realistic esthetic; his dialogue is embodied with ironic humor of Cervantes's model. Galdós's Cervantine style is noticed by many authors and it is worth mentioning the assertion of the researcher Rodolfo Cardona in *Anales Galdosianos* (1968, p. 151).

According to Benitez:

*His work (Galdós' work) would be different or it would not exist without Cervantes. Cervantes has enlighten his way of thinking regarding Spain, it has provided the model of the ideal novel, driven a critical vision towards the modern novel, harmonized with the Spanish tradition... (Benítez, 1999, p. 14)*

Galdós in some of his works:

*reproduces an evolving language from dialogues and scenes from Don Quixote's chapters... uses archaic words directly taken from Quixote's work. He even refers to the old cities of La Mancha and builds imaginary dialogues between Quixote and his servant... As far as it goes to find his friend in Tobosa, the peasant rider dressed in the green jacket's knight clothes (the latter character of the Quixote), the idealist Republican and the quixotic Jusús del Campo. (Dandle, 1990, p. 24)*

In the last years of his life, while he was blind and quit any political activity, Galdós recreates the journey of Quixote with Sancho along Tobosa, in some essays published in *La Esfera*<sup>1</sup> magazine through which he discovers how important the novel *Don Quixote* was and Cervantes in his literary activities.

Galdós is a Spanish narrator, playwright, chronicler of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a representative of realistic literature and one of the most important representatives of the Spanish narrative genre in general. The author has a numerous and successful composition of 100 novels, 30 theatrical plays, many stories, essays, journalistic articles. Galdós is considered by the Spanish literary criticism as the most important Spanish novelist after Cervantes". (Aub, 1966, pp. 446-454)

The author's models in literature were Cervantes, Dante, Goethe, Balzac, Dickens, etc.

Pérez Galdós, a passionate admirer and reader of Cervantes, even recited entire chapters of *Quixote*.

Cervantes's work is a direct influence to Galdó's pleasant ironic humor.

*Galdós perceives the modern world through the character types of the past. Galdós not only uses Quixote's words and expressions to evoke the world of Cervantes, but he himself turns into a quixotic character... Irony and fantasy are well mixed to the practical sense, as an extraordinary gift of the novelist writer. (Dandle, 1990, p. 21)*

Among the author's works we highlight *Fortunata and Jacinta* (The sub title - *Two Married Women's Stories*), which was written in 1887 as one of the most beautiful novels of Spanish literature. The novel deals with social topics, the events take place in Madrid at the time when the novel was written. An extraordinary density of events and actions characterize the novel: love, adultery,

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<sup>1</sup> "La Esfera", an artistic magazine, 1914-1930.

desire, desire to have children, children born out of wedlock, intrigue, tears, strife, death, madness, jealousy, adventure... This density of events, life as an insane rush of the characters, realism in the novel disclose Cervantes' influence.

*Fortunata and Jacinta*, (*Two Married Women's Stories*), is the most successful book of narrator Pérez Galdós, who is considered a servant of criticism for several reasons. From Cervantes, Galdós got a realistic, transparent, straightforward style; a language that includes all the linguistic books from that vulgar, popular and intellectual, standard and dialect; the vividness of events; the characters of various social strata, whose lives are intricately intertwined, etc.

The Spanish academician Ramón Pérez Ayala writes:

*The closeness between the Cervantes and Galdós are many and apparent... While Cervantes created the narrative genre, the novel, giving the Middle Ages a distinctive feature, Galdós led the genre straight fullness, perfection and maturity... Cervantes and Galdós are like two mountains, near and twin, but apart from each other for three centuries. There are other high and skilled masters; but they do not reach the height of those two mountains, twin and peerless. Cervantes could not become the first dramatic author of his era; Galdós is, undoubtedly, one of the first of every age and place.* (Pérez de Ayala, 1919, f. 123)

#### *Realism in two Novels*

Carlos Fuentes comments on literary realism:

*Literature offers the opportunity to imagine in words, it builds a reality that is as real as the historical one. Literature, ceaselessly builds new worlds by renovating itself.* (Fuentes, 1994, p. 132)

Literary criticism calls Cervantes the creator of the realistic novel, or the founder of realism in literature. Cervantes paints with his pen the unchanging reality of quotidian living giving it an artistic dimension. Cervantes *begins* the novel *Don Quixote*, describing his surrounding reality, accumulating the everyday details around him:

*In a village of La Mancha, the name of which I have no desire to call to mind, there lived not long since one of those gentlemen that keep a lance in the lance-rack, an old buckler, a lean hack, and a greyhound for coursing.*

*An olla of rather more beef than mutton, a salad on most nights, scraps on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays, a pigeon or so extra on Sundays. Made away three quarters of his income. The rest of it went in a doublet of fine cloth and velvet breeches and shoes to match for holidays, while on weekdays, he made a brave figure in his best homespun. He had in his house a housekeeper past forty, a niece under twenty, and a lad for the field and market-place, who used to saddle the hack as well as handle the bill-hook.* (Cervantes, 2008, p. 13)

This description tells the reader that noble man is fed with modest food every day, his clothes tell us about his modest economy, and his noble man (hidalgo) title shows his low noble class. Cervantes starts the novel with the menu of the week, with Quixote clothing.

The three appearances of Quixote are set out in the summer season, a long lasting summer, in which it rained only once in a two years. The presence, the appearance of the summer season is a sign of literary realism but has no connection with reality.

*In Quixote and in any other novel, no matter how realistic they are, realism has nothing to do with reality. They are two different terms that need to be understood and distinguished.... literary realism is that artistic endeavor that wants to give the reader a sense of being face to face of reality; it requires the use of some techniques that make possible the literal transfer of reality within the artistic work... which convey to the reader the emotion of believing that he is reading the reality. (Pedraza Jiménez, 2005, pp. 695-712)*

The period of literary realism in Spain in the second half of the 19th century coincides with the time when the bourgeoisie increases and expands its political and economic power. Literature reflects with great realism the ideals of the bourgeoisie, such as: individualism, materialism, and desire for social expansion. Galdós's literary work tries to be objective in the representation of the society, so as the characters are taken from reality.

His characters are representatives of the middle bourgeoisie in its attempt to getting rich. They belong to a mix social class, among the poor bourgeoisie that aspires to improve the economic opportunities and the upper social class that is falling into the lower class. Galdós pays attention to the presentation of the bourgeois of his time, which according to him (in the novel) is selfish and aims for a public official post, to change his life, he likes the unknown.

*In this fascinating period of wealth growth, from 1845 onwards, the Santa Cruz home recognized important changes imposed by time, but they were only superficially done, as the core did not change. There were gas lamps now displayed in the studio and in the depot, while the four-candle candlestick was thrown away thanks to new inventions, and it was nowhere to be seen. In the drawer, the first checks of the San Fernando bank, which were used only for payments, were displayed. (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 565)*

Pérez Galdós's realism relies on the presentation of everyday reality in the *Fortunata and Jacinta* novel, in the description of Madrid's urban spaces, at the exact time determined, in the presentation of bourgeois personages, in the focus or emphasis of the visual, etc. The events take place in real time, history begins in 1869 and ends in 1876.

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*The fast ships brought Parisian updates to Madrid every day. The invasion of light colors, which held the meaning and the sign of culture, came slowly and tyrannically... the same did the fashion of red jackets or scarves from Manila. Aristocracy gave it with disdain to the middle class, which, in turn wanted to look aristocratic, so they passed it on to the lower class, which was a follower of vibrant colors. (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 585)*

Perez Galdos's novel fulfills the conditions of the realistic novel, depicts with realism, even paints in words, Madrid's current environment, customs, people, etc. bringing spatial and temporal definitions from that time in Spain.

*It was apparent that Madrid's habits were rapidly changing, that this proud Royal Court would soon be transformed from a retarded neighborhood into a civilized capital. Madrid, had nothing except for the metropolis, the name and ridiculous pride. (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 645)*

He observes and uses meaningful details that illustrate his idea, Madrid's squares, the way how the poor and bourgeois homes, offices, shops, etc. have been organized and furnished.

*Madrid was transformed and it was so precious the progress that was built up from that extraordinary man, whose portrait we met with pleasure along of his ancestors. A new city was built on the ruins of religious conventions. Madrid's trade rapidly developed due to the accelerated reforms; The Genius from Salamanca conceived the first railroads; the art of steam made it possible for Madrid to be only 40 hours away from Paris, it brought wars and revolutions, shocking changes on people's personal wealth. (Pérez Galdós, 1875, pp. 583-584)*

Moreover, Galdós describes with quite realism the "souls", "hearts" of people, their characters and formation. The language of the characters so artistically used reveals their features.

*Juan Santa Cruz completed his studies of Law followed by History and Literature. His parents were very wealthy and did not want their son to become a trader, nor was there any reason why, they were no longer themselves. But as soon as Juan completed his studies, he entered a new crisis period, suffered a change, a mysterious moment or a transition from one age to the other, accompanied by personality change. Suddenly, all the desire for oratory debates, for any historical and philosophical subject, was lost. They looked ridiculous to him. (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 65)*

*It was not even much later he quit reading, or did not read at all anymore. His mother, Barbarita, who blindly believes in his son, thought he had dried up the well of science and had nothing to read. (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 71)*

*Cervantine Characters*

There are four main characters in Galdós's novel, Fortunata and Jacinta and their two spouses Juan and Maximiliano. The novel reveals two opposite marriages, which pass through difficulties; the stories of two married women belonging to two different social classes, who love the same man, Juan Santa Cruz. Juan, the scion of a wealthy family from Madrid in the late nineteenth century, his wife Jacinta who also belongs to the high social class, while Fortunata is a poor girl, a miserable mistress.

An interesting character is Maximilian, a *Cervantine* character, whom the author does not present to us as "mentally weak" from the beginning but Galdós describes him as a rachitic who wants to fulfill his obligations and cannot go beyond his capabilities.

To his fellows, Maximilian is shameful, a loser, that's why his nickname is *Rubinius Vulgaris*. He has been given a Latin label, as Max studied pharmacy. After falling in love with Fortunata, Maxi changes greatly, his character becomes more positive and his mind recognizes a new development, opens up and becomes more intelligent, but everything changes when he realizes that his wife betrays him. Max seems to be a Cervantine character because he shows two extreme manifestations: the madman and the intelligent in interweaving. Max loves his girlfriend, adores her, but unlike Quixote he has the power to retaliate and hurt her.

Max objectively analyses the situation at the end of the novel: "At first, I had the delusion of persecution, then the delusion of greatness..." (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 23555)

*I now see all the conflicts, all the problems of my life, with a clarity that comes only from reasoning. I declare and swear before God and people that I profoundly forgive this blameworthy woman, who I loved more than my life and hurt me so much... The world ended for me, I was a martyr and a madman. With the help of the Lord I was healed from my madness.* (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 32567)

His reflection and awareness at the end of the novel reminds us of the Quixote at the end of his life when he renounces the bold cavalry and platonic love. Max considers himself healed of madness as he now understands his past life, but in the future he will end up in a hospital for mental disorder. Max was not mad by either reading or love, he was ill since birth and had personality problems, his defeat in love and the inability to build social relationships made him move to a hospital room.

Max, as well as Quixote, does not perceive reality, he is not clearly oriented, but unlike Cervantes' hero, his defeats in life make him unhappy and socially dangerous, as Max thinks undertaking extreme actions.

While Quixote was characterized by kindness, selflessness and sacrifice, his defeat did not fill his soul with revenge, and we feel sorry that the hero died when he understood everything, and it is good that Cervantes painted a hero without hatred, without bitterness, without enmity, who loved his heroine even when she fell from the altar of the princess to that of the peasant who works the field.

At the end of his life, we see Quixote liberated from the chivalric illusions, from the delirium of greatness and victorious heroes to the world of injustice. Don Quixote dies of melancholy, of pain, while he opens his eyes and mind and looks at people's falsity.

Sancho so beautifully saying:

*don't die, my sir, but take my advice and live many years, because the craziest thing a man can do is to let himself die just like that, without anyone killing him, nor any other hands finishing him off except those of melancholy. Look, don't be lazy – get out of bed, and let's go into the countryside dressed as shepherds, as we agreed. Maybe behind some bush we'll find the lady Dulcinea, disenchanted as nice as can be. If you're dying because of the grief of seeing yourself vanquished, let me take the blame, saying that because I didn't tighten Rocinante's saddle right you were knocked over. Moreover, your grace probably saw in your books of chivalry that knights are always overcoming others, and he who is defeated today is a victor tomorrow. (Cervantes, 2008, p. 569)*

Max completely loses his reason because of Fortuna's betrayal. He did not die physically, but "died" isolated from life, love and the world.

The author settles near Max, another Cervantes character, Don José Ido del Sagrario, who appears in other three of Galdós' novels. Don Jose Ido and Max meet in bars and get drunk together, while crying together, suffering the betrayal of their wives. Don Jose Ido looks mad from disappointment and sadness, but unlike Max, he assumes his wife's betrayal, convincing himself of a fact that had never happened. His tears and his words strike Max and become a stimulant to the latter. Don Jose Ido's situation is not real but the product of sick fantasy. This is another Cervantes' moment in Galdós' work, the interplay of reality with the imagination, when the product of fantasy determines the characters' lives and transforms them; the deformation of their fantasy turns into their unfortunate reality.

The characters of Benito Pérez Galdós belong to different social classes, the author does not set them apart but mixes their lives no matter how gentle their

relationships are. “It builds powerful contrasts between the ridicule of its characters and the powerful illusions they have.” (Benítez, 1999, p. 15)

Characters face mentalities, thoughts, and completely different behaviors. Galdós gives them the opportunity to change their social status, to be educated, to grow, and as a result their lives can change their shape but cannot change their content. Fortunata fell in love with Juan, forgetting his abandonment, the frustration caused by the loss of their child.

Despite he was already a married man, she returned to him and paid with her life. Fortunata married Max, a wealthy boy who offered her the opportunity of a quiet life and education, nevertheless, she betrayed him for a hopeless love.

Like Cervantes, he puts together his characters regardless of their social class or intellectual difference. Cervantes’s characters dialogued in different linguistic registers, which convey a variety of discussion, and finally we see that they are influenced by each other’s words and deeds.

At the beginning of the novel *Fortunata and Jacinta*, the narrator tells us the story of Juan Santa Cruz and his parents, Mr. Baldomero and Mrs. Barbarita. Juan is the son of a middle-class businessman whose business is moving very well, due to the developing capitalist society of the time along with industrial and population growth. Juan studies law, but does not exercise his profession at all, as he likes entertainment, nightlife, transforming into his family parasite. A gentleman who competes with his aristocratic colleagues for vain things, such as flirting with women, while Fortunata turns into his caprice. Fortunata, a beautiful woman, drew his attention from the first moment, despite coming from a low social class and her vulgar behavior.

*He thought he would not see anything, but saw something that gave immediate effect, a beautiful, tall, young, tall woman, the girl had a light blue bonnet and a scarf on her shoulder. (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 1012)*

The girl, meanwhile whirled a boiled egg, slamming the shell behind the stairwell after finishing. “The orphaned daughter lived with her aunt, who grew chicken and sold eggs in Cava de San Miguel.” (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 1376)

This is the description that Juan makes of Fortunata, while confessing to his wife Jacinta his love story:

*She was an innocent, naive, foolish girl, she was one of them who says all she feels, whether good or bad... A pleasant and savage peasant who did not know how to write and read. (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 1397)*

This realistic description is close to that of Cervantes’, where beauty and ugliness are placed together, vulgarity and nobility are close to each other,

building a paradox as a dialectical unity of opposites. Man is in general a mixture of passions and opposing tendencies such as life itself, with its highs and lows. Quixote is mad and noble, ugly in appearance and beautiful in spirit and thought, tolerant and authoritarian, idealistic and uneducated. Fortunata is also beautiful and vulgar, a cheater but desperately in love, desired to madness but abandoned to death, etc.

Despite being first seen as they convey a great aesthetic potential especially to express the inner spiritual world of man and literary heroes, Cervantes and later on Galdós realized that these unions of opposites are not artificial and paradoxical. Sancho writes to his wife a letter with the words: “Don Quixote was a wretched wise and a mad acquainted.” (Cervantes, 2008)

Cervantes’ and Galdós’ novels are novels of characters and events. Both authors differ on their descriptive narrative mastery, and each of them has his originality and artistic individuality. Cervantes parodies chivalric literature, opens the way for the new realistic literature, the new genre, the modern novel, the idealistic hero dressed in human values; while Galdós anathematizes society’s disesteem, raises a desperate call for human values, for life, he writes the realistic novel of his time.

Cervantes and Galdós like to bring out the different social classes, their features, and pertinent characteristics, clothing, way of life, cultural formation, etc. in their works. We think that the main reason Galdós gave the novel a subtitle *Married women’s stories* is the presentation of two main female characters, the duel between them, the mentality they inherit as the representatives of certain social classes. Two women who hate one another to death because they want the same thing, Juan’s love. While the characters of Cervantes are a unique twin, a binomial where one fills the other. We have seen Sancho as servile, fruitless, who better estimates the materialistic values rather than the spiritual ones, but he is wise, practical, and loyal to his superior, virtues that the latter lacks. The ingenious gentleman Don Quixote makes no sense without his squire.

Galdós describes the place where Fortunata lives like this:

*Neighbors... were both categories either lonely women or families who had their business near the Saint Anton market. They lived in dilapidated flats, full of rubbish and vulgar women, who let their children go and play away. (Pérez Galdós, 1875, p. 1045)*

Cervantes and Galdós like to tell human stories in extreme situations: the two works bring out the reality of the time when the novels were written. Characters suffer physically and psychologically. Fortunata, twice pregnant and

without any economic support, is abandoned by Juan. The first time immersed in misery and depression decides to prostitute, loses the child and its condition deteriorates. The second time she dies after giving birth. Mrs. Lupe and Maximilian want to take Fortunata out of the wretched situation of the prostitution by offering her a house, marriage, and the opportunity to be educated and transformed into a lady, not only physically but changing her social position, too. But, as soon as Juan appears again, he simply manipulates Fortunata for a while only to abandon her again, she decides to leave everything.

Galdós's characters are quixotic because they are free, his narration is free, his reader is free, the freedom that literature has acquired with Cervantes's modern novel.

Carlos Fuentes writes that the freedom of the characters is worth emphasizing in Cervantes's work:

*Quixote is likely the most remarkable freedom adventure of the modern man as there we can find the opportunity to recognize the world differently, not to strut into a unified world as that of the Middle Age, but the entrance in a world that you are not either understood nor do not understand, face challenges against the world, pass your own boundaries, being an actor within the history, or sometimes walking on another path with the desire to see the events from outside, even draw lessons from that history. This is a novel to me. (Fuentes, 1994, p. 132)*

The same freedom adopted Galdós' characters, his literature differs from the preceding romantic literature, the freedom of imagination is amazing, and on the other hand this event is truthfully conveyed, even establishing a balance between "artistically beautiful and possibly real", as his novel is both artistically accomplished.

"Artistically beautiful and possibly real", this is a feature of Cervantes's literature:

*In Cervantes's fiction the coexistence of the two different worlds reflects the existence of two aspects of reality: the ideal and the potential... Cervantes ruins stylistic elements but in the meantime finds harmonious connections previously uncovered between poetic ideals and the possible historic. (Riley, 1989/1962)*

The illusion of reality, an important topic in the novel *Don Quixote*, is quite tangible by *Fortunata and Jacinta*. Quixote did not understand the reality around him until the end of the Second Book, his mind was attired with the illusions of the chivalry books, and was filled with ideas and desires for heroic deeds. Neither Galdós' characters are able to understand the reality around them, they look blind, or are unable to make existential analysis, desires overwhelm the logic, nor does the desire about the dangers they undertake make them crazy. Fortunata risked her

life by surrendering herself to the love for Juan, admitted to having another baby with him while he considered her a toy in his hands. Fortunata, beyond logic, considers herself Juan's wife while she is married to Maximilian and he is married to Jacinta. The latter, madly desires having a child with a man who does not love her while being sterile. Her despair increases so much that she decides to buy the baby who is conceived out of wedlock. Maximilian is a pharmacist who suffers from severe mental problems. He loves Fortunata, marries her despite not offering a real marriage to her, but only better economic opportunities and the reverence for her social position. Depressed and extremely ill, Maximilian ends up in a mental hospital because his behavior becomes more dangerous for the lives of others.

In the novel *Fortunata and Jacinta*, like in *Quixote*, there can be found characters that face "the dream life and the real life". Fortunata's dream is Juan, Maximilian's dream is Fortunata, Jacinta's dream is to have a baby and her husband, but the real life does not follow the dream. Jacinta is a sterile woman, ready to buy her husband's child with his girlfriend Fortunata, as she falls prey to the deceivers who sold another child. Fortunata never won Juan, no matter how much she loved him. He abandoned her whenever he was bored of her whilst she died being in love with him. Maximilian never had his wife, Fortunata, for himself. She betrayed him with Juan and others, while the social position and wealth he offered her did not rescue their marriage.

Galdós's characters are quixotic (like Quixote), since he dreamed himself of being a knight, fulfilled all the conditions needed for such an important undertaking as the dress, horse, name, girlfriend, etc. undertook many adventures, but he never became a knight, a true hero, the world's savior from the bad people.

### *Conclusion*

Many novelists all over the world have been thoroughly affected by Cervantes' work, particularly *Quixote*. It has served as a lecture for the modern narration. Literature continues and keeps alive many of lessons from Cervantes' work, for example: irony, parody, the conflict between the hero and the world that does not understand him, the essence of antithetic through imagination, fiction and reality, the reflection of reality in fiction, the reflection of life in literature, the reflection of literature on literature itself, the principle of an irregular structure of a literary work, etc.

The dialogue of Galdós's characters is Cervantine for the remarkable sensitivity it transmits; characters change, grow, are transformed through dialogue; they are analyzed through dialogue and not meditation or description; he also

avoids rhetoric pursuing naturalism and realistic esthetic; his dialogue is embodied with ironic humor of Cervantes's model.

Cervantes' and Galdós' novels are novels of characters and events. Both authors differ on their descriptive narrative mastery, and each of them has his originality and artistic individuality. Cervantes parodies chivalric literature, opens the way for the new realistic literature, the new genre, the modern novel, the idealistic hero dressed in human values; while Galdós anathematizes disesteem, raises a desperate call for human values, for life, he writes the realistic novel of his time.

Galdós's characters are quixotic (like Quixote), since he dreamed himself of being a knight, fulfilled all the conditions needed for such an important undertaking as the dress, horse, name, girlfriend, etc. took many adventures, but he never became a knight, a true hero, the world's savior from the bad people. Galdós's characters aren't able to understand the reality around them, they look blind, or are unable to make existential analysis, desires overwhelm the logic, nor does the desire about the dangers they undertake make them crazy. Galdós's narration is free, his reader is free, the freedom that literature has acquired with Cervantes's modern novel.

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# The Unmarkedness of Subject-Verb Agreement in Contemporary English

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## **Abstract**

*Subject-verb agreement in contemporary English has always been regarded as an operation morphologically marked, especially through the bound morpheme -s on the verb/auxiliary.3SG<sup>1</sup> in the present tense. However, that agreement is not marked neither on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the past tense nor on modal auxiliaries. It is worth noting that this is surprising for a language where subject-verb agreement is viewed as morphologically visible. Things are supposed to be so due to the poverty of the English inflectional morphology (Cf. Roberts, 1985; Pollock, 1989; Chomsky, 1991; 1993; Fernández-Pena, 2014; 2017; inter alia). Thus, since subject-verb agreement in contemporary English is said to be visible only through the occurrence of the bound morpheme -s on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present tense, this morpheme is consequently taken as the symbol of subject-verb agreement markedness (Cf. Kayne, 1989; 1994). And yet, when considering some non-assertive constructions and sentences having a collective noun as grammatical subject, there are reasons to postulate that subject-verb agreement in contemporary English is not morphologically marked. This paper is then intended to show that subject-verb agreement in contemporary English is not morphologically marked, that the bound morpheme realized on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present tense appears to be the realization of a pragmatic/discursive feature, and that this morphemic realization is triggered by legibility conditions as proposed by the Strong Minimalist Thesis (Chomsky, 1995).*

**Keywords:** *Subject-verb agreement, feature [3SG], topic feature, Strong Minimalist Thesis, morpheme -s, referential defectivity.*

## *1. Introduction*

In natural languages where subject-verb agreement is obviously visible through the morphological structure of the verbal element, it is observed that each

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<sup>1</sup> First person singular/plural (1SG/PL), Second person singular/plural (2SG/PL), Third person singular/plural (3SG/PL).

person (i.e. 1SG/PL, 2SG/PL, 3SG/PL) shows a distinctive ending on the verb or auxiliary. This is the case, for instance, of languages like French or Spanish.<sup>2</sup> This is also the reason why such languages are said to be morphologically rich.

As for English, it is considered as a language with poor (inflectional) morphology in the sense that distinctive endings or inflectional morphemes on the finite verb/auxiliary are non-existent for the different persons. Rather, only on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present tense do we have the bound morpheme *-s*. By way of consequence, the bound morpheme *-s* is viewed as an evidence to assume that subject-verb agreement is morphologically marked on the verb/auxiliary in contemporary English. Nevertheless, there are (empirical) reasons to assume that subject-verb agreement in contemporary English is not morphologically marked.

Thus, this paper is intended to show that subject-verb agreement in contemporary English is not morphologically marked, that the bound morpheme occurring on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present tense appears to be the realization of a pragmatic/discursive feature, and that this morphemic realization is triggered by legibility conditions as proposed by the Strong Minimalist Thesis (Chomsky, 1995).

The theoretical framework of this paper is the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995), within the perspective of the Cartography of Syntactic Structures (Rizzi 1997). The data used in this paper were collected from different written texts from authors like Reid (1991), Biber *et al.* (1999), Radford (2009), Haskell and MacDonald (2003), Harley and Ritter (2002), Dowty and Jacobson (1988), Corbett (2006), den Dikken (2001), Eberhard (1999), Acuña-Fariña (2009), among others.

The paper is divided into three main parts, namely section 2 dealing with the morphological invisibility of subject-verb agreement in contemporary English, section 3 related to the nature of the bound morpheme *-s* realized on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present tense, and section 4 which is about the occurrence of the bound morpheme *-s* on the verb/auxiliary.3SG as a consequence of the Strong Minimalist Thesis.

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<sup>2</sup> In French, for example, a verbal base form ending in *-er* such as *aller* (go) has the following endings in the simple past: *j'allai* (1SG), *tu allas* (2SG), *il/elle alla* (3SG), *nous allâmes* (1PL), *vous allâtes* (2PL), *ils/elles allèrent* (3PL). Likewise, in Spanish, for verbs with a base form ending in *-ar*, such as *cantar* (sing), the different endings on the verb in the present tense are as follows: *canto* (1SG), *cantas* (2SG), *canta* (3SG), *cantamos* (1PL), *cantáis* (2PL), *cantan* (3PL).

2. *The morphological invisibility of subject-verb agreement in contemporary English*

The idea that subject-verb agreement is (morphologically) unmarked in contemporary English proves to be on the right track when considering the utterances of the type of those in (1), (2), (3) and (4).

(1)

- a. Cherry cokes is the most popular drink here. (Reid, 1991, p. 194)  
NP.3PL Cop.Pres.3PL
- b. Five miles is a long distance to walk. (Biber *et al.*, 1999:187)  
DP.3PL Cop.Pres.3PL
- c. The faculty are all agreed on this point.  
DP.3SG Cop.Pres.3SG
- d. [This bomber and its cargo] probably weighs over a hundred tons. (Biber *et al.*, 1999, p. 180)  
[&P.3PL] Pres.3PL
- e. Two drops deodorizes/\*deodorize anything in your house. (Reid, 1991, p. 331)  
DP.3PL Pres.3PL

(2)

- a. I suggest that he work/\*works part-time.  
Comp 3SG.Nom
- b. They recommended that she pay/\*pays cash.  
Comp 3SG.Nom

(3)

- a. The wind destroyed all the crops.  
DP.3SG Past.3SG
- b. \*The wind destroyeds all the crops.  
DP.3SG Past.3SG

(4)

- a. The neighbor must visit the doctor tomorrow.  
DP.3SG Mod.3SG
- b. \*The neighbor musts visit the doctor tomorrow.  
DP.3SG Mod.3SG

In (1), the observation of the utterances reveals that the so-called marker of subject-verb agreement (3SG), i.e. the bound morpheme *-s* realized on the verbal element, is not always associated with a grammatical subject bearing the morphological feature [3SG]. Indeed, the grammatical subjects *cherry cokes* and *five miles* in (1a) and (1b), respectively, agreeing with the copula realized *is*, have

the formal feature [3PL]. This observation clearly disapproves the assumption that the copula *is* always agrees with a nominative subject defined by the feature [3SG]. Correlatively, the subject *the faculty* in (1c), which is defined by the formal feature [3SG], agrees with the copular verb *are*. Here, again, the copula is not realized *is*, even though the subject has the feature [3SG]. Moreover, the coordination phrase (&P) *this bomber and its cargo* representing the grammatical subject in (1d), having obviously the feature [3PL], agrees with the verb *weighs* bearing the bound morpheme *-s*, the alleged marker of the subject-verb agreement implying the feature [3SG]. On the other hand, there is the subject *two drops* in (1e) with the feature [3PL] which agrees with the verb *deodorizes*. There is an asymmetry between the morphological feature [3PL] of the subject *two drops* and the ending on the verb *deodorizes*, if subject-verb agreement is taken to be (morphologically) marked on the verbal element. More surprisingly, there is an ungrammaticality when the relevant verb is realized *deodorize*, i.e. without the bound morpheme *-s*. In this respect, needless to say that the bound morpheme *-s* on the verb *deodorizes* cannot be the marker of the agreement.3SG with the subject *two drops* (3PL).

In (2), it is observable that subject-verb agreement is not marked on the verb in the embedded clause headed by the finite complementizer *that*. As a reminder, contemporary English has three complementizers: *that*, *if* (finite complementizers) and *for* (non-finite complementizer) (Cf. Rizzi, 1997). In the embedded CP of the utterance *I suggest that he work part-time* (2a), the verb *work* seems to be in its base form even if it is associated with the nominative pronominal subject *he*. Likewise, in (2b), in the embedded *that*-clause, the nominative subject *she* is associated with the base form of the verb *pay*. In fact, the verbs *work* and *pay* in (2a) and (2b), respectively, are base forms due to the ungrammaticality of the strings *\*I suggest that he works part-time* and *\*they recommended that she pays cash*. Since the sentences in (2a) and (2b), where there is no desinence on the verb, are grammatical, then, it can be asserted that subject-verb agreement is not visible.

Regarding the example in (3), it is worth noting that the ungrammaticality of the sequence in (3b) is problematic as regards the possibility for subject-verb agreement to be marked in contemporary English. As a matter of fact, when subject-verb agreement is marked in a natural language, it is marked in all tenses found in that language (Cf. languages like German, French, Portuguese, Spanish, etc.). English having two tenses (present and past), it is very surprising to observe that the so-called or alleged “symbol” of the markedness of subject-verb

agreement in English, i.e. the bound morpheme *-s* on the verb.3SG in present sentences, is not licensed on the verb.3SG in past sentences like the one in (3b).

In (4), when the modal auxiliary *must* takes the alleged marker of subject-verb agreement (i.e. the bound morpheme *-s*), the resulting sentence is ungrammatical. It is well known that when subject-verb agreement is morphologically marked in a natural language, it is marked either on the main verb when there is no auxiliary or on the auxiliary when there is one in the sentence. However, in (4), when the morpheme *-s*, allegedly said to mark subject-verb agreement in contemporary English, is realized on the modal auxiliary *must* agreeing with the subject.3SG *the neighbor*, ungrammaticality follows. What this means is that the concerned morpheme is not a marker of subject-verb agreement in contemporary English as commonly assumed; it is likely that that agreement is not morphologically marked.

### *3. The nature of the bound morpheme -s on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present*

If the bound morpheme *-s* realized on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present is not a marker of subject-verb agreement in contemporary English, then, it proves logical to wonder about the nature of that morpheme. In fact, there are reasons to suspect that (i) the bound morpheme *-s* is a realization of a pragmatic feature in view of the discursive status of nominative grammatical subjects, and that (ii) the relevant morpheme is an allomorph of the so-called genitive morpheme *-’s* due to the syntactic, morphophonological and semantic similarities existing between the two morphemes.

#### 3.1. THE MORPHEME *-s* AS A REALIZATION OF A TOPIC FEATURE IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

The bound morpheme *-s* on the verbal element in the present can be regarded as a realization of a discursive feature, in this case, a topic feature. Indeed, grammatical subjects are said to share many properties with topicalized elements, i.e. they are said to have much in common with topics (Reinhart, 1981; Laenzlinger, 2006; Frascarelli, 2007). For instance, Frascarelli (2007, p. 26) stipulates that “topics and subjects share basic properties since they are both connected with given information and provide a starting point for the event described in the predication.” In addition to that, Chomsky (2000, p. 93) admits that “one option of variation among languages has to do with left-right orientation, English being syntactically «left-headed» [...] and Japanese «right-headed».” Thus, if sentences in contemporary English are oriented to the left, it means that they are oriented towards their grammatical subject, given the fact that the

grammatical subject represents the topic or target of the sentence. In other words, a sentence can be defined as a set of information about the grammatical subject.

These observations suggest that grammatical subjects, at least in contemporary English, are to be considered as topics<sup>3</sup> in finite sentences. As a matter of fact, I postulate that grammatical subjects of finite sentences in contemporary English have a topic feature ([+topic]) which is linked to their nominative Case.

Since the feature [+topic] of nominative subjects in contemporary English is a discursive feature (or interface feature), the head *top* is likely to be found in the CP domain. This implies that, during the derivation of finite sentences, nominative subjects move higher than [Spec. TP]<sup>4</sup> to join [Spec. topP] that I assume to be located immediately above FinP. Therefore, I propose the following hierarchy.

(5)

ForceP ... (TopP) ... (FocP) ... **topP** ... FinP ... TP ...

As regards the abovementioned facts, I consequently assume that the bound morpheme *-s* is a realization of the topic feature of the nominative subject on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in present sentences as a way of showing/marketing the particular pragmatic status of nominative subjects. Concerning the reasons why the relevant morpheme is realized only on the verb/auxiliary defined by the formal feature [3SG], those reasons will be dealt with later in this paper (i.e. in the section 3).

It is worth mentioning that if the morpheme *-s* proves to be the marker of the topic status of nominative subjects, it is because that morpheme seems to be an allomorph of another marker of topic status in contemporary English, i.e. the genitive morpheme *-’s*.

### 3.2. THE MORPHEME *-s*: AN ALLOMORPH OF THE GENITIVE MORPHEME *-’s*

Regarding the bound morpheme *-s* realized on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present as an allomorph, a variant or another occurrence of the genitive morpheme *-’s* is quite logical when considering some similarities existing between the two morphemes. Those similarities between both morphemes are observable with respect to their syntactic position, their (morpho)phonological functioning, and their semantic scope.

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<sup>3</sup> A distinction should be made between Topics and topics (Cf. Laenzlinger, 2006). The first one (i.e. Topics) being the constituent merged into the initial position of the finite sentence, and the second one (i.e. topics) representing grammatical subjects with nominative Case.

<sup>4</sup> According to the approach, [Spec. TP] can be tantamount to [Spec. IP], [Spec. AspP], [Spec. SubjP], [Spec. MoodP], etc.

3.2.1. *Syntactic position*

The morpheme *-s* realized on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present and the genitive morpheme *-’s* do share syntactic (or structural) properties in contemporary English. Indeed, both morphemes are always located in a head position. In other words, each morpheme can be either a head or an element attached to an item which is a head, in the sense that a head can only be attached to another head in the structure (Rouveret, 2018, p. 32). In this respect, the examples in (6) can be considered.

(6)

a. This child sings very well.

[<sub>topP</sub> This child [<sub>top</sub> top Fin [<sub>TP</sub> ~~This child~~ [<sub>T</sub> T<sub>PRES</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> ~~This child~~ [<sub>V</sub> [V sings] [<sub>AdvP</sub> very well]]]]]]]]]

b. Ryan’s messy room. (Cf. the messy room of Ryan)

14. [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> [<sub>N</sub> [N Ryan]]] [<sub>D</sub> [D ’s] [<sub>NP</sub> messy room]]]<sup>5</sup>

As can be seen in (6a), the morpheme *-s* is located in the position of the head V because it is attached to the verbal head *sings* filling that position. Correlatively, in (6b), the so-called genitive morpheme *-’s* lies in the position of the head D, but because of its being a bound morpheme needing a lexical support, it attaches to the head noun *Ryan* in the specifier of DP.

Regarding the examples from (6), it can be noted that the morpheme *-s* realized on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present and the genitive morpheme *-’s* occupy the same type of syntactic position, namely a head position.

3.2.2. *Morphophonological properties*

After the syntactic position, another similarity between the morpheme *-s* realized on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present and the genitive morpheme *-’s* lies in their (morpho)phonological functioning. As a matter of fact, when both morphemes have their lexical support involved in a pluralization operation giving rise to the plurality marker *-s*, they behave the same way in the sense that they mutate. Clearly, when the lexical support for those morphemes gets a feature [+plural], the morphemes are not realized (phonetically) or pronounced: they become null. In that perspective, the examples in (7) and (8) are very telling.

(7)

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<sup>5</sup> Even though *Ryan* is topicalized in *Ryan’s messy room*, the phrase remains a DP because *Ryan* has a genitive Case. Then, *Ryan’s messy room* cannot be a topP for the simple reason that the feature of the head top is linked to a nominative Case.

a. The street's/\*street' width.

DP.3SG

b. The streets'/\*streets's width.

DP.3PL

(8)

a. He buys/\*buy fewer cigarettes now.

3SG Pres.3SG

b. They buy/\*buys fewer cigarettes now.

3PL Pres.3PL

On the one hand, in (7), it is observed that the genitive morpheme is realized in (7a) because its lexical support, i.e. the item on which it is attached, the head noun *street*, is formally defined by the feature [-plural]. And yet, when the lexical support, *street*, obtains the feature [+plural] materialized by the plurality suffix *-s* in (7b), the genitive morpheme is not realized. On the other hand, a similar situation is observed in (8) as regards the behavior of the morpheme realized on the verb.3SG in the present. Indeed, the relevant morpheme is realized in (8a) on the verb *buys* (3SG) with a feature [-plural], however, it is not realized when the verb is defined by the feature [3PL], including a feature [+plural]: that is the case in (8b).

Therefore, it can be said that the two morphemes have much in common with respect to their morphophonology. Also, given the symmetry between the examples in (7) and (8), it can be assumed that both morphemes represent two occurrences of the same morpheme.

### 3.2.3. *Semantic value*

In addition to the fact that there are syntactic and (morpho)phonological similarities between the morpheme *-s* on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present and the genitive morpheme *-’s*, another similarity between both morphemes is a semantic one. In fact, the relevant morphemes can be called “topicalizers” since they signal the topic status of the constituent on their left. For instance, the grammatical subject *this child* in (6a) is a topic (Cf. the subsection 3.2.1.), and this is observable through the morpheme *-s* realized on the verb *sings*; likewise, the noun *Ryan* is topicalized in (6b) precisely because of the presence of the genitive morpheme *-’s*. In fact, *Ryan* is not topicalized in *the messy room of Ryan*, but it is in *Ryan’s messy room*.

It is worth mentioning that both *this child* in (6a) and *Ryan* in (6b) have undergone a movement (or internal merge) to join the initial position due to their topic status.

By way of consequence, it can be assumed that the semantic scope of both morphemes comes to strengthen the idea postulating that they constitute allomorphs, i.e. two occurrences of the same morpheme.

Briefly, regarding section 2, it seems obvious that subject-verb agreement in contemporary English is not morphologically marked on the verbal element as assumed by syntacticians, in the sense that the so-called “symbol” of the markedness of that agreement, i.e. the bound morpheme *-s* on the verb/auxiliary in the present, is not a realization of the formal feature [3SG], but of a topic feature linked to the nominative case of grammatical subjects. As for section 3, it presents interesting facts strengthening the idea that the morpheme *-s* realized on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present in contemporary English, i.e. the alleged marker (and symbol) of subject-verb agreement, is not a marker of subject-verb agreement. In fact, that morpheme seems to be an allomorph or another occurrence of the genitive morpheme *-’s*.

But, if subject-verb agreement is not marked or visible in contemporary English and nominative subjects have the feature [+topic], then, what motivates the realization of the morpheme *-s* on the verb/auxiliary with the formal feature [3SG]? Why is it that the morpheme is realized in the present but neither in the past nor on modal auxiliaries? The section 4 strives to provide plausible answers to these questions.

#### *4. The morpheme -s on the verb/auxiliary.3SG and the Strong Minimalist Thesis*

So far, it has been shown that subject-verb agreement in contemporary English is not (morphologically) marked, that the morpheme *-s* on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in the present does not represent the symbol of the markedness of that agreement, and that the relevant morpheme is a realization of a topic feature linked to the nominative Case of subjects. In fact, the morpheme *-s* on the verb/auxiliary.3SG is likely to be an allomorph of the genitive morpheme *-’s*.

In this section, it will be shown that the formal feature [3SG/PL] is referentially defective on grammatical subjects. This fact constituting a problem

(Cf. Full Interpretation Principle<sup>6</sup>), the system resorts to a resurgence of the genitive morpheme -'s on the verb/auxiliary.3SG as a way of trying and solving the problem related to the referential defectivity of subjects with the morphological feature [3SG/PL].

4.1. THE REFERENTIAL DEFECTIVITY OF THE FORMAL FEATURE [3SG/PL] IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

The morphological feature of third person ([3SG/PL]) is regarded as a feature with referential defectivity in that it gives rise to an instability or versatility of the reference denoted by the grammatical subject bearing it. Indeed, the grammatical subject defined by the feature [3SG] may have either an atomic reference or a plural reference, and the same is true when the subject is defined by [3PL]. This is why, Benveniste (1966) claimed that the third person feature is the feature of non-person. As a result, third person pronouns are considered underspecified with respect to the feature [Person], whereas first and second person pronouns are said to be fully specified for the same feature (Rouveret 2015, p. 359). This is quite understandable when we think of first and second persons as having the feature [+Participant] as regards discursive events, while third persons have a feature [-Participant] (Nevins, 2007, 2011).

To grasp the referential defectivity of the feature [3SG/PL] on grammatical subjects in contemporary English, let us reconsider the utterances in (1a), (1b) and (1c), repeated below in (9a), (9b) and (9c), respectively.

(9)

a. Cherry cokes is the most popular drink here. (Reid, 1991, p. 194)

NP.3PL Cop.Pres.3PL

b. Five miles is a long distance to walk. (Biber *et al.*, 1999, p. 187)

DP.3PL Cop.Pres.3PL

c. The faculty are all agreed on this point.

DP.3SG Cop.Pres.3SG

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<sup>6</sup> This principle stipulates that all elements included in LF/SEM and PHON, be it features or bundles of features, must be interpretable, i.e. they must be legible by the C-I and SM interfaces. (Rouveret, 2015, p. 192).

The grammatical subject *cherry cokes* in (9a) is defined by the feature [3PL]. From a logical point of view, the subject *cherry cokes* should refer to a set of entities taken to be distinct, i.e. it should have a plural reference. And yet, *cherry cokes* does have an atomic reference. Indeed, for the speaker, *cherry cokes* represents a drink; as such, it can only have an atomic reference despite its feature [3PL]. Likewise, in (9b), the subject *five miles* has the formal feature [3PL]. However, since *five miles* represents a distance, its reference is then atomic. Here, again, the feature [3PL] of *five miles* does not prevent it to have an atomic referential value.

Next, in (9c), needless to say that the grammatical subject *the faculty* has the morphological feature [3SG]; but, in no way does it refer to a single entity. As a matter of fact, the reference denoted by *the faculty* is not atomic. The presence of the quantifier *all* (referring to *the faculty*) is very telling in this respect. Clearly, it can be retained that the subject *the faculty* refers to each member of a set called “faculty”; in this view, the reference of the subject is plural, what does not go along with its feature [3SG].

From what precedes, it is easy to apprehend the basis for the idea that the feature [3SG/PL] is referentially defective in contemporary English.

#### 4.2. THE (NON-)REALIZATION OF THE MORPHEME –S ON THE VERB/AUXILIARY.3SG

According to the Strong Minimalist Thesis, language is an optimal solution to legibility conditions imposed by systems external to the Language Faculty, i.e. the C-I and SM systems, respectively related to meaning and sound. In other words, language is supposed to find the best solution for any problem related to the interpretations of the meaning and sound of all linguistic expressions. Given the fact that the formal feature [3SG/PL] is a source of referential defectivity of the grammatical subject bearing it in contemporary English, the feature [+topic] of nominative subjects is realized as an allomorph of the genitive morpheme –’s on the verb/auxiliary agreeing with that subject so as to specify the atomicity of the reference denoted by the relevant subject with the feature [3SG/PL], solving, this way, the problem of the referential defectivity of the feature [3SG/PL]. What this means is that when the reference denoted by the subject.3SG/PL is atomic, the allomorph of the genitive morpheme is realized on the verb/auxiliary, and when the reference is not atomic, the morpheme is not realized.

##### 4.2.1. *The realization of the morpheme –s on the verb/auxiliary.3SG*

The morpheme -s is always realized on the verb/auxiliary.3SG when two conditions are met, namely when (i) the grammatical subject has an atomic

reference, and (ii) there is no morphophonological constraint impeding that realization.

(10)

a. The police inquires into the murder.

DP.3SG Pres.3SG

[<sub>top</sub> the police [<sub>top</sub> top Fin [<sub>TP</sub> the police [<sub>T</sub> [T  $\emptyset$  (T<sub>PRES</sub>)] [<sub>VP</sub> the police [<sub>V</sub> [V inquires] into the murder]]]]]]]

b. The committee has not met yet.

DP.3SG Aux.Pres.3SG

[<sub>top</sub> the committee [<sub>top</sub> top Fin [<sub>TP</sub> the committee [<sub>T</sub> [T has] not [<sub>VP</sub> the committee [<sub>V</sub> [V met] yet]]]]]]]

For the producer of the utterance in (10a), *the police* is a single entity whose job is to investigate criminal events. Thus, *the police* (3SG) having a reference considered as atomic, the feature defining the head top is realized as an allomorph of the genitive morpheme –’s on the closest non-null element occupying a head position (according to the Minimal Link Condition); in this precise case, that element is the verb *inquires* in the head V position. It is worth recalling that the morphemic realization being talked about here is triggered by the necessity to get rid of the referential (or semantic) defectivity of the feature [3SG] defining the subject *the police* by specifying the atomicity of the reference denoted by this one.

It is worth noting that the morpheme  $\emptyset$  of present tense (T<sub>PRES</sub>) in the T position, which is the closest head to top, cannot be a support for a bound morpheme because it has no phonological content: it is null. This is why, it does not represent an impediment to the realization of the morpheme -s on the second closest head, the verb *inquires*.

The same situation is observed in the utterance in (10b) where *the committee* is the grammatical subject. Indeed, *the committee* is taken to refer to only one entity. To mark this atomicity (or specificity) of the reference denoted by *the committee*, the morpheme -s is then realized on the verbal auxiliary *has* which is the non-null head in the closest position to the head top.

#### 4.2.2. The non-realization of the morpheme –s on the verb/auxiliary.3SG

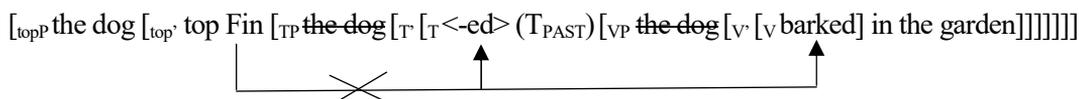
First, the morpheme -s is not realized on the verb/auxiliary.3SG in past sentences for morphophonological reasons. Indeed, inasmuch as that morpheme, which is the realization of the feature of the head top, is realized on the closest

non-null head in the structure, it is to be realized on the copy of the tense marker *-ed* in T. Nevertheless, the morpheme *-ed* being a bound morpheme, (i) it cannot constitute a support for another bound morpheme, and (ii) it represents a barrier for the realization of the morpheme *-s* on the verb in V for minimality reasons: hence the non-realization of the morpheme.

(11)

The dog barked/\*barkeds in the garden.

DP.3SG Past.3SG



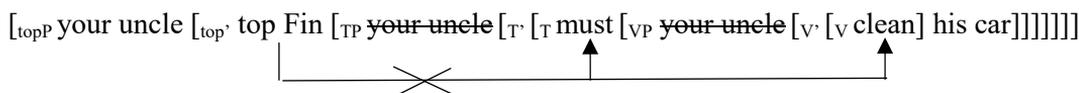
In (11), on the one hand, the topic morpheme *-s* cannot be realized on the copy of the tense marker *-ed* in the T position because both are bound morphemes; on the other hand, the morpheme *-ed* represents an obstacle for the realization of the topic morpheme on the verb.3SG *barked*. This is why the phonological module rules out the form *barkeds*.

Next, just like in past sentences, the realization of the morpheme *-s* on the verb.3SG is blocked in sentences containing modal auxiliaries. In fact, the same morphophonological constraint impeding the realization of the morpheme *-s* on the verb.3SG in past sentences is also at stake in sentences with modal auxiliaries.

(12)

Your uncle must/\*musts clean his car.

DP.3SG Mod.3SG



On the one hand, in (12), the morpheme *-s* cannot be realized on the modal *must* because modal auxiliaries function like inflectional morphemes in contemporary English (Cf. Roberts, 1985); this is precisely why they are associated to a verb in its base form, just like inflections. On the other hand, the realization of the morpheme *-s* on the verb *clean* is impossible as well, in the sense that the modal *must* occupying the head T position stands as an impediment to that realization by virtue of its being the closest non-null head to top.

Finally, sentences of the same type as those in (2) contain an embedded non-assertive clause. Even if the embedded clause is headed by the finite

complementizer *that*, that clause has a non-finite verbal element due to its discursive value. Consider, for example, the utterance in (13).

(13)

He insists [that she be respected]

Comp 3SG.Nom Cop.Unr

[ForceP [Force that] [topP she [top' top Fin [TP she [T' [T  $\emptyset_{UNR}$ ] [VP she [V' [V be] respected]]]]]]]]]

The topic morpheme *-s* is not realized on the closest non-null head (i.e. *be*) in (13) because of the morpheme  $\emptyset_{UNR}$  of unrealness in the T position which constitutes an impediment to that realization, even if that morpheme is null. Indeed, the role of  $\emptyset_{UNR}$  is to suspend any agreement relation in the embedded *that*-clause between the grammatical subject *she* and the verb *be*. The use of the non-finite verb *be* in this clause (despite the nominative Case of the subject *she*), as opposed to the use of finite *is*, is motivated by the fact that, for the speaker, the relation between *she* and the VP *be respected* is not established (yet): it is a hypothetical or fictitious relation. Therefore, the morpheme *-s* cannot be realized when there is the morpheme  $\emptyset_{UNR}$  occupying a position between the head top and its target, no matter if the grammatical subject is defined by a feature of third person and has an atomic reference.

Moreover, if the head T in the embedded clause in (13) is defective due to its filling with the morpheme  $\emptyset_{UNR}$  of unrealness, it means that the subject *she* gets its nominative Case from the finite complementizer *that*, not from T.

### 5. Conclusion

This paper has been intended to show that subject-verb agreement in contemporary English is not marked morphologically, neither on main verbs nor on auxiliaries. In fact, it seems that the bound morpheme *-s*, which is viewed as both the marker of subject-verb agreement (3SG) and the symbol of this type of agreement in contemporary English, represents the realization of the topic feature of the head top immediately above Fin in the CP domain of finite sentences. In view of the referential or semantic defectivity of the formal feature [3SG/PL], the topic morpheme *-s*, an allomorph of the English genitive morpheme *'s*, is realized on the closest non-null head as an optimal solution to that defectivity according to the Strong Minimalist Thesis: the objective being to properly interpret the subject.3SG/PL (Cf. Full Interpretation Principle). Clearly, when the grammatical

subject defined by the defective feature [3SG/PL] denotes a reference taken to be atomic by the speaker/writer, the morpheme *-s* is realized, but it is not realized when the reference of the subject is considered as non-atomic. In some sentences (i.e. past sentences, sentences with modal auxiliaries, clauses with non-assertive value, etc.) where the morpheme *-s* is not realized, that realization is hindered by (morpho)phonological or semantic constraints. It is worth mentioning that the realization of the topic morpheme *-s* is not compulsory for grammaticality in the sense that it is just a consequence of the agreement relation between the head top and the nominative subject and the subsequent movement of that subject from [Spec. TP] to [Spec. topP].

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# Teaching Spanish somatic idioms to Romanian students: theoretical and methodological considerations

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## **Abstract**

*This article aims to provide the necessary tools for teaching Spanish phraseological units to Romanian native speaker learners, applying the postulates of contrastive analysis, corpus linguistics and Phraseodidactics. Aware of the impossibility to cover an exhaustive range of semantic fields, we focus on verbal somatic idioms. Our purpose is to gather theoretical and methodological considerations that will provide more precise keys for designing didactic materials, which promote the acquisition of phraseological competence. We believe it is necessary to gradually integrate phraseological units in the learning/teaching process, not only for those who have already mastered a language, but also for those who start studying a foreign language.*

**Keywords:** *phraseological units, contrastive phraseology, somatic idioms, Spanish as a Foreign Language.*

## *Introduction*

We strongly believe that “learning a foreign language, as well as the social and cultural integration of a foreigner in the host linguistic community, also goes through phraseological integration, that is, the incorporation of the phraseological units into their discourse”<sup>1</sup> (Timofeeva, 2013, p. 323). Therefore, the students must be guided throughout the complex path towards the target language, facilitating the understanding and production of phraseological units (hereinafter PUs), so that their speech resembles (in communicative terms) a native speaker’s production. In addition, behind the idiomatic expressions lies an important cultural background and “the strong connection between phraseology and cultural component entails an

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<sup>1</sup> El aprendizaje de una LE, así como la integración social y cultural de un extranjero en la comunidad lingüística de acogida, pasa también por la integración fraseológica, es decir, la incorporación de las UF a su discurso.

expansion of sociocultural knowledge of the student, that is linked to the time and the circumstances of the use of language”<sup>2</sup> (Mendizábal, 2016, p. 6).

Each segment of reality or experience finds a place in the idiomatic lexicon. García-Page (2008) identifies numerous semantical fields: professions, colors, musical instruments, culinary art and gastronomy, flora and agricultural products, animals, minerals and precious stones, household objects, clothing, climatology, astrology and natural phenomena, anthroponyms and gentilics, world of sports and bullfighting, sailing and transportation, religion, arts, monetary system, weapons, linguistic units, etc.

In this paper, we focus on those phraseological units which include a part of the body in their structure, the so-called “somatic phrases” or “somatic idioms” which are, according to Čermák (2000), those that spark the greatest interest. Somatic or corporal set expressions reflect the perception that any human being entails of the universe, regardless of a specific cultural or linguistic world. It is, in fact, a linguistic pattern and “apparently, in all the languages of the world there is a structuring of our experience directly linked to the human or animal body and the way in which it interacts with the environment”<sup>3</sup> (Nénkova, 2006, p. 109). Moreover, the choice of this onomasiological field responds to other factors: the words designing the body are among the first ones that are taught and learned in a foreign language class and they do not usually pose any translations difficulties.

### *Teaching Spanish phraseology*

Teachers have been the firsts to identify the need to introduce this authentic, motivating and integrating component into the Spanish as a Foreign Language (hereinafter S/FL) classroom. Somehow, they went ahead in their quest with studies of a more theoretical nature. González Rey (2012, p. 67) affirms that “the origin of the Phraseodidactics is located in the glotto-didactic or didactic of languages, where teachers express the first sign of interest towards the most vivid part of the language they teach.”<sup>4</sup> Likewise, when creating and testing materials for foreign students, teachers have been able to ascertain that teaching phraseology

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<sup>2</sup> La fuerte conexión entre fraseología y componente cultural supone para el estudiante de ELE una ampliación del conocimiento sociocultural que va unido a la época y circunstancias de uso de la lengua.

<sup>3</sup> Al parecer, en todas las lenguas del mundo existe una estructuración de nuestra experiencia directamente vinculada al cuerpo humano o animal y a la manera en que se interactúa con el entorno.

<sup>4</sup> El origen de la Fraseodidáctica se sitúa en la glotodidáctica o didáctica de las lenguas, en donde emergen las primeras manifestaciones de interés de docentes de lenguas extranjeras por la parte más viva de la lengua que enseñan.

means much more than presenting a series of multi-verbal expressions: we are dealing with a content that serves to teach an entire language.

In our view, some techniques and approaches appear as obsolete, such as memory lists without providing contexts or other restrictions of use or any information that configures the syntactic structure or encourages a correct pragmatic use. Likewise, an exhaustive presentation of expressions generated by support verbs (*estar, dar, poner, hacer, meter*) is counterproductive. Phraseology is not acquired as a(n) (ir)regular verb conjugation table, but rather involves complex processes that go beyond formal, strictly linguistic aspects. “The information is not randomly stored in our memory, nor is it arranged alphabetically, but rather by establishing relationships with prior data. Our way of thinking is determined by two fundamental processes: associating and classifying.”<sup>5</sup> (Leal Riol, 2011, p. 246)

In our specific case of somatic idioms, we strongly agree with Diamante Colado (2003) and Moreno Pereiro (2006) who apply cognitive postulates to the teaching of these set expressions, following the experiential theories of Lakoff and Johnson (1980): the basis of our thinking is bodily and we (as speakers) categorize reality through basic metaphors which represent the explanatory foundation of a multitude of expressions. The phraseological units are, from the cognitive semantics standpoint, the linguistic reflection of the corporeal character of the mind.

Another important aspect is the balance between reflective and productive skills and the integration of functional and cultural content that must be taken into account, encouraging interaction in the classroom. Our teaching experience matches López Vázquez’s conclusions (2011): after analyzing the presence of the idiomatic component in numerous Spanish textbooks, she considers that

*We also have to draw attention to the fact that these textbooks focus on receptive phraseological competence, that is, the ability of learners to decipher and recognize these units, but neglect the ability to produce them, since there are very few cases of exercises in which learners must reuse expressions.*<sup>6</sup> (López Vázquez, 2011, p. 540)

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<sup>5</sup> La información no se almacena en la memoria aleatoria ni aisladamente, tampoco se ordena alfabéticamente, sino estableciendo relaciones con la información ya existente. Nuestra forma de pensar está determinada por dos procesos fundamentales: asociar y clasificar.

<sup>6</sup> También tenemos que llamar la atención sobre el hecho de que estos manuales se centran en la competencia fraseológica receptiva, es decir, en la habilidad de los aprendientes para descifrar y reconocer estas unidades, pero desatienden la habilidad para producirlos, ya que son muy escasos los casos de ejercicios en los cuales los aprendientes deben reutilizar las expresiones.

Hence, we are in favor of the didactic concept of action-oriented methodology, we defend the student's central position in the teaching/learning process and we consider "learning by doing" a fundamental principle in this endeavour.

We also want to highlight the amount of phraseological input inserted in the teaching materials. We assume that at certain times the number of exponents might be slightly higher than the natural production of a native speaker and we agree with Serradilla Castaño (2014) that

*Fortunately for Spanish learners, we do not usually introduce so many idioms in a row in our usual language, but it is no less true that we use them regularly in spoken and written language, so it won't be difficult to find real materials for our students when leaning Spanish phraseology.*<sup>7</sup> (Serradilla Castaño, 2014, p. 83)

Ultimately, we strive to avoid overwhelming our students with endless idiomatic expressions, which use seem strained in real life. However, our teaching experience confirms that a suitable contextualization fosters a high number of idiomatic elements that learners do not perceive as excessive.

Both curricular documents which guide us in the teaching/learning process of Spanish as a Foreign Language (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment – 2001 and Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes – 2006) assign the study of phraseology to C1/C2 levels of proficiency. Nevertheless, we are strong supporters of an earlier introduction of the set expressions. Julià Luna and Ortiz Rodríguez (2012) designed methodological proposals focused on the gastronomic lexicon, covering the complete curricular itinerary (levels A1-C2<sup>8</sup>).

*A teaching proposal has been created for each level, and the PUs are integrated as part of the learning process consisting of tasks reflecting different linguistic skills and connected to essential factors in the learning of idioms of any language (the meaning, the use, and the metaphor behind). It is an integrative and transversal method.* (Julià Luna & Ortiz Rodríguez, 2012, p. 12)

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<sup>7</sup> Afortunadamente para los aprendientes de ELE, no solemos introducir tantas locuciones seguidas en nuestra lengua habitual pero no es menos cierto que recurrimos a ellas con asiduidad en la lengua hablada y escrita por lo que no será difícil encontrar materiales reales con los que enfrentar a nuestros estudiantes a la fraseología del español.

<sup>8</sup> Para cada uno de los niveles se ha creado una propuesta docente en la que las UFS se integran como parte del aprendizaje en tareas de distintas destrezas lingüísticas y en relación a factores esenciales en el aprendizaje de fraseologismos de cualquier lengua (el significado, el uso y la motivación de las formaciones). Se trata de un método integrador y transversal.

### *Teaching Spanish somatic idioms to Romanian students*

Likewise, they suggest a series of criteria to take into account when introducing the phraseological component in the classroom, among which we highlight the relationship with the sociolinguistic context, the frequency of use, the onomasiological organization or the link between the origin or cognitive schema and meaning. In a later work (2013), they focus on somatic idioms and, from the cognitive semantics standpoint, they present a transversal and progressive proposal for the recognition, understanding and reproduction of a series of phraseological units. They highlight the importance of the presence of the idiomatic expressions from the initial stages of learning a language (A1) to the end of it (C2).

Finally, we consider that the materials and the activities designed should meet the requirements expressed by modern approaches such as “post-method” (Brown, 2002) or “eclectic method” (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Based on three fundamental organizational principles (particularity, practicability and possibility), teachers must take into account several other aspects, for instance: maximizing learning opportunities, facilitating negotiated interaction, developing intuitive learning, promoting language awareness, contextualizing the input, ensuring social relevance.

#### *Teaching phraseology (levels A1-A2)*

For the initial levels, our purpose is to promote linguistic awareness and help learners to develop the association process established between the units, not only at the phonetic, morphosyntactic or discursive level, but also at the non-linguistic level: visual stimuli, cultural knowledge, etc. Therefore, we propose to expand the learners’ mental lexicon towards the phraseological universe, conceived as an associative network of words structured and organized in interconnected networks, in constant movement and expansion (Aitchison, 1987).

The phraseological component should be introduced in a very subtle way, taking advantage of authentic or credible “samples”. Needless to say, intermediary activities are essential, since we do not build a whole didactic unit around a series of phraseological units, but integrate the idiomatic segments in a natural way.

Likewise, we have noticed that in modern materials the learner's mother tongue is banished. Although as a methodological principle we support the total immersion in the Spanish as a Foreign Language classroom, Romanian students constantly demand the equivalence of the PUs in their mother tongue, which gives them security. For this reason, despite the “bad press” that traditional method techniques receive, we consider necessary to respect the long educational tradition of our students.

When referring to translation as a verbal technique for conveying the meaning of a PU, Leal Riol (2011) considers that the target language should be used if the student's level of communicative competence allows it, but "translation can save a lot of time and, in addition, we gain precision and accuracy as long as the phraseological unit refers to the same extralinguistic reality and its meaning is shared in both languages."<sup>9</sup> (Leal Riol, 2011, p. 242)

Unlike Julià Luna and Ortiz Rodríguez (2012), we consider establishing a high number of PUs per level to be an unattainable goal and quantifying the input proves itself impossible to reach.

*(...) each level would not exceed the presentation of 200 PUs and at the end of the learning process the student would be able to recognize 1,200 PUs. This is obviously a guideline number since we do not believe that language learning is really quantifiable. However, the progressive presentation of a certain number of PUs would allow the apprentice to become familiar with this type of structures, their use and characteristics.*<sup>10</sup> (Julià Luna & Ortiz Rodríguez, 2012, p. 14)

As a final consideration, contextualization plays a fundamental role as it guarantees optimal results in the learning process from the beginner levels.

Somatic idioms (A1-A2): *no abrir la boca, no tener dos dedos de frente, tener la cabeza sobre los hombros, estar mal de la cabeza, peinar canas, hablar por los codos, tener un corazón de oro, ser el ojito derecho, tener los pies en el suelo, no tener ni pies ni cabeza, no tener dos dedos de frente, tomar el pelo, costar un ojo de la cara, etc.*

Communicative content: physical and personality traits description; conversation about daily routine; conversations about prices; objects descriptions, etc.

Objectives: enhance phraseological competence through contextualized somatic idioms; reinforce somatic idioms by activating the image of the somatic lexeme; encourage cognitive reflection on the nature of PUs (with or without correlation in Romanian); reflect on the search for idiomatic equivalences; provide cultural content (television programs, comics, music and film) as a motivating

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<sup>9</sup> La traducción puede ahorrar mucho tiempo y, además, ganamos precisión y exactitud siempre que la unidad fraseológica se refiera a la misma realidad extralingüística y su significado sea compartido en los dos idiomas.

<sup>10</sup> Cada uno de los niveles no superaría la presentación de 200 UFS y al final del aprendizaje de la lengua el estudiante llegaría a poder reconocer 1.200 UFS. Se trata, evidentemente, de una cifra orientativa puesto que no creemos que el aprendizaje lingüístico sea realmente cuantificable. No obstante, la presentación progresiva de cierto número de UFS permitiría que el aprendiz se familiarizara con este tipo de formaciones, su uso y sus características.

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support for practicing somatic set expressions; promote multilingual competence and mediator competence; encourage learners' autonomy and the use of lexicographical sources, etc.

#### *Teaching phraseology (levels B1-B2)*

Compared to previous levels, the (upper)intermediate levels offer the learners more linguistic resources in order to carry out complex tasks. Hence, the phraseological component takes on more prominence and, on occasions, can represent the backbone of didactic proposals. At these levels, it is possible to integrate a higher input of phraseological units and take advantage of “realia” - samples and objects from real life used in classroom instruction. A foreign student should be able to understand (and subsequently properly produce) a somatic idiom that Spanish native speakers would freely express. Nevertheless, considering the vast community of Spanish speakers and the huge number of diatopic variables, it is essential to carry out a previous selection.

We agree with Aguilar Ruiz (2011) in her strive to answer the challenging question “what phraseology to teach”, of the very high number of diatopic variants.

*We must emphasize here that what is truly important for the student is to correctly learn the proposed phraseological units, paying special attention to the pragmatic aspects so as to be able to apply them in adequate situations, and, above all, avoiding possible interference with their mother tongue.*<sup>11</sup> (Aguilar Ruiz, 2011, p. 3)

In this respect, and from our teaching and research experience, we propose to exclusively select idioms belonging to the variety of standard Spanish spoken in Spain. Therefore, we discard all those archaic, dialectal or disused expressions whose meaning is unknown by all native speakers. We also exclude vulgar and slang lexemes such as *culo*, *coño*, *cojón*, etc., despite them generating a high number of somatic idioms and having an active use in nowadays Spanish. We consider that the presence of these somatic idioms is not justified in materials for the initial and intermediate level curriculum, since learners do not yet master the speech registers (educated norm, formal, informal register, etc.). Therefore, these vulgar elements carry the risk of pragmatic errors in future productions.

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<sup>11</sup> Hemos de hacer hincapié aquí en que lo verdaderamente importante para el alumno es aprender correctamente las UFS propuestas, prestando especial atención a los aspectos pragmáticos para poder aplicarlas en situaciones adecuadas, y evitando, ante todo, posibles interferencias con su lengua materna.

In terms of techniques and practical activities, we continue to take advantage of visual resources, brainstorming, activating previous lexical knowledge and encouraging reflection and self-learning strategies. We are convinced that motivation is an essential factor and one of the teacher's fundamental tasks is to fulfill students' interest, since they are the true protagonists of their learning process. In this sense, we agree with Kaufmann's perspective:

*In the most effective classrooms, it is not the language that is studied, but some other subject of interest to the students. In studying another subject, the learners absorb the language, and are less self-conscious about their own language difficulties in their enthusiasm to communicate about something of interest to them. After the learners are exposed to a sufficient amount of interesting content by listening and reading in the language, they gradually become aware of the need for correct structure and word use. Then they are motivated to work on these aspects of the language. It is best if the learners ask for help as they need it, rather than having to respond to the timetable of the teacher. The teacher is able to correct the students privately or on written content and to offer relevant grammatical explanations as required. The classroom can be a useful learning environment if it is used in a flexible way which puts the learner and not the teacher in control.*  
(Kaufmann, 2003, p. 97)

For this reason, the activities must be playful, dynamic and fun, to encourage students' creativity. Therefore, they must be designed to last in their affective memory on the long term. The selected readings must have a wider extension and represent authentic texts, sometimes manipulated according to the phraseological objectives pursued. Many activities start from the fundamental premise that we can understand the main topic using our experience and knowledge of the concrete. The basic meanings serve us, therefore, to obtain the rest of the meanings through metaphoric and metonymic relationships, an extremely useful concept for understanding many somatic idioms.

Somatic idioms (B1-B2): *ser un bocazas, quemarse las cejas, empinar el codo, arrimar el hombro, no dar pie con bola, tener la mosca detrás de la oreja, poner pies en polvorosa, quedarse con los ojos a cuadros, echar una mano, darse con un canto en los dientes, morderse la lengua, clavar un puñal por la espalda, jugarse el cuello, poner toda la carne en el asador, etc.*

Communicative content: write a report; explain an event; tell a story; narrate experiences; express plans and projects; debate on cultural traditions and clashes; create advertising campaigns, etc.

Objectives: identify phraseological input in real contexts, carry out the process of decoding and provide suitable contexts to reuse UFs effectively; reflect on connotative and denotative meaning; expand lexical competence through

idioms ascribed to numerous communicative functions: “feelings” (happiness, satisfaction, frustration, anger, etc.), “communicative actions” (express menace, complaint, denial), “everyday realities” (work, studies, money, fortune, etc.).

### *Conclusions*

In this paper, we outlined a series of theoretical and methodological guidelines for designing teaching materials whose aim is to improve the phraseological competence of Romanians who learn Spanish as a Foreign Language (levels A1-B2) and several requirements for the materials to be effective. We were motivated by the fact that, despite the growing number of Spanish-Romanian contrastive phraseological studies that we have witnessed in recent years, we still lack large-scale didactic and applied works or relevant developments in the publishing market.

Despite the guidelines of the fundamental curricular documents in the teaching of S/FL, we consider that the integration of the language component must be carried out from the first stages of learning, with a gradual subsequent integration. Therefore, a careful selection of the phraseological input is necessary, taking into account numerous factors: the students’ needs, the integration of the FUs within the functional contents, the degree of difficulty (lexical and morphosyntactic, etc.). We consider that “less is more”, that is, it is better to carry out a careful selection, according to students' interest, than to overwhelm them with an amount of unnecessary input. The presence of a motivated metaphor, the total equivalence of somatic idioms or a similar actantial structure eases the insertion of the expression at a lower level (A1-A2), while the opacity, the idiosyncratic cultural background or the morphosyntactic and semantic complexity assign a PU to higher levels (B1-B2 and beyond).

As researchers and teachers, we must take account of our students’ needs and quests in order to design materials and activities that bring them a little closer to the target language. The acquisition of phraseological competence represents a fundamental part of their global communicative competence.

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ESSAYS

PRESENTATIONS

REVIEWS



# Traditions and philosophical renewals

## Review

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*Integrarea tradițiilor filosofice în societatea bazată pe cunoaștere*  
[*Integrating philosophical traditions in the knowledge-based society*].  
(2019): Kishinev. Institute of History, Philosophy Department – Chișinău  
[Kishinev], “Artpoligraf” Printing House.

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The philosophical studies of our colleagues from Chișinău [Kishinev] are connected to Romanian and universal ideas. The latest proof, in this respect, is the volume *Integrarea tradițiilor filosofice în societatea bazată pe cunoaștere* [*Integrating philosophical traditions in the knowledge-based society*] (2019). As we learn from the “Introduction”, this book does not only continue a series of previous studies, but “brings to the fore the way in which the traditions of the contemporary philosophy manifest in the knowledge-based society, emphasizing its specificity in the society of the Republic of Moldova” (p. 4). The reflections of the seven researchers – Ana Pascaru (coordinator), Gheorghe Bobâna, Lidia Troianowski, Rodica Ciobanu, Alexandru Cosmescu, Andrei Perciun and Nicolae Bodean – who contributed to the development of the book follow the evolution of the ideas which marked the universal thinking beginning with the 19th century up to present.

The richness of the research themes in the seven chapters – “Epistemic Prospects on the Knowledge Based Society: realities and perspectives” (by PhD hab. Ana Pascaru), “Contemporary Romanian Philosophy in European Context and Its Valorization in the Republic of Moldova” (by PhD hab. Gheorghe Bobâna), “Aesthetic-Spiritual Views in Contemporary Romanian contemporary thinking at the intersection of the centuries XIX-XX” (by PhD Lidia Troianowski), “The Perspective of the valorization of the Normative Social System” (by PhD Rodica Ciobanu); “Thought in Late 19th – Early 20th Century” (by PhD Rodica

Ciobanu), “Embodiment and Language in Phenomenology and Other Philosophical Traditions“ (by PhD Alexandru Cosmescu), “The Sensible Forms in the Traditions of Contemporary Philosophy” (by PhD Andrei Perciun), “Anthropological Philosophical Dimension of Identity in New Contemporary Realities” (by Nicolae Bodean) – is accompanied by deep analysis and critical constructive pendulum in the spheres of ideas with the aim of integrating philosophical traditions into the knowledge-based society. In the current context, the authors propose “renewing the relationship between the fields of philosophy and contemporary science” and “reorganizing activities and understanding ways to identify solutions to meet the challenges of the contemporary world” (pp. 4, 5).

In the chapter that marks the beginning of the work, Ana Pascaru considers, in this consistent essay, that “substantial reassessments” are needed, which aim to “exploit the following milestones: repositioning the fundamentals of knowledge, the contemporaneity of connections and acrimony” (p. 7). The “perspective of renewals” makes it easy for the researcher to make connections between traditional and current thinking, in order to capitalize on both, but also to optimize the relationship between philosophy and science (p. 25). Epistemic prospecting, if we take into account this angle, contributes to its development and systematization, because “Renewal does not mean renunciation of depth or value benchmarks, but on the contrary the more open they are in communication the closer they get to each other and also contribute to the edification of interconnections, interdependencies and interactions between issues invoked. What consequently diminishes event appearances and develops systemic ones” (p. 52). The same is the issue of education, if we report it to innovation (p. 50).

Gheorghe Bobâna highlights, in the second chapter, the intertwining between Romanian and European philosophical thinking. The researcher also pays attention to how, in recent decades, Romanian philosophy has been harnessed in the Republic of Moldova. The researcher's attention is directed, in particular, towards the interwar period, with regard to the social, cultural and political contribution of the thinkers C. Stere, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru and Alexandru Boldur. Significant pages of profound analysis are also dedicated to the philosophers Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica and Mircea Vulcănescu. Selectively, we will highlight some ideas. We note, therefore, that “For Stere, the destiny of the Romanian industry was linked to the modernization and development of agriculture, to the development of the internal market” (p. 83); that “C. Rădulescu-Motru outlines the ideology of the Peasant State. It starts from the principle of productions collectively organized in villages primary for the purpose of not using

money accumulation, but with the aim of raising the standard of living for those who take part in work” (p. 89); or that “The theory of the peasant state, promoted by Alexandru Boldur, addresses the problem of the relationship between classes and society. According to this theory, the state represents the essence of the peasantry, from the ethnicity of which the whole nation originated. The state arises from the special attitude between peasant and nature, an attitude that differs radically from the attitude of workers towards their tools” (p. 94).

In this section it is also interesting the part dedicated to the capitalization of Romanian thought, especially since “the Romanian philosophy has hardly implanted in the Republic of Moldova” (p. 148), being even a taboo subject “until the end of the 90s of the last century” (p. 147). Access to interwar thinking, for example, was eased in 1980, when the second volume of the *History of Romanian Philosophy* (1900-1944) - coordinators Dumitru Ghișe and Nicolae Gogoneața (Bucharest: Publishing House of the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania, 777p.), was published, but the doctrines were presented “from the Marxist-Leninist point of view, with the criticism «necessary» to the unwitting reader” (p. 148). It was not until 1997 that Sorin Roșca and Ludmila Roșca were able to put out a paper entitled *History and Philosophy of the National Culture*, and in 2011, in the Republic of Moldova, it was published the first Philosophy textbook, “with a compartment dedicated to Romanian philosophy”. In parallel, philosophical research was developed consisting of doctoral theses, essays and books dedicated to Titu Maiorescu, C. Rădulescu-Motru, Lucian Blaga and Mircea Eliade, for the last (one) there having been a special interest. In some broadcasts on Radio Romania Kishinev as well as at conferences organized by the State University of Kishinev, through the Department of Philosophy and Anthropology (pp. 148-152), there were presented the ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Romanian philosophers such as C. Rădulescu-Motru, P. P. Negulescu, Mircea Vulcănescu, Alexandru Dragomir, Mircea Eliade, Lucian Blaga and others.

A chapter dedicated to Romanian aesthetics at the intersection of the 19th and 20th centuries is the one signed by Lidia Troianowski. The problem of the section, inspired by W. Rostow’s theory, begins with theorizing on the edge of the modernity and the cultural climate of that time, in an era when T. Maiorescu, N. Iorga, G. Ibrăileanu, made “concerted efforts to counter foreign influences” (p. 162). The researcher re-evaluates the contributions of those mentioned and analyzes the concepts of “art with social tendencies” in the creations of Stere, Ibrăileanu and Ionescu-Rion. We note that the author proposes new perspectives

for understanding Romanian aesthetic thinking. Although it does not fit the ideal of social art promoted by C. Stere and R. Ionescu-Rion, because it “denotes certain errors of aesthetics-literary optics”, the two supported it because “it seemed to them the most appropriate solution to solve the equation concerning the social-spiritual crisis from the end of the centuries (fin de siècle) they intercepted” (p. 204). There are in this section other ideas that should be highlighted, but we stick only to the following: the influence of H. Spencer on T. Maiorescu (p. 169), or the impact of Max Nordau’s ideas on the critics “C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, R. Ionescu-Rion and G. Ibraileanu, who make references to the work of *Degeneration*” (p. 221).

Rodica Ciobanu proposes, in Part IV, a careful use of the social system, taking into account the connections between “all spheres of traditional life and activities, with the particularities of knowledge-based society” (p. 240), the emphasis being on moral and legal dimensions, and from a methodological perspective on interdisciplinarity (p. 241). The researcher believes that “the scientific approach of contemporary law requires a reassessment of theoretical-methodological standards, research directions aimed at identifying the future perspectives of the given field, by harnessing the defining dimensions of contemporary public space” (p. 280). Taking into consideration the dynamics of research and the new formulas proposed by contemporary openings, Rodica Ciobanu revives, through this essay, the discourse on scientific research in the legal sphere.

Alexandru Cosmescu examines, in chapter V, “from a phenomenological point of view, two defining aspects for the human being: the experiences of corporality and that of language” (p. 294). In the first part, the author focuses, drawing on Husserl, on the “incarnate dimension of the subject” and, in the second part, interprets, starting from Heidegger, the speaker characteristic of the human being (p. 294). From these theorizations, Al. Cosmescu extends the Husserlian and Heideggerian analyses from a few specific contemporary situations, to finally refer “to how the phenomenological tradition, under the conditions of knowledge-based society, finds an unexpected ally in the practice of mindfulness” (p. 295). Forays into the territories of thinkers Husserl and Heidegger renew the interpretive field and increase the understanding of the new context of thought. As for the practice of mindfulness, Al. Cosmescu argues that it “became a powerful ally of phenomenology in its quest to reach a form of experience-based discourse that analyzes of one’s own body. What it succeeds is the implementation of a radical phenomenological reduction – the reduction to the experiential layer of tactile

feeling of the body. – which can be used as a propaedeutics for phenomenological practice, helping practitioners to assume and apply the classic Husserlian urge *back to the things themselves!*” (p. 344)

In the penultimate chapter, Andrei Perciun analyzes “the forms of the sensitive in the traditions of contemporary philosophy, in the context in which the concept of image is re-signified” and “gives us the opportunity to determine the image as a process of how objects show themselves as phenomena for experience” (p. 346). The consequences of such a change create the framework for the proliferation of an empirical attitude on any fact, knowledge and an axiological change on the question of identity because “Aesthetics is no longer strictly limited to the field of art, spreading to all other social fields” (p. 346). Andrei Perciun’s reflections, by extension, also capture fundamental differences in the relationship between the human world and the animal. The starting points for his speculation are in the writings of the philosopher Giorgio Agamben: *Man and Animal, Nudity and Profanations*, which are supported “on the interpretation of Heidegger’s lecture of 1929-1930” (p. 347). The researcher believes that “in Agamben’s view with which our opinions resonate, the image is not a substance, but an accident, and this makes it found not in a place, but in a subject, which consists in a way of being non-substantial, that is, of what does not exist by itself, but by something else. For this reason, the image coincides with the species.” (p. 400) The fine conceptualizations of the first part of the study are complemented by profound interpretations of the thinking of Siegfried Kracauer, author of the famous book entitled *The Ornament of the Masses*.

Nicolae Bodean conducts, in the last chapter, a research on the “philosophical-anthropological dimension of identity in new contemporary realities”. The author considers that “Analysis of the identity problem is crucial, identity being one of the keys to understand our realities” (p. 404). The researcher finds out that the worlds is going through an age of post-truth, and man goes through an “ethical twilight” (p. 406), abusing euphemism, preferring ambiguities, neo-truth, artificial truth (false truth) and diluted truth (truth lite) (p. 407). Following these examples, the “alternative facts”, as well as fake news are gaining more and more ground. In addition to these aspects, N. Bodean also illustrates aspects of the relationship between culture, social and economic structures, as well as historical factors in the formation of identity. It is also to be praised the final analysis of the identity implications between liberalism and iliberalism, starting with Fareed Zakaria’s essay.

The book *Integrating philosophical traditions into the knowledge-based society* is a very good example of harnessing the treasure trove of Romanian and universal philosophical ideas in the context of knowledge-based society. The studies in this volume are useful for both Romanian researchers and those from the Republic of Moldova. The perspectives opened by this research can be serious pretexts for future collaborations between teams of researchers from the two countries, who feed on the same cultural past.

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