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# Travels, Journeys and Subjectivities: The exiles in Coetzee's Disgrace and Auster's In the Country of Last Things

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## INDEX

Introduction.....	4
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Analysis and Interpretation.....	19
Pre-exile condition and the exile's meddling.....	19
Reimagining oneself.....	41
Broken down...?.....	52
Conclusions.....	63
References.....	67

## Introduction

Since the beginnings of the XX century, people have move around the globe for many reasons. The most vastly recognized is the use of travel as a recreational activity which, since the establishment of capitalism in our present society, has given rise to the emergence of tourism as one of the great necessities of the XXI century. On the other side of the coin, a great part of the population have been forced to travel for reasons related to their survival. Usually referred to as collateral damage or victims of ideological problems, war refugees, migrants, expatriates and exiles have become more common to encounter over the last decades –more often than not, these are people coming from Latin-American, South-African or Eastern countries. It is only logical that in this light, authors began to explore the literary potential of travelling in their works.

For example, the impacts of exile in present day society can be appreciated in Latin-American societies, where dictatorships occurring during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century forced many people out of their countries. Understanding how this traumatic event affects people is crucial for healing profoundly damaged communities. Bearing in mind works of literature as organic historical and cultural expressions in constant interaction with readers from different backgrounds, it becomes of enormous importance to understand literary theory from different perspectives. Not only rich for its intellectual or academic value, but also as a unique opportunity to understand our reality and better shape our future. The present work will focus on to the theme of travelling inside postmodern literature, with its object of study being the repercussion of the forced travel in the introspective journey of the exile, and the effect the latter process has in his subjectivity.

The chosen corpus consist on two postmodernist novels written amid the last 30 years: Paul Auster's *In the country of last things* and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*. The former, written in 1987, tells the story of Anna Blume and her wanderings inside an unnamed post-apocalyptic city, which echoes many issues pertinent to postmodernity while acting as a sort of limbo for the novel's characters. There, she expects to find her missing brother, a journalist who travelled sometime before her and is nowhere to be found. The latter, written in 1999, narrates the problems a white South African English professor has to deal with after being exiled from his community for having an affair with one of his students. This situation leads him to moving in with his daughter, who lives in the countryside, abandoning his lifestyle while being forced to reconstruct his perception of how South-African society functions. J.M. Coetzee is a South African novelist, Australian

citizen and a Literature Nobel Prize winner. Paul Auster is an American writer and winner of the Prince of Asturias Prize for Literature.

Even though the concepts of travel and journey tend to be considered much alike, if not complete synonyms, when reviewing their etymology some differences arise. Whereas the former is mostly linked to a physical activity, the latter binds to a more imponderable meaning which appears to be implicitly present in literature and literary criticism. Travelling, then, comes in different forms and relates to different events. In the case of Coetzee's and Auster's novels, we believe it is portrayed as two physical forced travels that prompt, what we will denominate, two different introspective journeys.<sup>1</sup>

In the particular case of forced travel, or exile, we find a situation where a person has been obliged to alienate himself from everything that he is familiar with. This experience can be either self-imposed or forced by a third party, and compels the exile to move out of his place of residence (Guillén 29-97). More usual than not, this means travelling to a foreign country, but in the case of Auster's and Coetzee's novel it is not in that manner. Although it is clear that David Lurie is forced to move outside his city of residence to a neighboring town because his community rejects him, Anna's exile can prove trickier to explain. Being an outsider resident of a dystopian country, she is being both pushed to leave the place but restricted from abandoning it. In a manner, she is being internally exiled from the country of the last things and prevented from leaving the place or contacting the rest of the world, thus making her belong nowhere.

Moreover, the disruptive nature of both forced travels goes in hand with the main characteristics of the postmodern literary movement described by different authors. For Habermas, it is a neoconservative response to modernism that gives up the project of modernity yet to be fulfilled, by further separating science, morality and art into three autonomous spheres (14). For Lyotard, a reflection of an epoch that has discredited grand narratives as a legit source of knowledge in favor of the little narrative (60). As the latter exposes, Postmodernism clearly depicts a fragmentation of the modern with the objective of imparting "a stronger sense of the unrepresentable" (81). In the case of *In the Country of Last Things* and *Disgrace*, it is through the

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<sup>1</sup> For editorial purposes, I will use the concept of "Travelling" to refer to the broad majority of processes commonly embedded in the concept of "Travel". Thus, the former will be subdivided into two different types of "Travelling": (1) "Travel" as the physical movement done by one or more subjects, disregarding their reason for it; and (2) "Journey" as a symbolic kind of travelling experience which is connected to the evolution of the subjectivity.

protagonists' narrations that readers are able to sense the disjunctive quality of their stories, as they get the opportunity of immersing into the character's journeys. The characters' subjectivities – namely, the assumptions they make about themselves (Nancy 51)– get exposed through their narrations, and so, we can appreciate how the journeys their exiles force them to follow, apparently, make their subjectivities collapse.

As exposed by Nolen Gertz, exile has been one of the many methods used by people as a form of punishment which main aim is to destroy the exile's sense of belonging and dis sever him from his identity (9-10). Taking this into account, even though both novels present us with apparently postmodern exiles, the main hypothesis of this work is that only Anna's fulfills this purpose, while David's accomplishes the purpose of a modern exile. The following analysis will be developed by contrasting both situations. On the one hand, David's exile triggers an introspective journey that shatters the character's subjectivity, but fails to fulfill its purpose because it also provides him with the greater knowledge of which is his true role inside his society –an opportunity for his subjectivity to transform. On the other hand, Anna's exile can be understood as postmodern because it manages to trigger an introspective journey that completely shatters her subjectivity. This shattering is caused by Anna's tampering the qualities of the unstable and disrupted city onto herself –qualities created by the ones governing the city.

In this light, David's experience allows him to recognize himself as an objectified subject who must comply with the disposition of a rage-driven African community. The exile process thus fails its purpose by –paradoxically– immersing him into a society he did not feel part of, rather than depriving him of his sense of belonging. Contrarily, Anna's forced travel presents her with a changeful landscape that whilst erases any remnants that could allow her the identification of a time existence, denies her any opportunity of remembrance or sense of belonging. Such reality negatively affects her subjectivity, making her accept that the exile has overpowered her. Having this in mind, the main objectives of the present work will be, firstly, to compare both characters forced travel and consequent journeys; secondly, to enlighten which are the impacts of the exiles on David's and Anna's subjectivity; and thirdly, to unveil how the characters' disposition by the end of the novels reveals that these postmodern novels aim to criticize postmodernity.

## Theoretical Framework

When contrasting definitions of the concepts of travel and journey, we are faced with circular explanations where the latter is used to explain the meaning of the former and vice versa. Just to mention some examples, travel has been defined as “the activity of travelling” (Cambridge Online) –with travel (v) meaning “to make a journey, usually over a long distance” (Cambridge Online)–, “make a journey, typically of some length” (Oxford Online) and “to go, move, or journey from one place to another ... or journey through or across (an area, region, etc)” (Collins Online). Next in order, Journey has been defined as “the act of travelling from one place to another” (Cambridge Online), “An act of travelling from one place to another” (Oxford Online) and “a travelling from one place to another; a trip or voyage”. Nonetheless, these concepts have not always been plain synonyms of the other. Digging somewhat deeper into their roots, and the different contexts in which both words are used, certain differences arise. For example, while the word *travel* (late 14c *the action of travelling*) comes from the Old French *travail* which meant “work, labor, toil, suffering or painful effort”, the word *journey* from the c. 1200 (related to the Old French word *ournée*, meaning “a day's length”) had a second meaning besides “a defined course of traveling”: it was “one's path in life” (Etymonline).

It is interesting to contrast this more contemplative meaning of the journey with the more practical conception of travel as a productive activity, explicitly more physical. Louise Collier Willcox, in her text *Travel*, remarks travelling as an activity which allowed men to obtain knowledge. It was a work which played the fundamental role of reporting “to other men and manners, of policies and politics, of taste and education” (609), of other languages, monasteries, palaces, different societies, cultures and different forms of art. It was an activity that also allowed the sharing of materials of thought and judgment, like manuscripts and notes taken by the same travellers. Likewise, it is a work that was put in danger because of motor travel, where roads are of greater consequence than history or art (609-611). It can be understood that, as a consequence of these facts, travel has nowadays started to be used as a synonym of tourism, whilst journey has still maintained a rather figurative meaning. This affirmation can be reassured by looking at the secondary definitions of journey, depicted as “a long and often difficult process of personal change and development” (Oxford Online) and “a person's experience of changing or developing from one state of mind to another” (Collins Online); or its use on sentences like “he views his life as a spiritual journey towards a greater understanding of his faith” (Cambridge Online).

Moreover, it appears that this distinction has prevailed in English literature as well. Discussing the conception of travelling inside modernity, Villegas explains it has gone from understanding the travel as a physical displacement to conceive it as an internal or intellectual experiences (15). Under this premise, the author postulates that modern heroes have continued to follow the path portrayed by Campbell's monomyth, but in the form of a symbolic journey. More specifically, there has been a displacement of the heroic quest from the physical world and into a psychological level. In this sense, he explains, our society tends to democratize the character as a human subject that instead of positioning himself over his society, lives overruled and subjugated to his environment, or the current systems. Therefore, the existence of the hero depends on a psychological need of having someone representing a set of positive virtues (dependent on the set of values intrinsically proposed on the novel), and the "heroic" would rely on the character's portrayal as a savior immersed in the dark side of our personality, and who has the primary goal of defeating himself (Cirlor qtd. in Villegas 65).

In both novels to be discussed, the theme of the travel is fundamental to the development of the plots. Furthermore, although both of them are postmodern narratives, it can be appreciated that both protagonists do follow the path of a symbolic journey, by introspectively analyzing what the experiences lived during their exiles mean to them. Moreover, the manner of this symbolic journeys is directly related to these experiences, as should the exiles had not occurred, the journeys would have proceeded differently. It is because of this context that the travelling experiences in the novels will be subdivided into two different processes; the 'travel' and the 'journey'. While the former will be understood as the characters' physical motion of moving from one place to another, the latter will be understood as a psychological experience, in this case of an introspective nature, that enlightens which is "one's path in life". Furthermore, this journey would depend on the characters' travels<sup>2</sup>. It becomes necessary to clarify though, that it is the introspective nature of the journey the one that depends on the travel, not the journey itself, as a symbolic journey could occur without the presence of a travel. At the same time, this dependence cannot be understood as unique to these narratives, as it could be present in other works were the protagonists undergo a travel, either forced on not.

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<sup>2</sup> In this context, the process of introspection would be the equivalent to the "road of trials" that, as explained by Campbell, the hero faces whilst on his quest; and to the symbolic journey proposed by Villegas.



It becomes imperative then, to discuss how the forced travel, or exile, has been approached inside literature. Although etymologically speaking the word exile is portrayed as “the right to leave a place”<sup>3</sup> (Jornadas 9), the usage of the term does not exactly converge with its etymological meaning. Nevertheless, it is the starting point that helps to understand the nature of the concept as it is used today, and the implications the current understanding has on this work. After reading Guillén’s *El sol de los desterrados: literatura y exilio*, we can conclude that the exile is a situation that forces the person to alienate from their natal land and his community of origin, usually by travelling to a different place. It can be a personal decision or one imposed by another. However, while the process of exile can be linked to a travel, not all types of exiles comply, as in the case of alienation. Amidst both ends lies the internal exile, to be exiled inside your natal country, isolated and prevented from leaving the place to where you are confined to, and/or from communicating yourself with your community or others (Santos Herceg 15). Nevertheless, for as long as the theme of travelling has been present inside literature, the exile has been linked to the travelling experience.

According to Guillén, exile has been, historically, a personal and social reality which has been illustrated in literature since 300 b.C., as having different connotations, mainly depending on the culture of the society in which the exile originated (31). More often than not, exiles abandoned their endemic society either because of intellectual or spiritual purposes (to liberate themselves from social restraints); or because they were banished for political, moral or ideological reasons. Guillén considers Ovidio and Ulysses to be the archetypes of the exile (54), accounting the works of the latter as fundamental for the classification of exile as a theme (53). As a literary theme, it has been approached from different perspectives: as an ontologically positive journey, as the exile of the wise (Chinese culture), the return of the expatriate, and as the expatriate’s loss of the national identity, among others.

It was not until the beginnings of the 1820’s that the concept of exile started to be understood as a political sign (Guillén 78). As explained by Guillén, it was during this period that the appropriation of local roots and popular traditions took place, transforming the uniformity of the national culture into an irreplaceable and untranslatable condition. Even though a variety of authors of the time were only able to find their origins through alienation (81), this conception of the exile prevailed in modernism. Hence, several authors, from Lord Byron to the Lost Generation,

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<sup>3</sup> Originally in spanish, “[el] derecho de irse de un lugar”

found themselves attached to expatriation and writing from the exile. But, considering both Auster's *In the Country of Last things* and Coetzee's *Disgrace* as postmodern narratives, it becomes imperative to pause the conceptual discussion of the exile in order to discuss some of the characteristics of the postmodern. This insight is relevant to understand how the problem of exile has been approached since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, how this affected its classification as a theme, and how it connects to other concepts to be dealt with.

Postmodernism depicts a form of contemporary culture that reflects some of the epochal changes of postmodernity, "a style of thought ... suspicious of the classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate ground of explanation" (Eagleton vii). Under general terms, there appears to be a consensus regarding the implications postmodernity has on literature and which are the main traits of postmodernism. Cuddon, and Childs & Fowler depict it as a period marked by the fragmentation and challenging of modernism that took form between the 1940s and the 1950s. Thus, literature characteristic of the time tends to be non-traditional and to take some irreverent liberties to what manners of expression and language concerns. It also has inherently political qualities, and –from the 1970s onwards– got involved in the burgeoning of Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytic criticism (Cuddon 552-553, Childs & Fowler 185-186)<sup>4</sup>.

More specifically, Jürgen Habermas postulates that postmodernism is a neoconservative response to the failure that is the incomplete project of modernity that was born during the Enlightenment. This project contained the efforts of philosophers of the time to objectively develop science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art so as to release these domains from their esoteric forms. It had the purpose of enriching everyday life through providing social life with a rational organization, but during the 20<sup>th</sup> century this differentiation gave the segments an autonomy that has signified their separation from the hermeneutics of everyday communication (9). In Habermas's opinion, we should not give up on this project but learn from the mistakes committed and take the judgment of the three dimensions of culture (cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive) from the hands of professional critics, and give it to the

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<sup>4</sup> Several of these characteristics can be identified inside Coetzee's and Auster's narratives. For example, Coetzee's first novel, *Dusklands*, is considered to be the responsible for the arrival of postmodernism in Africa, while Auster's narratives that tend to blur elements of fact and fiction, and evoke the notion of urban dislocation.

ones of everyday experts. Then, the experience of these judgments could be related to life problems and used to “illuminate a life-historical situation” (13). The problem would be that neoconservatives believe in a decisive confinement of these spheres that signify the abandonment of the project of modernity.

Considering a different perspective, for Lyotard postmodernism is not modernism at its ends but a constant nascent state of the latter. He explains that the modern aesthetics would be a “nostalgic” aesthetics of the sublime that puts the unrepresentable forward only as missing content, and has a form that provides the reader with solace and pleasure, in the form of intrinsic combination of pleasure and pain (81). On the other hand, the postmodern would be “that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable” (81). For Lyotard, postmodernism would be a product of accelerated generations precipitating themselves, resulting in something that denies itself the possibility of being thoroughly and well presented (79-81) –apparently on purpose.

I will develop my critical proposal understanding postmodernism as a movement of an inherent political nature that aims to challenge tradition by giving preference to a fragmented reality, threatening the core of societies. In this manner, postmodern aesthetic will normalize the situation where a society imposes its power to a subject, whilst the subject validates the control of the others has over him. Because of this reason, we also propose that in presenting the unrepresentable postmodernism depicts a place where the level of fragmentation has given rise to a convergence between the private and public spheres.

Inside the postmodern context, the exile has been prevalingly understood as a fragmentizing and alienating experience which thoroughly dislocates a person’s identity, as the feeling of ‘unbelonginess’ remains a constant sign disregarding of the person’s physical location (Jornadas 9-10). Namely, this political weapon of power and control has the objective of dis severing exiles from their identity, and transforming them into bifurcated being who are torn between their memory, and their attachment to the past. For them, being exiled means living in one land while dreaming of another, and being forced to disconnect from their sense of who they are in order to create an identity as members of a Diaspora (Milani 2-4). This understanding of the exile has been reflected in postmodern literature. For example, as demarked by Cymerman, the Hispano-American classification of exile as a theme presents a direct relationship with the themes of armed struggle, violence, and repression (in the form of state terrorism and military interventions) (538-

539). This is closely related to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Hispano-American history, while most of the writers and intellectuals of the region were exiled from their countries (and a few exiled internally), as a result of the vast number of dictatorships that were taking place in the *Cono Sur* at the time (Cymerman 523).

That being said, when discussing English literature in lights of the postmodern *literature about the exile*<sup>5</sup> two difficulties arise. The first one would be the few amount of English literary works capturing the effects of the imposition of the exile and its use as a political weapon. The second one would be the apparent disinterest of the western world for analyzing the existent *literature about the exile* from a socio-political perspective –literary works which usually come from Hispano-American communities and the Eastern world. This could be related to the fact that the English culture has historically been located either the oppressor's or the colonizer's side of history. Referring to previous studies related to the classification of exile as a theme inside postmodern English literature becomes a problem, that, when researching on studies about the effect that the forced travel has on the character's subjectivity, only gets more complicated.

Nevertheless, considering the postmodernist contextualization of the exile and how this use has been reflected in the Hispano-American understanding of the same as a theme, in the present work we will firstly understand that when exiled the postmodern subject, just as the modern one, will inevitably succumb into an excess of retrospection and remembrance while simultaneously living in several levels of temporality, without being able to successfully distinguishing them all the time (Wittlin qtd. in Guillén 88). However, the exile in postmodernism will take the character to a place where both the political and the private converge, and where the imposition of power and the subjectivization of the self will depend on each other. Namely, the postmodern exile will take the protagonists of the novels to a place where the imposition of power made by a third person will force them to reconsider their subjectivities. At the same time, the character's subjectivity will play a role in the configuration of the exile, because if Anna and David did not recognize the ones exiling them as subjects that can overpower them the experience would lose its connotation.

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<sup>5</sup> When discussing the *literature of exile*, it becomes important to distinguish between the *literature from the exile* (in other words, which is written by an exile) and the *literature about the exile* (namely, one that discusses the theme of the exile) (Cymerman 524). In this sense, both novels being analyzed can be placed in the latter group, while Coetzee's could be also categorized inside the former (if we consider his relocation in Australia to be a form of self-exile).

The word subjectivity comes from the adjective *subjective*, stemming from the Late Latin *subiectivus*, which meant “of the subject, subjective” (Etymonline). The root of the idea of a subjectivity is, it appears, most likely connected to the Aristotelian idea that it is impossible for something to happen and not happen at the same time, just as it is impossible for the subject to believe that something is and is not. The first stone of our understanding of the subjectivity was Socrates’ phrase *gnoti seauton* –“Know yourself” (Nancy 28). According to Levinas, subjectivity is the exception of *lo otro que ser* –which is what transcends beyond *el ser y la nada* (46)–, the self-condemning of the annexations of the essence (51). This progression implies that the subject was once subjugated to the essence, and therefore understand it, as otherwise, the subject would not be able to condemn it. For Nancy, the subject in philosophy is a supposition, and the ending of the concept –its substance– would be the *somebody*. The subject is an infinite identity that arises from the transplant of what it was into what it will be, and so there is no certainty of whether the subject is present or not (49-52) because it could be understood as being shaped from a subject evolving into another subject in the same place (58). Nevertheless, the *somebody* presents certain traits that would differentiate it from the subject: the characteristics of being unique, distinct and singular; its quality as anybody (“el cada uno es tambien el algo uno, no importa cual, el todo cada uno” (65); and finally, the eschatological mode of its singular presence (65). Consequently, the subjectivity would be given by the subject’s supposition of himself, in lights of a supposed subject who turns into somebody by inventing himself, each time, as a new possibility of the singular sense (82).

According to this work’s proposal, the subjectivity can be altered by the introspective journey the character can go through. The term *introspection* is derived from two Latin words, *spicere* (to look) and *intra* (within) (Borchert 720). From a philosophical point of view it is “a means of learning about one’s own currently ongoing, or perhaps very recently past, mental states or processes” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy), being implied that the introspective learning of one’s mind cannot be done by anyone else but oneself. It can be either a conscious or an unconscious process, but the introspection always has the same purpose: finding answers to particular problems (Ryle 146). It will be understood then, that a symbolic journey of an introspective nature will allow the character to refashion or reimagine himself. Depending on the knowledge the character acquires about himself, and to what extent the nature of it agrees with his subjectivity, the latter could be greatly affected by the former. We can establish that forced

interactions with an unknown environment, such as it happens in the case of the exile, could trigger and would affect the introspective journey of the characters. In this case the situation to be confronted would contradict or put in doubt what the subject has already established about himself. Accordingly, this also establishes that the exile could distort the character's subjectivity by manipulating the characters' introspective journey.

Taking into consideration the symbolic journey of the character as a never-ending process, we can propose that it can be possible that a second introspective journey occurs, which would allow the character to arise as a subject once more. This reshaping would include the previous distortion as new knowledge that enriches the self, giving the exile a modern twist where the traumatizing experience would acquire the connotation of a greater knowledge. Finally, the subjectivity will be understood as the supposition the subject makes of himself, a supposition that depends directly on the subject's introspective journey. More precisely, what the subject learns from his introspective journey, and how this learning enriches or conflicts with how he supposes himself at the time. Therefore, these are all factors that will affect the emergence of the subject.

Turning inside the context of postmodernity, Auge coins the term "supermodern" to express what he considers to be the essential quality of present days: the image of an excess of time, space and ego (29-38). Considering an abundance of events, the subject has an inability to understand the present, give meaning to the past and therefore presents a demand for the lacking meaning which leads to signs of crisis and subsequent disappointment (30-31). Being, paradoxically, inversely proportional to the shrinking of the planet –the shortening of distances through the use of different apparatus–, the excess of space (together with the easy manipulation of easily accessed and spread information) creates a distortion and generates a power over the subject that transforms this spatial abundance in a decoy (31-32). Lastly, the ego which individualizes the subject generates the need for the person to be a world in himself, generating a vast amount of multiplicity of average individuals (26-38). These excesses are utterly relevant to the fragmented quality of postmodernism depicted in the novels to be discussed, because how the excess affects the character's introspective journey will impact his subjectivity, and the nature of the *somebody*. In the case of the present novels, the distortion would be created by the substitution of the characters' proper place with a shattered environment that would eventually tamper the subjects' introspective journey. We must not forget though, that this distortion also depends on the characters' acceptance of themselves as distorted.

For the postmodern subject, desire and power are highly important. According to Mansfield the postmodern subject is driven by panic, fear and a permanent feeling that an imminent disaster is coming (168-169). He is a disoriented one that wanders “in a world [he] cannot accurately conceptualize” (165). Thus, this disturbed subject which lacks certainty and stability have given desire and power a great importance, as he dreams of “having it all” (172). Although desire is present in both *Disgrace* and *In the Country of last things*, the character’s lives clearly revolve around the idea of power. While in the former the community that exiles David imposes its power through direct attacks made by other members of the community, in latter this imposition is established more implicitly. The ones behind her exile never show their face, but use the city’s chaotic state to constantly remind the characters of their powerlessness. Thus, the place where the exiles are forced to live is a shattered one<sup>6</sup>, and also an instrument of control.

Under this perspective, it would be ideal to understand the ‘Country of Last Things’<sup>7</sup> as both a non-place and an apparatus. Auge coins the term non-place to refer to any space which “cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity” (77-78): non-anthropological spaces opposite to the places and produced by ‘supermodernity’. Hence, these spaces respond to a world which has surrender itself to solitary individuality (79). Contrary to the places –which function as palimpsests and are never completely erased–, the non-places functions as an alienating space which can be quantified. If we understand the formers as used as apparatus, they would acquire a concrete strategic function. As explained by Agamben, the apparatus is located in power relations, or any type of elements, set of practices, or mechanisms that can function as a network between discourses, institutions, buildings, laws, police measures, and philosophical propositions, among other. This, with the purpose of facing an urgent needs in a manner which ensures a more or less immediate effect (2-8). Consequently, for the ones imposing control over Anna and David, these cities are non-places that fulfill the role of an apparatus which has the goal of shattering, overpowering and subjecting the characters.

The novels will be further analyzed by following some principles of Stanley Fish’s approach to the reader-response theory, in which the individual subjective response the reader has

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<sup>6</sup> Once again, we can establish that the substitution of the proper place with a shattered environment does not only depend on the ones imposing the exiles but also on the exile’s recognition of the place as shattered as well.

<sup>7</sup> The nameless country where Anna is exiled will be referred to as ‘the Country of Last Things’ or ‘the Country’, while the novel will be introduced as *In the Country of Last Things* or simply *In the Country*.

towards a piece of literature is considered to be linked to an interpretive community, those who share a set of assumptions and interpretative strategies which are brought to texts when they are read (Selden 55-56, Tyson 185). In his text *Is there a text in this class?* Fish analyzes a real life interaction/situation in order to further explain this approach. He claims that understanding does not depend on the existence of an independent context-free system of meanings. Instead, it relies on a set of communal and conventional beliefs, a shared set of interests and concerns that links what is being said to a common background (303). Then, the possibility for someone being “independent of institutional assumptions and free to originate [his] own purposes and goals” (321), could never exist: interpretation only occurs from within an interpretive community and interpreters act as extensions of an institutional community (304, 321). Likewise, Fish has also proposed that these communities are not static because a reader could (consciously or not) belong to more than one community at the same time, and thus, different communities could coincide in certain aspects of their interpretation (Tyson 185). Considering his ideas, we can conclude that the reader’s interpretation of a text will originate from the interaction between the reader and the text, what this text informs the reader and how he enriches it. Then, a reader will provide the text with an interpretation specific to his interpretive community, from among the multiplicity of interpretations the text can be given –interpretations that could, or could not, share some similarities.

Fish’s approach has not been exempted from criticism. In fact, *Is there a text in this class?* was written as a response to one of his critics. One of the critiques made to this approach, and that will be considered in this work, is that after further defining the concept of the interpretive community several times, Fish compromised the defense and empowering of the reader by creating a power structure that helped bringing a stability of meaning, allowing a manipulation by those at the top of the communities (Roberts 33-34). In this light, Roberts proposes that the interpretive communities should play a role in our understanding of interpretation, pluralism, and truth rather than only being used inside a system that links truth with power, an idea to which we agree (36). Furthermore she distinguishes the existence of two forms of interpretive communities –the self-selecting (theorists who choose to belong to a specific ideological group); and the situational (consisting of individuals who are part of a specific situation for one reason or another) (36).

Whereas the *Disgrace* and *In the Country of Last Things* are part of postmodern English literature, the interpretative community from which the following analysis will be carried out from



a Latin American community. As it was previously explained, the understanding of the postmodern exile vary between the English and Latin American context in the sense that the former has not have the opportunity to experience the exile as a disruptive experience. Rather, it has imposed it or, during the last years, watched the effects it has on other communities that have resort to them while looking for a safe place to live. Communities belonging to Latin America though, are not unfamiliar with the shattering effects the exile poses when used as a political weapon. Under this light, the community from which the novels will be interpreted belongs to the Chilean reality.

In his book *Identidad Chilena*, Larraín characterizes Chilean identity as being shaped according to different historical events, since the colonization of the Araucanos up to the beginning of the 21th century. He recognizes how our society has been ridden by an authoritarianism that has historically act by the perspective that principles can be violated, but only inasmuch as they are simultaneously recognized<sup>8</sup> (231). According to Larraín, Chilean hypocrisy would derive from this conception, and it would be one of the reasons why, over the last 25 years, not much has been done to prosecute the crimes against humanity committed during Pinochet's dictatorship, at the hands of the National Armed Forces (225). As a consequence of the 17 years of dictatorship, Chileans have diminished their interest in politics and have developed a depressive, mistrustful, shy and displeased identity (159). Over the 17 years that the dictatorship lasted, over 200,000 people were exiled, 35,000 imprisoned (of which 28,000 were tortured) and over 3,000 were killed for political reasons. Under this reality, the memory and identity of Chilean society have been thoroughly disrupted and so it is only logical that post-dictatorship generations were affected by these events. They have not only taken hold of this fragmentation as part of their identity, but are also eager to find a balance and punish whoever is responsible for their state of being.

The interpretive community from which the following analysis will be carried out holds some of the opinions postulated by Larraín and will reside amidst both types of *interpretive communities* postulated by Roberts. Such interpretative community will be understood as a group of Chileans who understand that the high rate of depoliticization, mistrust and anger inside their society are mainly consequences of three situations: Firstly, the lack of punishment of the recurrent violation of human rights that had place during Pinochet's dictatorship. Secondly, the disruptive effect that the exile had, and continues to have on exiles and their immediate families. Thirdly, the

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<sup>8</sup> “los principios pueden transgredirse pero solo en la medida que son simultáneamente reconocidos” (231)

fragmentation of Chilean identity provoked by an authoritarian and violent regime, from which we have not been able to recover. Ultimately, the common background that joins the members of this interpretative community lies on a shared ideological perspective, and their nature as firsthand or secondhand witnesses<sup>9</sup> of the atrocities they and their people had to endure between September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1973 and March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1990.

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<sup>9</sup> In other words, people that directly witnessed or endured those events (firsthand) and people who are highly familiarized with the same (secondhand).

## Analysis

### *Pre-exile condition and the exile's meddling*

Although written in an unusual manner, by using a variation of a historical present told in third-person, *Disgrace*'s narration gives us the opportunity to analyze David's subjectivity and how it changed throughout the novel quite thoroughly. These changes get reflected in an extradiegetic level, where a free indirect style makes the current of thoughts of the character intrude in the voice of the narrator. Then, we are given the possibility of analyzing the character's different states of being quite smoothly: its pre-exile stage, how it shattered and how it was refashioned.

Throughout what will be considered the first section of the novel, or the pre-exile stage, David is presented as a confident middle-aged man of a fixed temperament (2) who has some air of superiority, which can be detected in his discourse. At a certain point in the story for example, he invites one of his young students to spend the night at his house and when she asks him why she should, he answers her that "[she] ought to ... because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has the duty to share it" (16). But his treatment of women can be ultimately related with the character's past as a womanizer, and the confidence he gained while noticing that women were attracted by his looks: "his height, his good bones, his olive skin, his flowing hair, he could always count on a degree of magnetism" (7). This description serves to enlighten us on how important this situation was for him, using an anaphora and evoking the image of a magnet to emphasize the beauty of his physical qualities and how irresistible he was to women.

Nevertheless, at a certain point in his past when "without warning his powers fled" (7) and "glances that would once have responded to his slid over, past, through him" (7), and his reaction reassures us of how important it was for him that women were drawn to him, to have them nearby. The fact that he now had to pursue women if he wanted one makes him give up to an "anxious flurry of promiscuity" (7) that only gets relieved when meeting Soraya. She is a prostitute who he visits once a week and cherishes enough so as to have grown up an affection for (3) but not to the point of having developed further romantic feelings for. It is said that their relationship is enough for David to get a feeling of completeness in his life, as he "who used to think he needed a wife, a home, a marriage" (5) has no need of establishing a romantic relationship with someone in order

to feel at ease. Then, Soraya is turned into an object which fulfills the purpose of giving David physical pleasure while satisfying his need for having women around.

Nussbaum suggests that there are at least seven notions which are involved in the process of objectifying a subject –that means, treating someone as an object– (257), of which four can be identified in Lurie’s treatment towards women: *instrumentality*, *fungibility*, *violability* and *denial of subjectivity*. Instrumentality relates to how the *objectifier* treats the object as a tool for fulfilling his purposes and can be identified in him using Soraya and other women to satisfy a need. The concept of fungibility describes the treating of the objectified as interchangeable with other *objects* of the same type, which relates to him being able to replace Soraya after he loses her without further problems. Violability refers to treating the objectified as lacking in boundary or integrity, an object that can be broken up, smashed or broken into. This characteristic is present when Lurie decides to pay a detective agency to track Soraya down, trespassing the limits she imposed him. Finally, the denial of subjectivity speaks of treating the objectified subject as someone whose feelings need not be taken into account, which is implied in Lurie’s lack of remorse for invading the prostitute’s privacy without even questioning his actions.

From a feminist perspective, perhaps, his would be a sexual objectification of women that responds to the chauvinistic behavior of a decolonized society which is yet to erase violence from its reality. This objectification would be linked to the legitimization of prostitution and the discrimination of women as acts that serve as proof of men’s manhood. But for David, his relationship with this woman has another connotation because Soraya’s importance does not rely on her condition as a prostitute but on his need of having women nearby.

Almost at the beginning of the novel, David proclaims himself as a womanizer, directly linking this condition to the fact that he was surrounded by female family members from an early age (7). The permanent presence of women in his life, disregarding the nature of his relationship with them, certainly had an impact on his subjectivity and turned into a need. During the beginning of his adulthood, and as women became attracted to him, this presence acquired a sexual connotation. It is only logical then that, having gotten used to being surrounded by women, their disappearance as he grew older had had an impact on him, moment when he felt he had lost control of his life. Later on he was able to regain this control with Soraya, whose companionship depended only of his payments and provided him with the female contact he needed in order to feel complete. Consequently, David’s feeling of completeness is provided by her presence, not by their sexual

relationship: She is a controllable object that guarantees him his peace of mind will not depend on his ability to pursue and captivate women, and the uncertain results of his efforts, but on a manageable object which presence depends only on his payments. This is a proposition that gets reassured when the prostitute's disappearance breaks him out but only until he finds a new woman he can use to satisfy his needs. It is under this context that we can postulate that David's objectification of women is not driven by a sexual desire but by a need for control.

While looking for someone to substitute Soraya's presence, David's promiscuity reappears and clouds his judgment: he makes the mistake of harassing and engaging in a sexual relationship with one of his students. It is because of this decision that he is asked to resign from the university. More specifically, this request is due to his resistance to subjugate himself to his community's demands of publicly expressing remorse for abusing<sup>10</sup> the student, an acknowledgment of the pain he caused (McDonald 328). But although his resistance to acknowledge his error could point otherwise, the situation does affect David. It is while trying to understand how and why his idealized relationship with the student turned into a case of abuse that David's introspective journey begins. Whereas when he is presented with the accusation he convinces himself of thinking that Melanie was coerced into it, as time goes by David starts doubting himself. First, when recriminated by his ex-wife for having 'an affair' with a student, he starts considering the possibility that perhaps the young should not be exposed to "the sight of their elders in the throes of passion" (44) This statement is clearly a metaphor he uses to implicitly admit that there is a possibility that it is not 'correct' for an old man to have sex with a young woman, while embellishing the statement, perhaps, in order to make it less upsetting so he can be able to cope with it. Then, during the hearing he angers at the mention of the word abuse, but then he ponders that "Melanie ... barely comes to his shoulder" (53), and has to admit there is not denial they are unequal, and that she is at a clear disadvantage, but stills stands his ground. This situation is of the utmost importance, as it signifies that David's introspective journey was not triggered by his exile, but before it happened (an idea that we will continue further ahead).

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<sup>10</sup> Although it cannot be interpreted as so from the how the narration of their sexual encounters proceeds (for example, it would be illogical to think that a victim of a rape would willingly return to his abuser's house), from an ethical perspective, it can be argued that David's role as Melanie's professor gave him a position of power and, hence, she was being abused by him disregarding if she consented the encounters or not.

Although he was not directly imposed to relocate to a different place (as it goes beyond the administrative and political capacities of any academic community, and against its reconciliatory ethics as well), after being publicly pinpointed as a rapist not only by the academic community (through an article of the student newspaper (56) but also by outsiders (from whom his ex-wife heard what had happened (43), he had been alienated from and rejected by his surrounding environment in its totality. Hence, to remain living there was not a possibility, and so, his internal exile takes place.

From a historical perspective, Cornwell establishes that the disciplinary hearing to which David is confronted can be taken as an echo of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (from now on TRC) created after the Apartheid, where people used to confess their crimes but without acknowledging their guilt (316). For him, Lurie's assertiveness to declare himself guilty of 'being carried away by an impulse and Melanie's 'unresistingness', but not of abusing Melanie, can be seen to be informed by power relations of patriarchy, the academy, and those of race: "their encounter is contextualized within the several centuries of colonial history in which white men debauched black women with impunity" (Cornwell 315). Farodia Rassool, as a member of the committee, would clearly symbolize the frustrations of the TRC when faced with people who seemed to remain unrepentant for the crimes committed against Colored and Black communities, during the Apartheid (316). Disregarding, the reference to the latter group's resentment towards Caucasian South Africans, as symbols of the European colonization of South Africa, can be appreciated throughout the entire novel. In the episode of David's hearing, for example, Dr. Rassool states that David makes "no mention of the pain he has cause, no mention of the long history of exploitation of which this is part" (53), with "this" referring to his treatment of Melanie. But the relationship between Melanie and David can only be interpreted as an imagery of this historical period if we chose to believe that Melanie is in fact a Black person, or that David actually raped her.

The relationship between David and Melanie is perhaps the story of which the narration leaves more details to the reader's construction. Did David actually raped Melanie? Was she a victim or was she setting a trap for him? Is Melanie Black? Each of these facts can be assumed while reading the novel, but none of them can be actually confirmed. The unrepresentable here is being highlighted in lights of what the reader imprints to the text and its interaction with the story. The narrative points to us that the characters are immersed in a postcolonial context where racism and

violence towards black population has been normalized. Nevertheless, it is the reader's choice to relate this setting to the South African history and the Apartheid's era, or to only acknowledge the similarities between the fictional and factual worlds while keeping them apart. As we perceive it, to do the former would be equal to reducing the possibility of interpretations of the novel and impoverishing the responses the reader can have to the text: whereas Coetzee subtly drives the narration into a place that allows the reader to superimpose South African history on David's world, to follow this path would mean reducing the novel to a racist discourse. Atwell, in his work *Race in Disgrace*, establishes that the problem of race in the novel has been wrongly interpreted by the public (a statement to which we completely agree). He proposes that the discussion about race that is presented in *Disgrace* is meant to be considered as a symbol with larger patterns of historical and ethical interpretations. In this light, instead of appreciating this gesture with the seriousness it deserves, some readers have chosen to reduce the book to the mere controversy of whether this is or not a racist book. For Atwell, this "confirms everything that the novel itself broods over so apparently airlessly", that history has been given over entirely to "the struggle for political, material and sexual power" (340). It is our belief as well that *Disgrace* is a fiction that goes beyond the topic of race but it would be interesting to consider that categorizing it as a racist book does something more than what Atwell postulates (that is, confirming the criticism portrayed inside the novel is accurate). This categorization also narrows the possibility of interactions to be held between the reader and the text, as it offends the novel's richness in lights of its potential interpretational complexity and aesthetic value. Furthermore, the manner of how the narration of both *Disgrace* and *In the Country of Last Things* allows the emergence of different readers will be further addressed in the final part of this analysis. d

Still, the narration of Auster's *In the Country of Last Things* is relatively more complex. Resembling an epistolary novel, the narrator of the intradiegetic level is also the protagonist of the novel, Anna. Contrary to *Disgrace*, the narration of *In the Country* does not follow a chronological order, and is highly fragmented. Anna's story is referred to through a continuum of divagations that she uses to explain her addresser the different experiences she has had over the last 4 years, while providing us with repetitive descriptions of the main characteristics of the city where she is living her exile. Even more, whereas it appears that the novel is narrated directly by Anna, there are three instances that indicate us we are actually being read Anna's letter, about her time inside this post-apocalyptic city, by a third person. This almost imperceptible situation is evidenced at

three instances of the novel, by the inclusion of the utterances “she wrote” (1), “her letter continued” (2) and “she continued” (39).

Although the possible reasons the author could have had for choosing this type of narration will be discussed later on, this presents us with a problem. The only manner in which we can elucidate how Anna was before her exile, and what changes her personality went through, is by analyzing a narration that was made by her after four years of exile. Needless to say, at this point of the story time the character has already been affected by the traumatizing experiences she has had to face whilst in the ‘Country of Last Things’. Although this situation somehow signals us that the trauma caused by her exile affects her subjectivity somehow –providing support to our hypothesis–, it also makes our analysis more difficult. The few descriptions we are provided of the character’s pre-exile nature, and the manner of her introspective journey, are tainted by the character’s present perception of herself. Thus, we will need to infer and suppose how her personality was before the tampering of her introspective journey, instead of directly analyzing the character’s current of thoughts, as it is being done with David’s story. Furthermore, to understand the nature of the character’s pre-exile stage, we will need to analyze the comments she makes about her life before her travel took place and about her behavior once inside the unknown country. Only then, it will be possible to assemble a possible description of her personality and understand her subjectivity.

Perhaps the richest information the character provides us about her past comes from the episode where she meet the editor of William’s newspaper. Through their dialogue we can identify a 19 year old stubborn women who, although advised not to travel to the Country, was quite determined to go. We are hinted that this decision had been taken before their meeting, which is why the editor’s attempts to persuade her of the contrary were destined to be futile: “it wasn’t going to wash”, she said, “and Bogat knew it. I held my ground, determined to fend off his smug paternalism, and little by little he seemed to give up” (41). If we add to this behavior the idea that, as she denotes, both the addressee and her parents were against her decision, we can conclude that this stubbornness was part of her common behavior.

This trait is linked to a feeling of overconfidence on herself, a perception of herself as invincible –which is, it could be argued, common among the youth. Further ahead in the narration, Anna tells her addressee how “[her] childhood had been an easy one, filled with bourgeois splendors and advantages” (135). Even more, “[she] had lived with a sense that all [her] desires



were within the realm of possibility” (135). Then, we can trace Anna’s determination and stubbornness back to her spoiled childhood which could hint a certain naivety. Having grown in the safe environment that a life full of commodities provides, the only reality she knew was one of comfort, where her only lack was knowing the feeling of lacking something. Because of this reason, it would not be presumptuous to say that she grown unconsciously picturing life to be easy and manageable. She need not worry when things looked harsh as anything she needed would eventually come to her on its own. So, if she thought she would find her brother, this was bound to happen. This reading would explain why she did not get defensive until after she collapses and realizes there is no escaping the ‘Country of last things’.

We can also say that living in a bourgeois environment, appearances and personal presentation must have been a great concern for her: “you remember my lipsticks and outrageous earrings, my tight skirts and skimpy hems. I always loved to dress up and play the vamp, even when we were kids”. This enumeration could also highlight how her feeling feminine was conditioned by how attractive she looked with the clothes she worn, as it will be confirmed further ahead (60). This situation must not be confused however with vanity or shallowness, as we can also infer that Anna was –and continues to be throughout the entire narration– an optimistic and empathic person. The first evidence of this is her commitment to never strip dead bodies in order to make money with the deceased’s belongings (36). She says that she did not have the courage. That it was not a moral decision but that she just “didn’t have it in [her] to go that far” (37). But when summed up to other facts presented in the novel we are reassured that this decision responds to her good-natured heart: She left the comforts of her home, her life, family and friends in order to go searching for her brother (who got lost in an unknown Country from where “no one gets out ... the end of the goddamned world” (41); once there, she risked her life and her source of employment so as to rescue an unknown old woman from being crushed by a stampede of people, without a second thought (44-45); when this woman –Isabel– died sometime later, she spent money in buying a very expensive dress only so the deceased could be cremated wearing it, when she could have saved the money for her own survival (80-81); her later decision of sharing her savings with Samuel Farr, even when she recognizes that –following the city’s manners– the logical thing to do would have been to kill him and take his room and money (105-106); and so on and so forth. Furthermore, as evidenced by those episodes and others, her positivism and empathy will also

prove of the utmost importance during her constant internal fight to avoid succumbing into the city's manners and thus being consumed by its dynamics.

Going back to *Disgrace*'s narration, we cannot declare David's exile as definitely postmodern or modern immediately after he arrives to Salem, because the banishing of the exile from his place of origin is a characteristic common to both types. What we can say is that David's travel between Cape Town and Salem is significant to the character because it places him inside a landscape he rejects, and we are able to perceive how it destabilizes him. The introspective journey that David started when began doubting of what happened between him and Melanie continues after he arrives to Salem. This symbolic journey equals the natural progression of David's subjectivity and it gets configured while the character's introspection leads him to react to his daily situations in a certain manner. These reactions, combined with his environment's response, take the character to look once again into himself so as to decide which path will be followed afterwards. But, as David's introspective journey is affected by David's interaction with an imposed context (the city, the people in it, the customs of the place, etc.), that aims to disrupt him, the situation transforms. The exile intrudes the natural progression of the character's journey and makes him question his lifestyle, starting from the importance of his former occupation up to how he interacted with his fellows. Now, it is not David the one that interacts with his surroundings but the exile experience the one that intrudes into his private sphere and tampers it. Eventually, David loses his freedom to decide which paths he will follow, and the public sphere manages to completely control David's journey, disturbing his subjectivity. Accordingly, we can denote that the main relevance of his physical movement is to be the means that permits the public sphere to tamper the character's inner journey.

It is while Lurie tries to adapt to his new environment and to share with its participants that he recognizes he will have to get used to the dynamics of her daughter's community (because this is also the only place that is left for him) and the exile starts to slowly intrude his journey. Just as he tries to depict Lucy's home neutrally, we are reminded of his dominant-like nature and his habit of objectifying women. His action of "[searching] for the best word" (59) not to describe his daughter's hips and breasts erotically is crucial, as it denotes how used he has gotten to base his relationship with women on their objectification. We must remember that for him to feel at ease he needs feel the presence of women around him, and that since his young adulthood this presence acquired a sexual connotation, with women acting as objects that serve to satisfy his need for

feeling a female presence close by. It is necessary to remark that the conflict between his parental instincts and his habit of objectifying women will play an important role while he is forced to refashion himself.

Travelling inside this new land confronts him with behaviors, realities and circumstances that are uncomfortable for him, as his silent disdain and disapproval of Lucy's life choices, and his negative and ironic comments denote: "animal-welfare people are ... so cheerful and well-intentioned that after a while you itch to go off and do some raping and pillaging. Or to kick a cat" (73). We cannot fail to mention that this bad joke has an ironic interpretation as well, as, David does not know it yet, but by the end of the novel he could be considered to be a part of this 'animal-welfare people', but not of a cheerful type. In spite of what will happen in the future, at his present he still thinks that instead of living the banal lifestyle of the countryside, Lucy could be better spending his time in another place. He tries to act politely and keep his feelings to himself, but this feelings do not remain unnoticed by Lucy: "You think I ought to be painting still lives or teaching myself Russian. You don't approve of friends like Bev and Bill Shaw because they are not going to lead me to a higher life" (74). It appears that there are several other things that David is keeping to himself, as "his mind has become a refuge for old thoughts, idle, indigent, with nowhere else to go. He ought to chase them out, sweep the premises clean. But he does not care to do so, or does not care enough" (72). While he says this with the intention of justifying his prejudice against Lucy's friends as an old habit, we can interpret this image as a metaphor of a reluctance to commit to his introspective journey, to analyze himself, and also, as a reference to what he will be forced to do further ahead in the novel.

Notwithstanding his reasons, his neutral attitude changes after they get attacked by a gang of black men who manage to subdue him and rape Lucy, and he watches how, afterwards, she adopts a submissive disposition towards the men who raped her and rejects the opportunity to make justice. From David's perspective, Lucy is turning herself into a defenseless victim who has chosen to bend the knee to accomplish a "private salvation" through "[expiating] the crimes of the past by suffering in the present" (112). In fact, he is failing to understand that they, as well as his daughter's black assistant, Petrus (who from now on will start challenging David and imposing his power on him), have assumed the role of historical debt collectors: For them Lucy is only an object that fulfills a need, just as Soraya and other women were to him. From Lucy's perspective, she is in fact "[negotiating] a postcolonial future for herself and the mixed-race child she is carrying" in

“an austere, quasi-religious way of dispossession” (McDonald 329). By submitting herself to these men’s will she compromises her free will, but she also gets to keep her land and, more importantly, to provide her future child –product of the rape– a safe place to live. Further ahead in the novel we understand that the best decision Lucy can make is to submit herself to Petrus by agreeing to become Petrus’s third wife and giving up her land to him, because of three reasons. Firstly, she will get the chance to keep living in her house. Secondly, she will assure her child does not get discriminated for being the product of a gang rape that marks her as an object, leading to the possibility of being raped another time, and to the third reason: she will be protected from the possibility of being raped once more in the future, as she would be considered to be Petrus’s property. Furthermore, she is certain that he will not rape her because he is not interested in her. His only concern is becoming the owner of her property. Then, although from David’s perceptive she has the choice of abandoning the place and start a new life, Lucy knows that this is her only choice, as from now on, wherever she goes to she will be considered a pariah, and forced to go through the same trauma over and over again. We can ultimately interpret that Lucy’s passive reaction towards the situation relates to her understanding of the rules of Salem’s postcolonial community, which are based on the methods the former colonizers they resent used to establish their superiority: the ones that were once objectified, now objectify.

Nevertheless, David, as a man who needs to feel control of his surroundings, comes to understand the attack on Lucy as an attack on himself and feels threatened. Perhaps, he has inferred that if Lucy can be objectified, there is a possibility that he could be as well. But although he rejects the idea of being overpowered by a group of ignorant farmers, his failure in defending his daughter and preventing her rape evidences his powerlessness –because, what kind of power does a person who could be “locked in the lavatory while his daughter was used”(109) have?

Knowing he cannot control these men if he remains powerless, it is imperative for him that Lucy publicly declares what happened and bring the rapists into justice, point in the story where his need for control situations transforms into a need for overpowering others. Their incarceration is imperative, as it would allow David to regain control of his environment, as it would serve the double purpose of removing them from David’s surroundings while placing them in a lower hierarchical position. We could interpret this entire situation as a reflection of the gang and Lurie as pawns of a game of power relationships, where the political relies on the collision of the opposing ideological perspectives inside this South African context. We cannot fail to notice as

well how a trial would resemble Lurie's experience of being "judged" and found "guilty" by his community, which lead to a public humiliation. Thus, it could be supposed that there is an ulterior motive behind the punishment of the men's crimes. That is, to subject them to a public humiliation that will serve as a revenge for what he went through, in the same way that Salem's black community is taking revenge on white people for the "long history of exploitation" (53) to which Farodia Rassool referred to before. Moreover, this apparently never ending chain of revenge in which the character engage relates to Atwell's claim, that the novel broods over the idea that history has been given over to the struggle for power of different types, by portraying this struggle as the character's reality.

The real problem here is that contrary to David's beliefs, he will never be able to regain control over his surroundings while inside this community. In what has been broadly considered to be the most controversial episode of the novel, David is presented with a major challenge that will be central in his introspective journey: "Lucy's secret; his disgrace" (107), and although as a father he is truly concerned for her daughter's wellbeing and what happened to her, this feeling gets overshadowed by the implications her trauma had on him, *his disgrace*. Moreover, by ignoring Lucy's wishes of not wanting to expose what happened, he is objectifying her in order to fulfill his needs. Contrary to Soraya's and Melanie's situation this objectification has no sexual connotation, but it is still present through the properties of instrumentality and denial of subjectivity (see page 20). At this point, David perceives Lucy as an instrument she can use to restore his control of the situation, and shown himself superior to these men. He denies Lucy's subjectivity when he does not stop to consider the validity of her reasoning in lights of her perspective, and goes against her wishes, mostly by harassing and defying Petrus.

It is at this moment that the exile manages to completely intrude into the protagonist's symbolic journey. As Villegas proposes, the modern man is one that has lost his sacred vision of the world and feels trapped in a profane one, which presents a rational or scientific order (36). In this sense, the classical hero is replaced with a human man who, being dominated by his environment (or the current structures and systems), has the final goal of overcoming himself (63, 65). The tampering of the exile in his introspective journey though, will eventually lead him to surrender to the idea that his daughter will not change her values and lifestyle so as to please his wishes. Then, his introspective journey will take an unnatural path forced by the exile so he can cope with this new reality, but he will have to eventually accept that, while living in Salem's

community, he will not be able impose himself over the gang or regain control of his life. This will be the point where his subjectivity will shatter, and he will be forced to reluctantly reimagine himself, changing his original nature as a subject.

It is not that he does not try to impose his power in other ways. As the academic ponders the ideas that perhaps it was Petrus who ordered the attack, and that he knows the rapists' identities, he confronts him and learns that one of the rapists is in fact under his protection (138-139). Even more, after this scene takes places, we can notice how Petrus begins to gain a higher hierarchical position than Lucy and, consequently, than David, who is unable to find a manner of subjugating the man. As remarked by Attwell, David is quite sensitive to the ironies of the master-servant situation's reversal: he becomes Petrus's *handlanger* but regards him as an interlocutor on equal terms, giving their conversations a sharper edge of hostility (337). After realizing Petrus is protecting one of his daughter's rapists, we are described an episode where David is working as the man's assistant, carrying his tools, while pushing him to confess the identity of the rapist. The situation is peculiar, at least: the employee is standing his ground and mocking the employer while the latter reacts by unsuccessfully trying to articulate a strong and impeccable defense for the boy, only managing to nervously repeat the same ideas<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore and despite what David thinks, everyone in the community insist on that he should leave the matter aside and take her daughter's stance and he unconsciously begins to accept his new role as a subjugated person. A prove of this is how he willingly describes himself as the new "dog-man" (Coetzee 146).

It is true that he had been helping in the Animal Welfare clinic almost since he arrived at Salem but he only did it as a retribution to her daughter's hospitality. As time progressed, though, Bev Shaw became his confident, and his work inside the clinic his escape from reality. There, he starts to empathize with the dog's situation and to identify himself with their suffering: "The dogs are brought to the clinic because they are unwanted: *because we are too menny*" (146). He declares that "he does not understand what is happening to him" (143) as up to this point of his life, he had

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<sup>11</sup> <sup>11</sup>“you will not get your car back from this boy. He cannot give you your car. He does not know where your car is. Your car is gone ... and why, Petrus continues ..., do you want to take this boy to the police? He is too young, you cannot put him in jail’ / ‘If he is eighteen he can be tried. If he is sixteen he can be tried.’ / ‘No, no, he is not eighteen.’ / ‘How do you know? He looks eighteen to me, he looks more than eighteen.’ / ‘I know, I know! He is just a youth, he cannot go to jail, that is the law, you cannot put a youth in jail, you must let him go!’ (138)

been "more or less indifferent to animals" (143) but, through his constant observation of the process of euthanizing dogs, he gets convinced that the dogs are aware of their destiny. In personifying these mammals as able to feel, he is drawing them closer to himself whilst developing a respect for them. These feelings which get exposed in his attempt to not sentimentalize<sup>12</sup> them, at the same time that he tried to honor them by giving them a special treatment that another person would not have given them.

So forth, Lurie has taken the responsibility of disposing of the bodies himself instead of just throwing them into a dump, turning the process into a weekly ritual that he admits he does for himself. In this sense, his caring for avoiding that the bodies get profaned can be taken as a metaphor of his present state. More precisely, he feels his surrounding is beating him in order to transform him into a more malleable being in the same way the workmen in the incinerator where he takes the bodies "beat the bags [in which the bodies are contained] with the backs of their shovels before loading them" (144) into the trolley that takes them to the furnace, so as to make the process easier for them. Then, his caring for the dog's bodies would be a manner of nurturing himself, as he is accepting that, contrary to the dog's situation, there is no much he can do to avoid his feeling of disrupt. Because of the respect with which he treats the animals before and after they die, it is clear that he feels a great compassion for them, but he apparently looks at himself only with pity. Whereas he has stopped trying to do something to improve his situation, his compassion for the dogs has transformed their euthanizing from a solution to get rid of unwanted animals and into a merciful chance of escaping their painful and disgraced life, a metaphor of freedom and peace –or what David has not been able to find for himself.

It is at this point of the story that one could argue in favor of the protagonist's exile being postmodern. This assumption is based on how the experiences he has been forced to face while living in Salem have managed to provoke in him a feeling of not belonging and impotence that have finally affected his subjectivity. This situation can be appreciated in his submission of power in the episode in which he agrees to have sex with Bev Shaw as an imagery of his resignation to his dominance. "After the sweet young flesh of Melanie Isaacs", he says, "this is what I have come to. This is what I will have to get used to, this and even less than this ... And stop calling her poor Bev Shaw. If she is poor, [I am] bankrupt" (150). Let us not forget that David used to sexually objectify women as a manner of satisfying his needs, and thus, the change of roles presented in

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<sup>12</sup> "He is not, he hopes, a sentimentalist. He tries not to sentimentalize the animals he kills" (143)

this scene is fundamental. Now it is him the one being objectified by a woman, the one being used to satisfy someone else's needs. He knows Bev Shaw's desire was to have an affair and he complies: "Of their congress he can at least say that he does his duty . . . so that in the end Bev Shaw can feel pleased with herself" (150). Henceforth, he has finally surrender to the idea that in this community he will not figure as a powerful person, nor have a hierarchical position higher than Petrus or the gang that raped Lucy. Powerless as he is, he has no authority to objectify anyone anymore but can only be objectified, exchanging roles with the resentful black community who now has the role of their formal colonizers. As so, he fulfills Bev's wishes, even though he had previously stated that "he does not like women [like her,] who make no effort to be attractive" describing her as "a dumpy, bustling little woman with black freckles, close-cropped, wiry hair, and no neck" (72).

Notwithstanding, David sees Lucy's disposition as one of slavery, not one of submission, which for her makes a difference. Despite his disagreeing with the situation, it is important to remark that there is a change in David's mind. As the exile has intruded his introspective journey, he has come to accept he does no longer control what happens in his life. This is the main reason why he is able to respect Lucy's decision of not reporting Pollux –her known rapist– to the police. But David's focus has turn from the search for the restoration of his power to concerning for his daughter's wellbeing, so Lucy's decision exasperates him to the point that he prefers going back to Cape Town, a travel through which his subjectivity will evolve.

So long, we have analyzed how David exile has confronted him with a reality where, in order to fit inside a community he cannot abandon, he must accept his powerlessness and give up his controlling attitude. While his exile was not fixed to a specific location but was an exile from his community of origin, now that he has stopped objectifying women and has been able to reencounter his paternal feelings he feels obliged to stay with his daughter. Anna, on the other hand, has been broadly described as being stubborn, determined and empathic. It was also said that having grown in a wealthy environment provided her with enough comfort that she has idealized the world, or at the least, assumed she can escape unharmed from any situation. This would serve as an explanation to why she did not feel the urge of abandoning the 'Country of Last Things' upon arrival.

Although she panicked as she approached the place by sea, having the address of his brother's office inside the city provided her some calm. There is no mention of her reaction when



she found out that the entire census zone where the address was located had been destroyed, and that there was no clue about where his brother could be or even if he was still alive. We have already mentioned that the narration of *In the Country* is highly fragmented, and that Anna constantly digresses from the narration of events to descriptive of her feelings. This clearly responds to the highly instability of the urban place, an urban space that appears to have a life of its own, where buildings, streets or even entire “census zones”<sup>13</sup> disappear from one day to another, but there are other levels of fragmentation as well. Going further the physical space, the instability of the environment prevents its inhabitants from having a secure access to housing, refuges, clothes, jobs or even food. It is this type of characteristics what make of the city of the ‘Country of Last Things’ a postmodern landscape, but they also permeate the characters’ subjectivities.

As Anna explains through her narration, memories become blurred when living inside this city, and thus there is much information she cannot provide simply because she has been forgotten it. Things vanish, the memories of them get lost, the words portraying those things are forgotten as well, and thus, the past becomes an uncertainty: “bit by bit, the city robs you of certainty” (6), “a thing vanishes, and if you wait too long before thinking about it, no amount of struggle can ever wrench it back ... when too much is changing all the time, the brain is bound to falter, things are bound to slip through it” (87). Then, the city is twisted into a harsh place that not only fractures the past but prevents the conformation of a history and, consequently, the possibility of projecting a future (because no future can exist if it does not have a past from which to be built). Without realizing it, the inhabitants inside the post-apocalyptic city of the Country of Last Things are being forced to live under a perpetual sense of ‘presentness’. As it was proposed by Habermas, the main objective of the project of modernity was to enrich everyday life with an accumulation of specialized culture. But, without a past to which resort to or a future to project, and as the inhabitants are disposed of any sense of tradition, culture gets lost and any possibility for developing a feeling of belonging disappears. Then, the subject slowly isolates himself and communities are not able to endure. Still, there are some characters that are able to find others that have not still completely given up to the city’s dynamics, as it happened with Anna and Isabel. But while they could find in each other a balance that can function as a basis for establishing a community, the alteration of her surroundings has taken the possibility of constructing a modern society away from them.

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<sup>13</sup> This is the name given to denominate different sectors inside the city, similar to neighborhoods.

It could be that Anna does not remember or that she did not consider it an important piece of information, but the fact is that there is no mention of how she felt when realizing that William was nowhere to be found. Furthermore, this situation exemplifies how the different levels of fragmentation inside the novel allow the rise of a reader that, by closely interacting with the literary text, can enrich the novel through inferring different details. We could speculate that she tried looking for him for some time –which would explain why she did not try to abandon the city before and, instead, even got a job. Perhaps, it would not be bold to say that nineteen years old Anna was really optimistic, or really naïve, as her description of the city's condition indicates that her brother is most likely dead, and that, unless she leaves, she will probably end up dead as well. Naïve because being used to have it all (as it was previously discussed), she was unable to truly understand the seriousness of what she witnessed. Or maybe, she was too shocked and preferred not confronting a scenario where she would not obtain what she wanted, for the first time in her life. But, as by the end of the book we can notice how she still believes there is a possibility that her brother is alive somewhere, we will conclude that her staying was directly connected to her optimism and determination.

One way or another, from her memories of her first year in the city we can conclude that, if she did think of these things, she did not let them affect her. She does not try to leave the place, although her first days were the hardest (with experiences that went from weeks or months of lonely wandering and homelessness to almost being raped (43)). She could clearly see that the city was crumbling around her, and even nature seemed to have been affected, as the weather changed so drastically that it appeared to be controlled by “forces so complex and obscure that no one can fully explain it” (28). In this place, death has been transformed into an idealized and idolatrous ritual. People looked for extravagant methods to end their lives, like in the case of The Runners, The Leapers, The Ghost People (10-13), among others. This idealization had also set the stone for the birth of a ‘death’ business. Euthanasia Clinics offered different dying experiences, depending on how much the person could pay. Another option was the Assassination Club, where people paid a fee to hire an assassin that would kill them without them knowing when, and Scavengers Transformation centers where the dead are turned into fuel (13-17). Paradoxically, death even became a reason for living for some. There were some that fought to keep living only so they could die. The Runners, for example, underwent a strict yearly training only to develop the skill to run without stopping until they dropped dead from exhaustion. Anna understood that these people

lived under extreme poverty, mistreated, starving, homeless and broken in spirit, and could not escape their unavoidable death, but despite of all these facts she decided to stay. Considering this context, her decision to stay also reassures how determined and stubborn Anna was before her personality changed.

Had she not been as determined to fulfill her task, or stubborn enough to admit she was not going to make it inside this city, perhaps she would not have been able to continue, but it cannot be said that these were the only qualities that keep her strong. As it was previously mentioned, Anna had an optimistic personality: “still, I was not a total failure. I had my legs, after all, and a certain youthful enthusiasm to keep me going, even when the prospects were less than encouraging” (35). She was aware of how hard it was going to be for her to stay in this land, but let us not forget that a part of her stubbornness and determination depended on her feeling untouchable. It would be safe to admit that a part of her thought she had control over the situation, and so that whenever she felt like quitting she would be able to go back home safely. Most probably, finding Isabel reassured her of the existence of a never-ending safety, but at the end, it was their relationship what marks her shattering. In order to better understand this, it is necessary to further explain the dynamics of the city first.

When asked about political references inside *In the Country of Last Things*, Auster has directly said that “there’s scarcely a word about politics in [the novel]. It’s about how one lives in a kind of chaos” (Morris 166) but more usually than not, the scope of topics inside a novel depend on the reader’s interpretation as well. In *Disgrace*, we can appreciate how power relations inside the community force a convergence between the public and the private spheres (To be further developed in section 3). Throughout the narration, Anna refers to at least three government changes and different services that –although precarious– keep the city working. We are confirmed then that there are people responsible for its management, who use it as an apparatus of control<sup>14</sup>. We must return to the idea that the city’s malleability creates a hostile environment where the inhabitants are not allowed to settle while prevented from constructing a history or retaining their memories. Then, the name ‘Country of Last Things’ does not make reference to a place where last

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<sup>14</sup> The ones controlling the city would be the responsables for Anna’s exile (the exilers), but they will not be identified as so until we discuss the nature of her exile further ahead. We must not forget that, according to our interpretation, up to this point of the story time Anna still has not realized she is trap inside this country. Namely, her exile gets explicit only after *she* realizes she has been exiled from the outside world.

things are contained but to one where they are devised through the elimination of all other things. On a more subjective scale, it is where memories come to die and subjectivities are dismembered.

But eliminating things in order to create the ‘last’ implies that after a certain time the ‘last’ things remaining cease to be the last ones and turn into just ‘things’ once more, and the same would happen with the characters, their memories and their subjectivities. As certain patterns emerge, we can identify, through Anna’s experiences, which is the method the government uses for shattering the inhabitants of the country: the instability of their surroundings is meant to take the characters to the limit, and so, every time they are enjoying of a peaceful or calm situation, ‘settling down’, this oasis gets abruptly destroyed by the intrusion of a difficult or traumatic event. Then, another moment of calm emerges, only to be eventually destroyed once again, and so on and so forth, until the characters finally break. Then, there are two possibilities: either they do not have the strength to keep going and die, or they stay alive submitting to, and feeding, the city’s dynamics (allowing it to survive).

Going back to the analysis of the story line, Anna’s friendship with Isabel can be seen as her salvation as well as her doom. Saving Isabel from dying provides Anna a safe place to live and a mentor who can teach her the techniques required for object hunting, ensuring her a stable access to money and food. Sometime after this happened though, Isabel got so weak she had to stop working, a critical moment that demarks the start of Anna’s introspective journey. Having to take care of Isabel and Ferdinand –her husband– provided her with a responsibility she had never had before, hence, a reason to mature:

*I took over the day-to-day affairs of the household. I was the one in charge, the one who did everything ... You remember how it used to be for me at home ... I never had to lift a finger ... Now I had become ... the sole support of two people I would never ever had met in my old life ... for the first time in my life there were people who depended on me, and I did not let them down (57-58) [emphasis added]*

After this experience, Anna began to analyze things from a different perspective. She remained a determined person, but became less stubborn, as now not pondering the consequences of her actions before acting meant running the risk of leaving Isabel –and Ferdinand– in the lurch. Her first sacrifice was to hide her femininity, an important part of herself, for protection. This meant changing her physical appearance, but in spite of knowing how necessary this was, her

frustration was quite noticeable (the importance she gives to her looks has been already discussed). While this happened she felt so impotent that she even threw Ferdinand a mirror for laughing at her. But from these happenings she also got stronger.

A decisive moment for Anna occurred after a night when Ferdinand hears her masturbate. He slowly starts harassing her up until he turns quite aggressive, and finally, one night tries to rape her. Although she was aware of Ferdinand's intentions, Anna was unsure of what she would do, how she would react, if and when he made his move, at least right until he did. It was when he touched her that she realized she was going to kill him (64). Going back to examine the city's dynamics, we can interpret Ferdinand's threatening figure and his depredatory attitude towards Anna as a metaphor of the city's attempts to overpower her, whereas the decision of killing the man for its attack would have a double meaning. On the one hand, it would denote Anna's attempt of fighting the place, but, on the other hand, this impulse would also signify that the exile has started to overpower her.

By choosing to kill Ferdinand she surrenders to the city's destructive dynamic, where hostility trespasses from the public place to the intimacy of the subject, turning people into aggressive individuals. We can notice how Anna takes advantage of the textual language while she narrates this episode, in order to enlighten us, as readers, of how relevant it was for her, and she is trying to make sure that we completely understand her state. We can notice in the following quotes how she tries to emphasize her feelings through a recurrent use of enumerations, anaphors and constant repetitions of other words (in italics), that serve to strengthen the connotation she is trying to give to her ideas. Then, the coming of the city into her personality gets reflected in the pleasure the action of choking Ferdinand provoked in her. To denote this pleasure she emphasizes the words that demonstrate how empowered she felt while being in control, by giving them a positive connotation: "As long as *I* held on to Ferdinand's throat, *I* was free. *I* was *beyond* the pull of the earth, *beyond* the night, *beyond* any thought of myself" (65) [emphasis added]. Fortunately, she realized what was happening, and, in contrast, she tries to demonstrate how disturbing it was for her to understand she rejoiced at the killing: "[*She*] understood that [*she*] was not *killing* him in self-defense—[*she*] was *killing* him for the pure pleasure of it. *Horrible, horrible* consciousness ... now [*she*] understood that [*she*] was *no better* than Ferdinand, *no better* than anyone else" (65-66) [emphasis added], and lets go. Notwithstanding, this moment is not only significant because of Anna's realization. Ferdinand behavior was acceptable under the context of the city's dynamics

where rules were almost inexistent, and rape was among the orders of the day, but not from Isabel's perspective.

It can be argued that Anna came to fill a space in Isabel's life, a woman who was lacking the love of her husband and was trying to bring him closer. Under this perspective, we could conclude that Isabel felt Anna was fulfilling the role of the daughter they were missing in order to become a family. Although this could have been Isabel's ulterior motive, the fact is that the moment the three started living together a community was established. Because of this reason, and in order to maintain as so, rules were implicitly created: Anna provided the food, Isabel keep house in order and cooked, Ferdinand was not to be disturbed and his ships could not be sold. For Isabel, the dynamic of this community was not to be the same as the ones of the other inhabitants of the city, where violent acts like rape were permitted. Then, Ferdinand had turned into a threat to their community and had to be punished even though considering she loved him and suffered from her decision. This would be a plausible explanation to why Isabel secretly killed her husband, cryptically embedded in the last thing she says before Anna realizes the man was dead: "Life can be so wonderful, after all, even in times like these", she said. "It's a pity that some think only of spoiling it" (68).

It is afterwards, while the women take Ferdinand's body to the roof to toss him from the edge (just as a sailor would be tossed into the sea), that we are given the first sign of how the disruptive context in which she is immersed had managed to break Anna's spirit. "For several months after that I did not feel like myself anymore", she explained. "I continued to live and breathe ... but I could not escape the thought that I was dead, that nothing could ever bring me to life again" (74-75). Then, as she was forced to watch Isabel suffer a slow and painful death due to her sclerosis, the guilt and impotence for not being able to reverse the old woman's condition consume Anna, and she finally collapses. Isabel's death and all the suffering it brought to Anna caused her doom, as it managed to disrupt her to the point she finally felt the need to escape from the country and return to the safety of her home.

It is during the episode where she tries to leave the 'Country of Last Things' that her exile is introduced. A year had passed since her arrival and she was right back where she had started, with some money in her pocket, but unemployed and homeless. She decides to look for a charity ship that can take her home, as it was only logical that she would be able to leave the same way she arrived, only to find out that the dock where she landed had been turned into the construction

site of a gigantic wall. It was meant to guard the country against the possibility of a foreign invasion, which implied that no ships were allowed to enter the country, nor leave it. While David's internal exile aims to detach him from his natal community and immerse him into a different one without him leaving the country, Anna's internal exile has a different purpose: For the 'Country of Last Things' to keep functioning assets are needed and thus no one must not be allowed to leave the country. Hence, the internal characteristic of Anna's exiles presents some similarities and differences when compared to David's exile: He was exiled from his community and by his community, but Anna is being exiled from her homeland by a third force. All the more, they cannot leave these places for different reasons. While David's community of origin forces him to leave Cape Town just as much as his love for her daughter forces him to stay near her, Anna is simply not allowed to leave this disrupted city nor its country. Then, as it was posed in the introduction, Anna's exile is a mixture of both an internal and an external exile. In other words, she is being exiled from her natal country and community, restricted from travelling outside of the city's perimeter, and isolated from the rest of the population of the 'Country of Last Things'. Furthermore, the settings where David's and Anna's exiles take place play a fundamental role that also impacts the configuration of these novels as postmodern, putting forward the unrepresentable: the rural setting inside *Disgrace* amplifies the contrast between the roles of the inhabitants of this fragmented postcolonial environment, and the physically disruptive and shattered urban setting of *In the Country* serves as a metaphor of the rupture of modern civilization.

At this point of the analysis we can establish that the journeys of both characters are connected to their exiles, as they would not have developed accordingly if they had occurred under different circumstances. For David's journey to finish in the acceptance of his powerlessness and his submission, it was necessary that he were faced with an uncontrollable and rupturing situation from which he could not escape (as the constant reminder of his powerlessness to stop or avenge his daughter's rape). Concurrently, for Anna's journey to make her recognize her inescapability from real life and her inability to obtain everything she desires, she had to recognize herself as being powerless to write her history at her will. These events eliminated the base for her determination and stubbornness by attacking her construction of the world, taking the things that she cared for away from her, and destroying her hope. As Anna herself admits, "when hope disappears, when you find that you have given up hoping even of the possibility of hope, you tend to fill the empty spaces with dreams, little childlike thoughts and stories to keep yourself going"

(9). Therefore, it was then that she realizes “[she] had deluded [herself] into thinking [she] could return [to her home] whenever [she] wanted to”, that she collapses and begins refashioning herself, as “for the first time since coming to the city, [she] was engulfed by pessimism” (89), allowing her subjectivity to evolve.

Because of all these reasons, we can establish that the introspective journeys of the exiles are not *triggered* by their forced travels but are *intruded* by the forced travel. As it was previously developed, the symbolic journey gets configured while the character’s introspection leads him to react to his daily situations in a certain manner, an interaction that makes him determine which will be the route to follow next. This implies that the introspective journey cannot be forced to happen mainly because it is an ongoing process that never stops. Having discussed how the exiles managed to shatter David’s and Anna’s subjectivities during the beginning of their journeys, we can enrich our hypothesis by stating that Anna’s and David’s exiles intrude (not trigger) their introspective journeys with the purpose of disrupting the images they have of themselves, concurrently dismantling their subjectivities. Then, we now need to take into account the ongoing nature of the introspective journeys. Although this characteristic had not been previously considered, it relates to Nancy’s claim that the subject emerges from a never ending process of evolution where his subjectivity arises from a constant reimagining of the self. In the following sections of the analysis we will discuss which direction the journeys take after the subjectivities have been shattered, or more precisely, if these ongoing journeys help the characters refashion their shattered subjectivities –a process which is would be fundamental to elucidate if the exiles succeed in their purposes.



*Reimagining oneself*

When David Lurie is forced to move out of his urban life and into a rural one, he is confronted with an unexpected reality where he is no longer able to remain in control of his life. He tries to regain this control by imposing his power over the ones threatening him, but he soon realizes that, contrary to previous experiences, he will not be able to reclaim control over his surroundings nor his life. Then, the exile intrudes his introspective journey, as previously discussed, which ends in David surrendering and subjecting to those more powerful than him – portrayed by Petrus. Namely, the character loses the perception of who he is, with the exile apparently accomplishing its purpose. Nevertheless, as the story continues we can appreciate how while he is crumbling David feels an unconscious need for refashioning himself, and thus, he wanders through different familiar places while his journey continues.

After leaving Salem, David seems totally lost. It gets clear through the narration that he is unsure of what he is doing, why he is doing it or what he will do next, and just acts instinctively. It is under this context that he feels the need to travel to George, Melanie's hometown, and to have a meeting with his ex-lover's father, even though he does not know why. There, he recognizes that since he was forced to abandon his community he has "been at a loose end" and he feels a need for "[saying] what is on his heart" (165), although he is now sure of what that is. He first tries to justify himself by explaining which were the feelings that lead him to abuse of Melanie, although he then regrets it and retracts his intention to say what is on his heart. It can be clearly seen here how when Mr. Isaacs notices Lurie's confliction and how powerless he has become and, apparently because of a religious nature, he feels compelled to help Lurie find his path of redemption. "How are the mighty fallen!" (167), exclaims Mr. Isaacs making a reference to the bible, when noticing David's distress, and invites him over to his house with the intention of helping him realize what he is really there for: he feels a need for apologizing for what happened with Melanie.

It is interesting to notice how Lurie was unconsciously driven to apologize to Melanie's father –and his family– but not to Melanie herself. This relates to and proves Lucy's and Bev's claims: he does not understand what a victim of a rape feels because he has never been one. Nevertheless, he does understand how it feels to be the father of a victim, how disrupting is to feel powerless to protect her. Once again, we can appreciate how the author organized the narration of the text and the information given in such manner that it could easily prompt the emergence of a reader that reads this episode as David confessing to having raped of Melanie, but we are never

really clarified what happened. If we chose to, we could degrade the novel into a racist story about the normalization of rape when it is committed by a white man towards a black South African and the criminalization of black South Africans through the violent image of a gang of black men raping a white powerless woman. We could condemn it as highly offensive, an attack on everything the antiapartheid era stands for, coming back to the historical interpretation that we have already discarded. The truth is that the ease with which one can come to this interpretation relates to the postmodern qualities of a novel that aims to disrupt the reader, and also to the intention of the text to act as a critique to postmodernity, topics which will be treated in depth further ahead. As it is not our intention to simplify the novel in this manner, we will say that David is apologizing to Mr. Isaacs for abusing of his daughter but more importantly, he is apologizing for the pain he caused to him as Melanie's father. Being now able to relate to what it should have been for Mr. Isaacs to feel he could not protect his daughter, he feels the need to apologize to him and to his family. It is only after David has identified himself as an abuser—a person so despicable as the men that raped his daughter—that he is able to recognize he is “sunk in a state of disgrace from which it will not be easy to lift [himself]” (172), a situation he is trying to cope with. After acknowledging his state, he decides to travel to Cape Town, a place where he is not wanted. There, he begins to analyze himself through the writing of his opera on Lord Byron and Teresa, a situation that will prove fundamental to the upcoming development of his renewed subjectivity.

When returning to his house in Cape Town he notices the place has changed since he left. “Shanty settlements have crossed the highway and spread east of the airport. The stream of cars has slow down while a child with a stick herds a stray cow off the road. Inexorably, he thinks, *the country is coming to the city ... soon history will have come full circle*” (175) [emphasis added]. Almost as if he had taken the country to the city with him with his return, as if roles had turned around and now the environment was the one tainted by the doings of the subject, this coming of the rural to the urban acts as a metaphor of how his stay with his daughter has affected and changed him. His house has been ransacked, his access to the university restricted, the name-tag on his former office changed, and he is being avoided by those who know him, all situations that confirm he is no longer part of this town. Although he declares himself a “free man, with duties to no one but himself” (177), the former image can be also interpreted as a images of the attachments David still feels to Salem, especially to his daughter, while he tries to ignore his guilt for leaving—“from Monday onwards the dogs ... will be tossed into the fire unmarked, unmourned. For that betrayal,

will he ever be forgiven?” (178)— and laments his misery while implicitly asking Lucy to accept him back: “who would have guessed, when his child was born, that in time he would come crawling to her asking to be taken in?” (179).

Almost since the novel started we have been sporadically reminded of David’s intention of writing an opera on the life of Lord Byron and his romance with the Contessa Teresa Guiccioli, but this is the first time he actually sits down to write it. As he begins to his work, we can notice how conflicted he is with the fact that the manner how he had previously envisioned his work now collides with his current state of being. He declares that there is “something misconceived about [the opera], something that does not come from the heart” (181) and decides to reformulate it. When analyzing the modifications he makes to the work we can notice how some of the personality changes of his fictional characters come to represent some of the emotional conflicts he is having, and we are enlighten on how his subjectivity refashions. It is under this context that the journey of the character is enriched by a change in his journey: it becomes a retrospective experience.

For the philosopher Gilbert Ryle, there are certain states of the mind that cannot be examined while they happen, mainly because they imply a violent agitation of the subject, and thus it is only when the subject is ‘cooler’ that he is able to analyze himself, process known as retrospection (147-148), or a ‘late’ type of introspection. We will understand the retrospective journey as the process of reflecting on one’s state of being through the analysis of past experiences to which the subject has been able to emotionally distance himself. Nevertheless, we will not consider the reflection of difficult or conflicting situations to be exclusively retrospective, as we have appreciated how David has been able to go through an introspective journey disregarding of how conflicting his experiences have been. Then, during the writing of his opera David starts a retrospective journey that makes him question his present state of being by reviewing his past life in lights of the more recent events he has lived during his exile. This will be one of the events that will help him to decipher which is his real path in life and thus, and consequently, to refashion his subjectivity.

Having this in mind, the changes made by David to the nature of his characters are directly linked to this retrospective journey. While the Lord Byron he first envisioned is an image of his conflicted self at the beginning of the novel, the ghost of Lord Byron that finally remains becomes an image of how the Lurie we first met is now gone. The first Byron was “full of doubts” as he was “once passionate but now [has become a] less than passionate older man” (180). His doubts

he did not showed, as he hide his state of being to the outside world by acting as a womanizer who mistreated women as objects of pleasure (182). This is a behavior completely comparable to ‘pre-exile’ David, who had once relied on his looks to keep women nearby, developing a need for their presence and getting used to objectify them. But that version of himself has been killed, so it is only logical that ‘pre-exile Lord Byron’ dies as well. With regard to Teresa, she was originally a “passionate young woman” (180) that had been described as “young, greedy, wilful [and] petulant” (181), a portrait similar to young promiscuous Lurie during his golden years, when he was charming, passionate and attracted any and every women. But New Teresa has matured, and while he asks himself if whether “an older Teresa [will] engage his heart as his heart is now” (180) or not –as if he were asking himself if he was ready to accept himself as a submissive man who has given up his power– he finally decides to depict her to “[look] more like a peasant, [more like] a *Contadina* than an aristocrat” (181). Interestingly enough, this description is quite similar to one he had previously made of Petrus. When he arrived at Salem and meet him he was his daughter’s assistant, or the ‘dog-man’ as he described himself, and David instantly placed himself in a higher hierarchical position than the man. He described him as “a peasant, a *paysan*, a man of the country” (117). Then, with the reversal of roles David feels this description best fits himself now, which would explain the twist in Teresa’s disposition. What Byron had once so admired of Teresa has now been turned hectic, just as what Lurie had admired of himself during his youth now unsettles him, signifying the change from a cocky attractive man into a submissive unappealing one.

Anna’s journey, on the other hand, appears to remain introspective. After Isabel’s death Anna gets completely destroyed and while she lets her emotions get over herself she lets her guard down. During this time her cart gets robbed, or perhaps she lost it as “[her] mind was so fuzzed just then [she] couldn’t be sure [of what happened]” (82). Nevertheless, she had lost “the one thing [she] needed to survive” (82). However, instead of worrying about her future she lets herself act impulsively and sells her scavenger license, only because the job reminds her of Isabel. After being pushed out of the house and understanding she is unable to leave the country (or the city), she ends up homeless, unemployed and hopeless. Sadly for her, all this happens just before the ‘terrible winter’ began. She describes this wintry season as the cruelest winter she had to face, one that was even turned into a point of reference in time for the city’s inhabitants. This last idea is of the utmost importance as it implies that this season was so appalling that it even managed to escape the previously discussed ‘presentness’ of the city.

Interestingly enough, she describes this winter as having been especially cruel for the homeless, for whom “survival was nearly out of the question” (91), but excluding herself from this condition –she refers to them as an external group. This could be a sign of her personality still pushing her to move on, and her determination to not dying taking over herself as an instinct of survival. Anyhow, her positivism has abandoned her. We get reinforce of these ideas as we are faced with a rather defiant side of Anna we had not seen before. After running away from a riot she finds herself in front of ‘the library’, a building she had not seen before, and, as she is being forced to leave the place, she stands her ground and burst in. There, she finds a group of Jews with whom she easily connects (being a Jew herself). While discussing about their religious faith with the Rabbi, Anna shows herself to have turned into a rather pessimistic and hopeless person: “You’re not going to tell me that *you* believe in God ... My friend Isabel believed in God ... She’s dead too.” (96), a clear proof of how she has started to break already. But just as things are getting darker for her, her luck turns around. Although they had not seen her brother, they do know Samuel, the reporter who Bogat sent to the ‘Country of last Things’ after William disappeared. Once again we are faced with a defiant Anna who will not pull back, and who eventually manages to convince Samuel to let her stay living with him.

The period Anna lived in the library with Sam is indisputably the calmest of all the three oasis she enjoyed during the four years illustrated in her letter: “Those were the best days for me. Nor just here, you understand, but anywhere—the best days of my life” (107). They keep each other’s company and while William works in writing a book about the reality of the country, Anna took care of the domestic shores –“I went out shopping for food, I took care of emptying the slops, I cooked our meals and kept the room clean” (108). As it can be expected, they fall in love, a situation that provides Anna with the hope and reason she needed to keep going. Before meeting, the only thing that kept Anna alive was the determination to find out what had happened with William. As for Sam, the writing of the book was his lifeguard, the one thing that “prevents [him] from thinking about [himself] and getting sucked up into [his] own life” (104).

We are never be able to know why they felt in love. A more pragmatic interpreter, for example, could hypothesize that it was because of the context in which they were living, an instinctive decision. In spite of the reason, the fact is that they continue to be together throughout a great part of the season. Even more importantly and against all odds, Anna gets pregnant. We must not forget that the ‘Country of Last Things’ is the place where things comes to die, and thus

the gift of life is not given inside this land. Yet, the story being told is the one of Anna *Blume*. From the beginning of the novel the protagonist is portrayed as a highly optimistic person, someone from which good feelings, good deeds, good situations bloom. Once again we are proven of the richness of the novel's narration: As we delve into the story we are reinforced of the carefulness and elegance with which Auster wrote *In the Country of Last Things*, and so the importance of paying close attention to the narration and how it interacts with the reader grows stronger. We cannot ignore as well that the Blume-bloom being a homophone that makes reference to Anna's positive nature, our reinforcing our inference of Anna's 'pre-exile' personality. Furthermore, this image of Anna as a person from whom things bloom collides with the configuration of the urban setting in which she is immersed, a place where things come to die. Then, the main question that arises (and will continue to reemerge up to the end of the novel) is: will Anna be able to triumph over the 'presentness' of the environment and 'bloom' a future for herself, or will the city manage to destroy her nature? We will come back to this discussion by the end of our analysis, as we would not be able to thoroughly answer this question without having discussed first the rest of Anna's experiences and the novel's ending

The hope for constructing a life inside this post-apocalyptic place grows as Anna's pregnancy advances. Even Sam, who Anna describes as a hardly optimistic and tormented person, got "positively invigorated by the idea of becoming a father, and little by little he soothed [Anna's] doubts [and] got [her] to look at the pregnancy as a good omen" (117). Probable because of the positivity of the context, Anna starts recovering her stubborn and determined personality. Sometime after she gets pregnant, she is forced to stop running the house errands for her soon-to-be family, not only because of the delicacy of her state but also because "it was around this time that [her] shoes wore out". Anna has explained how important walking is inside this land since the beginning of the novel. When Scavengers strip bodies of their belonging the first thing to go are the shoes, because "staying on your feet is the most important task ... and when walking becomes painful, you are as good as lost. *One step and then another step and then another*: that is the golden rule" (24) [emphasis added] in this city. Even the texture of the phrase highlighted stresses the idea of walking, as the organization and repetition of words evokes the coordination of one's feet while walking. Henceforth, now that she has no shoes William is resolved to protect her and insist on her staying inside the library, but her stubbornness to remain locked up starts feeding her

determination to find a new pair of shoes and exasperated by the situation, she creates her own doom.

Sometime after her arrival to the library the group of Jews living there are expelled, for political reasons, and Henri Dujardin, a despicable cryptic man, takes their place. From the moment he and Anna met he shows a rejection towards the woman. Then, his change of attitude towards her after hearing of her problem is quite suspicious. He approaches her offering to act as intermediary between her and his cousin, who has a brand new pair of shoes to sell. Immersed in her desperation, Anna does not realize this is a trap and accepts to accompany him to his cousin's house, where she realizes she had been deceived: "my visit to this place had nothing to do with shoes or money or business of any kind ... and there was no mistaking what I saw in there: three or four human bodies hanging naked from meat-hooks, and another man with a hatchet leaning over a table and lopping off the limbs of another corpse" (125). The clarity with which Anna presents this episode leaves no room for misinterpretation, and although the hostility of the environment in which she is immersed is clear from the beginning of the novel, this is a quite shocking and unexpected turning point for the story. Even though she managed to escape she paid a big price for it. During her escape she had no choice but to jump through a window, a long drop that signified the end of her pregnancy. Whereas this event got her into the Woburn house, place where she lives until the end of the novel, it marked the end of her second period of calm.

Perhaps the biggest difference between David's and Anna's journey is that David's retrospective part of it is included inside the story time we are being narrated (his episode in Cape Town), while the one of Anna is immersed in her narration, so we could compare her writing of her story and her comments of it as the evidences of her retrospective journey. Whereas we cannot demark an end to Anna's retrospective journey—the reasons why will be addressed further ahead—, David Lurie's story does cover the retrospective section of his journey up to his end and beyond it. After he decides what changes he will make to his opera, the question that remains for himself is crucial: "can he find it in his heart to love, this plain, ordinary [Teresa]? Can he love her enough to write a music for her? If he cannot, what is left for him?" (182), or implicitly: Will he be able to cope with accepting he is no longer who he was? Because, just as his new Teresa has to mourn her loved one, he has to mourn his shattered subjectivity and start to reconsider himself. Therefore, as he writes about this new Teresa, he also starts refashioning himself, a terrifying prospect that makes him feel the need of "working as swiftly as he can, holding tight to Teresa" (183). Luckily,

as the days pass by “he begins to live his days more fully with Teresa and the dead Byron”, as he were accepting his inner change as well.

The changes of the type of music he envisions for his opera throughout his story also reveal his change in heart. During a great part of the novel he foresees his work accompanied by classical music: “At the beginning I thought it was a subject that would call for quite lush orchestration. Like Strauss, say ... Now I’m inclining the other way, toward a very meagre accompaniment – violin, cello, oboe or maybe bassoon” (63). But at this stage of his journey, it has become clear for him that the classical music he once envisioned for his work will not work out as well as a music written specifically for the characters would. Then, David starts writing his own music, as drafting what lines his life will follow from now on and, shockingly, he decides his opera will be orchestrated by an odd little seven-stringed toy banjo that once belonged to young Lucy, marveling himself at what he learns from this decision:

Six months ago he had though his own ghostly place in *Byron in Italy* would be somewhere between Teresa’s and Byron’s: between a yearning to prolong the summer of the passionate body and a reluctant recall from the long sleep of oblivion. *But he was wrong*. It is not the *erotic* that is calling to him after all, nor the *elegiac*, but the *comic* ... he is held in the music itself, in the flat, tinny slap of the banjo strings, the voice that strains to soar away from the ludicrous instrument but is continually reined back, like a fish on a line (184-185) [emphasis added]

Through this event he also realizes that being with every women he had been with actually had the purpose of metaphorically “[sucking] the complex proteins out of his blood like snake-venom, leaving him clear-headed and dry” (185) –that is to say, to liberate him from his burdens and problems so he could live his life comfortably, using them as *objects* to fulfill *his* needs. Lucy’s toy banjo then gains a deeper importance, as it symbolizes the relevance of the role she plays in his life: She helps him connect with his true self. At the same time he realizes that just as the voice of the strains is not able to escape the proximity of the toy banjo, he will never be able to escape from Lucy and everything that he went through while living at her house, an experience so transcendent that made him realize who he truly is. He manages to fully understand himself not only because of everything he had lived over the last three months while in Salem, but by analyzing his life since his youth in lights of his present state, and now he can only laugh at himself. This is



the point when he realizes that he had been making a mock of himself, and that he will never be able to abandon Lucy and her community, for all they mean to him. Then, he feels an urge for including a third voice inside his opera, Allegra (Byron's daughter), who, in a situation of distress, symbolizes his need to understand his own daughter from a perspective of innocence and danger, where she needs his father to survive. This interpretation agrees with his decision to return and remain in Salem, embracing his daughter and her decision to play the role of Petrus's third wife in order to protect herself and her child (a decision that which we will delve into later on). Summarizing, Lurie has not only analyzed his present thoughts and emotions but has also understood them in light of how they have evolved throughout his life, a process which is revealed in his decision to use a shadow of Byron and a mature Teresa in his opera instead of the original depictions of Lord Byron and Teresa he intended to, a metaphor of the abandonment of his past self in favor of his present one. But the evolution of the opera also enlighten us of a third change, that is, how his work becomes an image of the replacement of grand narratives with the little narratives of the postmodern era. In this manner, the chamber opera, a highly traditional expression of art, eventually gets transformed into the confused, depressing and fragmented story of a distressed widow being interpreted by a distressed man playing a toy banjo. Then, we can notice how David has stopped conceiving his life as part of a modern reality and has started embracing the postmodern. History, and the conception of the modern as being dependent on tradition are sidelined in favor of a reality that is immersed in a constant state of 'presentness', like the one portrayed in *In the Country of Last Things*.

The entire analysis of the time David spent writing *Byron in Italy* confirms and refines part of our hypothesis: David's internal exile intrudes his ongoing introspective journey, shattering his subjectivity, but afterwards, it prompts a retrospective one that allows David to understand his exile as a learning experience. More specifically, he learns which is his true role inside his society and embraces his postmodern reality. This signifies that the forced travel is deprived of its postmodern nature, accomplishing the purpose of the modern exile, where confronting a difficulty allows the character the acquisition of a greater knowledge of himself, and a wisdom not previously possessed. But the postmodern perspective of the process that aims to disrupt and overpower the subject appears to be present as well. It becomes important to clarify then, that the postmodern quality of his scenario resides in the knowledge he obtained, but not necessarily in the nature of his exile. Lurie is now aware that from this moment onwards his community resides with Lucy at

Salem. He also knows this means he has become a part of a postmodern world where he has no control over anybody else, but fulfils the role of an objectified subject. He must accept his submission and subjugation to Petrus and the bigger community he represents –that is, the South African black community. Analyzing the novel from the South African historical perspective, though, this could be interpreted as the image of the colonizers turning into the colonized and vice versa. In this case Petrus would be representing those who were subjugated during the Apartheid period, and who now resent white South Africans as David, who symbolizes the former colonizers. Once again, through his world knowledge, the reader is able to interact with the text to turn it into racist discourse, but because of the reasons that have been previously discussed this will not be done.

David's journey, in the sum of its introspective and retrospective stages, has lead him to acknowledge his objectified subjectivity. His objectification, though, accounts for every one of the properties that Nussbaum gives to objectification, except from the one of ownership (where the objectified subject is understood as something owned that can be bought or sold), as apparently there is no episode where David gets treated as someone's property. Apart from the ones previously mentioned (instrumentality, Fungibility, violability and denial of subjectivity), we need to account as well for the *denial of autonomy*, where the 'object' is treated as lacking in autonomy and self-determination; and *inertness*, where the 'object' is treated as lacking of agency (257). The former can be identified when we understand David is at mercy of Petrus's wishes, and the latter in David lack of free will.

Finally, there are two other episodes during his stay in Cape Town that clearly helped David reassure he did not belonged to this community anymore. One of them is his conversation with his ex-wife, when her worldview collides with his new manner of approaching the world (directly linked to his submission and subjection). When she tells him that, by deciding not to look for a new job and by not being concerned with his lack of money, he is throwing his life away he responds by stating: "My life is not thrown away, Rosalind. Be sensible ... I'm going to end up in a hole in the ground ... and so are you. So are we all" (189). The other episode is when he goes looking for Melanie, because he feels "there is something unfinished in the business with [her]" (190). With this in mind, he goes to watch a play where she is acting. There, he thinks of all the women he has been with and asks himself what must have happened to them, and how he was enriched by each of them. For that he thanks them, but he is suddenly taken back to reality when

Ryan, Melanie's boyfriend, orders him to leave and to "stay with [his] kind" (194), implying he does not belong here anymore. Which 'kind' is Ryan referring to, though? Going back to the different readers that could arise from this novel he could be either referring to a group of white people, rapists, racists, or simply wherever he now belongs. Disregarding, the derogatory connotation is clear: he is not welcomed there.

When David returns to Salem, we can notice how he is still not entirely comfortable with the prospect of accepting this as his new life ("Lucy's farm, Lucy's patch of earth. Is it his earth too? It does not feel like his earth. Despite the time he has spent here, it feels like a foreign land" (197), but it gets clear that he has had a change of heart by his reaction when affronting Lucy's pregnancy. Different to what had happened times before, he restricts himself from erupting in rage, even though this means that neither of them will be able to ever forget the traumatizing situation they lived (considering this is the child from one of the rapists, and that she has decided to keep him). Instead, he turns to himself and cries. Nevertheless, he dislikes the situation and explicitly states it to Lucy and Petrus. It is during his conversation with the last that it is clarified that although they share a community, they belong to different groups of people: Black South Africans descendent from aboriginal people, and white ones who descent from the European colonizers. Perhaps under a different context this two groups could have seen each other as equals, but considering the novel to be set in a postmodern post-colonialist context it must be understood that this is a highly fragmented society where the resentment of black people towards whites is undeniable. Hence, Lucy must submit to Petrus's commands and Pollux's wishes if she wants to remain in her land, but seeing that Lucy lets Pollux sexually harass her and even defends him ("He is disturbed. A disturbed child" (208) is still too much for David to endure, and he leaves her house to go live in the town.

*Broken down...?*

Up to this point in the story, David has gone from a controlling, ironic, promiscuous womanizer with some airs of superiority<sup>15</sup> to a submissive, subjected and loving father who has admitted his objectification. But still, his first concern now –and the only thing he thinks he can do– is to protect his daughter, and so he has not realized she is in the same position as he is, he does not stand to see her being objectified. He has not been completely broken down, but going back to *In the Country*, we can see that Anna’s case is different. She started as a positively stubborn, determined and naïve young woman who saw herself as indestructible, but little by little has been shaken down by her reality. When waking up in Woburn house she realizes that not only she has had a miscarriage, but also that while she was waking up the library was burning down. Sam is most likely death, a prospect that tears her apart: “Those were the facts I had to deal with during my first months at Woburn House. It was a dark period for me, *darker than any period I have ever known*” (130).

The Anna of whom we talked in the first section of the analysis has died and where she used to be only fragments remain, a clear reflection of the city’s state. Like she herself explained, almost at the beginning of the novel, this is a place constructed of pieces and fragments of old, broken and discarded things. Nevertheless, she also said that among the chaos created by those unrelated pieces, everything fuses once more: “[when] things disintegrate into muck, or dust, or scraps ... what you have is something new ... that cannot be identified. It is a clump, a mote, a fragment of the world that has no place: a cipher of it-ness” (36). This image reflects how postmodernity articulates its narration from the fragmentation of ideas: In *Disgrace*, we are provided a story with omissions of information that prevent the reader from knowing the entire context, but, at the same time, allow him to interact with the text in a greater number of manners. In *In the Country of Last Things* the configuration of a broken character allows the author to present a narration that rejoins the pieces of a story in a random fashion, while the disorganization of the narration allows the configuration of Anna as a shattered person. We have previously discussed how at the ‘Country’ the ‘last’ things at a certain point lose their status of last and turn into just things once more. Likewise, at some point in between the fusing of pieces and the loosing of status Anna starts refashioning herself. Sadly it cannot be demonstrated if this refashioning depended on

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<sup>15</sup> we must remember when he arrived at Salem for the first time he looked down on Petrus and almost everyone else

a retrospective journey as it happened with David Lurie, but there is evidence enough to confirm that her subjectivity had a regression.

Woburn House is without any doubt the most stable place where Anna lives while the city. Previously the house of a wealthy doctor who recently died, during the time the ‘Country’ started to collapse it was transformed into a shelter where the homeless could take refuge. During their time there, people are provided with a comfortable bed and decent meals. Although she arrives there because of a terrible reason, inside this house resides the biggest community to which Anna belongs (at least, during the period of time summarized in her letter). A total of 4 other people live permanently inside Woburn. They are Victoria, the doctor’s daughter; Otto Frick and his grandson, who maintain the house and pick up injured people from the street; and Maggie Vine, the deaf-mute cook and laundress. There is one more person that we must consider, Boris Stepanovich, a mysterious man who functions as intermediary and is in charge of providing the shelter with the supplies it needed –He does not live inside the house, but he is a member of this community nonetheless.

Although Anna eventually copes with the idea of having lost her baby and Sam, it is clear that the positivism and determination that remained in her had been lost. Let us not forget that she had once travelled to a deadly land to search for her presumed dead brother, risked her life to save an old woman, and offered to share her money with a stranger. But now “the do-gooder philosophy of the place” (137) made her uncomfortable. She was a living dead, a fact that we can notice in the narration’s negative change of mood: “[she] knew that everything from now on would be an aftermath—a dreadful, posthumous sort of life, a life that would go on happening to [her], even though it was finished” (137). In terms of her personality, her optimism turned into a pessimistic attitude. For example, although Woburn House was “a haven, an idyllic refuge from the misery and squalor around it” (139), Anna wondered if they were really doing any good to people. As she saw it, the shelter provided the hope of a future that she considered inexistent, a hope that only managed to deepen people’s suffering when they returned to the streets. Eventually, she goes from seeing the place as a cruel place to a futile enterprise and decides to stay, but her attitude did not change. She knew that no matter the hard work they did, as long as there were too many to be helped and too little to help them they were going to fail. Her reasoning proves how significant her change in heart has been, going from the confident Anna who knew she would find William to one that simply declares hope is useless.

However, we have seen how cyclical the life inside this city can be. While working in the house Anna found in Victoria a lover, and she had given her the stability and the “courage [she needed] to live in the present again” (157); they were a refuge for one another. Then, a great moment of joy presents when a completely broken, but alive, Sam arrives at Woburn House. He is in the brink of death and Anna’s world is turned upside down with his presence. She is worried of Victoria’s reaction towards this situation, but the nurse could not have shown herself happier of having another helping hand inside the house. She even offers him, after he recovers, to play the role of the house’s doctor, and not only he manages to pull the charade off perfectly, but it also makes “his interior world [grow] larger, sturdier, more able to absorb the things that were put into it” (168). However, as time passed, things grew more difficult.

Throughout the entire period to follow, Anna appears to be rather indifferent, more pragmatic. Her narration appears to no longer be discussing her memories and her feelings, but facts; history as it happened –at least up until her writing reaches her present. Sometime after her arrival, Boris, in whom she had found a good friend, warned Anna that the refuge was a house of cards and eventually it would have to close. So, sooner rather than later, money began to scarce, and the reality inside the house stopped being so different from the one outside of it. During this time, Mr. Frick dies and Victoria takes the decision of burying him inside the house, which is forbidden by law. It is when they are caught that we are introduced, for the first and only time inside the entire novel, with a figure of authority with a connection to the government: a policeman that arrives to Woburn to exhume Otto’s body and punish whoever was responsible for the fault. If before this event it could only be inferred that the ones in charge of this post-apocalyptic city maintained it as so on purpose, the intention is now evidenced. Satirizing hypocrisy in a manner similar to other dystopian works such as Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, we are presented with a well-dressed pudgy and red-faced policeman giving a speech about the precarious state of the country and how selfish it was to bury a body that could be turned into fuel, to a group of half-starved people dressed in tattered clothes and living in a house amidst a ravaged city; a man whose hypocrisy is further exposed by how quietly he left after accepting a bribe from Boris Stepanovich. Of the entire situation, what worried Anna the most was Willie’s reaction to the event, but we do not perceive any other emotion from her besides a melancholic comment on the disappearance of a car horn they had buried Otto with: “Like so many other things before it, the horn had vanished without a trace” (177), its loss being a metaphor of the unsteadiness of their lives.

Concurrently, David's story does not get any better than Anna's. After moving out of Lucy's house and to a town's house room, David resumes his work with Bev Shaw at the Animal Welfare clinic. Once in there, he gets so immersed in himself that he transforms into "a mad old man who sits among the dogs singing to himself" (212), and continue working on his opera. At this stage, Teresa only wants to be rescued from her current state of being, and begins to go over a path that leads her further away from reality and into madness. Then, just as David's life, the opera begins to crumble. As he laments having brought Teresa back from her grave with the premise of giving her another life just to fail her, we cannot fail to notice how he is also implying he laments having returned to Salem just to fail as a father once more.

It is during this depressing moment, when he is using the writing of the opera as a catalyzer of his current state (he is an objectified subject *and* has failed in protecting his daughter), that he stops projecting himself into the opera and starts projecting himself onto one of the clinic's dogs. It will should have to be killed soon, but as he starts growing fond of it he manages to keep it alive for more time than it should have been. But by stating that the dog will have to be "[submitted] to the needle" (215) sooner or later, David is most probably also talking about himself, as he realizes once again that eventually he will have to submit to the facts that, first, his condition as an objectified subject denies him the possibility of protecting Lucy, and second, that she is in the same position than he is. For him to finally arrive to this realization, his attitude towards Lucy's rape had to pass through different stages. At first David internalized his daughter's trauma as an attack on himself. Then, he understood her trauma as an event that had clouded her judgment and made her wrongly believe she had the obligation to pay for the sins of others. Finally, he understood that although he had been traumatized as well, her daughter's trauma belonged to her and her only, so he can only help her cope with it, but it is not up to him to erase it nor avenge it. In this manner, the only task he can perform is keep living in Salem so she is not left alone, and therefore he gradually starts approaching her again, hoping he will be accepted back. Finally, when this moment comes to be and he is able to reenter her life knowing what it implies –that he has no power over what happens to him or Lucy–, he finally retrieves the dog from the kennel and gives him up for it to be submitted as well, at Bev Shaw's hands.

As Anna's story starts to approach her present (and its end), the situation inside Woburn House only gets worse. After the exhumation of Otto's body Willie develops a deep hostility and resentment towards the residents of the shelter, including Anna, Victoria, Sam and Boris. He

acquires the custom of staying out of the house for days, to the point that one day everybody think he has left. But instead of just disappearing of the house, as Maggie Vine had done a few months before, Willie returns one last time. He had lost his senses, and burst into the shelter firing a machine gun that kills seven residents and injures three before Sam shot him in the chest. That was the moment that marked the end of Woburn House and the rise of something new. We are told by Anna that, at the time of the narration, Sam, Boris, Victoria and she are making plans to leave the city as soon as the days gets warmer, which should happen in a couple of days. It was the day after the shooting that Anna fortuitously found Isabel's blue notebook, lying in her bag. She had bought it for the old lady to communicate with her when the sclerosis had started preventing her for talking, but she only managed to use only a few pages before she died. It was because of how overwhelmed Anna felt by the "thousand things [that] came rushing back to [her] at once" (182) that she started to write her letter –the one we are being read by an anonymous person. It becomes even clearer as we reach the end of the novel that for her the writing of this letter was her way of performing her retrospective journey, the one that has allowed her to reimagine herself once again. She has learnt from her experience in the 'Country of Last Things' and from it she has matured. If from the memories of her past, and from her behavior during her first years inside this country we established that she was a stubborn, determined, bold and feminine young woman, after the almost four years she has lived inside this hostile place she has become a melancholic, skeptical and weary woman who has grown old before her time.

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Through the analysis of both novels being discussed, it gets clear that Auster's and Coetzee's narrative choices take into consideration the literary tradition from which they emerge, but in order to break it, allowing the configuration of the novels as postmodern. One of the characteristics of the movement is that postmodernism discredits grand narratives in favor of the little narratives (60), which will come to challenge what had been considered as the literary tradition. In concordance with the importance given to the grand narratives inside modernism, T.S. Eliot, in his essay *Tradition and Individual Talent*, explains that when writing an author must not consider what has been written before him as part of a past. Instead, the whole of literature should be considered as being part of a simultaneous order and constituent of his contemporaneity. Thus, an author cannot be valued individually but must be contrasted and compared with his predecessors in order to carry out a thorough historical and aesthetic criticism of his works (Tradition and



Individual Talent). Then, challenging the idea of modernism and giving preference to the little narratives, postmodernism would reject this idea of dependence between past and present narratives, fragmenting literary tradition. As explained by Lyotard, modern aesthetics relates to the sublime where the unrepresentable is only presented as a missing contents, offering the reader solace and pleasure through an intrinsic combination of pleasure and pain (81), which is opposed by what is presented in the novels of Auster and Coetzee.

The ending of *In the Country of Last Things* leaves more for the reader to worry than for him to feel at ease. The novel ends leaving us with an uncompleted story, making us wonder if they did manage to exit the city, or what happened with Anna and the rest of the group. More specifically, we are presented with an open-ended story *with* no conclusive notions (there is a difference between both ideas). The open ending of the story leaves room for the reader to fantasize with what could have happened to the characters afterwards, but it also implies that at some point the reader will somehow have access to the rest of Anna's travel, for example, in the form of a second novel. Then, the disruptive nature of the novel's ending is not its openness, but the fact that the story is not given a conclusion, either in this same novel or with a following one. Perhaps an example could clarify the difference even more: In *Disgrace*, David's story has a beginning connected to his pre-exile condition, a development which shows us the character's fight to avoid subjugation, and an ending that indicates whether he was finally subjugated or managed to overcome his state of being. Anna's story has a beginning, where we are told she is trapped inside a post-apocalyptic country, a development where we are told how difficult and traumatic her experiences inside this place have been. Then, it is expected that the ending will inform us whether she remained trapped inside the country for good or if she managed to escape; but instead, we are left wondering if her efforts to move to a different city were fruitful or not.

The main problem the reader confronts is that Anna's last words give us enough evidence to infer that her situation is improving, so everything is going to be alright, but, time after time, the rest of the narrative proved us that whenever a situation looked like it was going to improve, everything went wrong. If we had further evidence to support the claim that, most certainly, everything improved, or worsened, we would have a basis to elaborate a conclusive notion, even if it were not explicitly stated. But, evidences are equally strong on both sides, so one cannot take a stance. On the one hand, the characters have adopted the idea of constructing a future, a rather modern perspective that contradicts the postmodern nature of the novel, so we are given the hope

that things are getting better. On the other hand, the fact that someone else is reading Anna's letter strengthens the possibility that her story managed to cross the nation's borders and got into the hands of her addressee. But there is no further evidence that can give more weight to one idea over the other. It could be possible they are once again living a calmed period that will eventually collapse. Perhaps, her letter is being read by another inhabitant of the city, who found the book lying among other 'last' things. Then, we are prevented from having a feeling of conclusion.

Notwithstanding, the possibility that the reader is another person inside the country is low. At a certain point of the story we are told by Anna that the fragility of the memory while living in this distorted place became so great that, as people forget things, they also forget words and even sounds. "Finally the whole thing just collapses into gibberish ... *each person is speaking his own private language*, and as the instances of shared understanding diminish, *it becomes increasingly difficult to communicate with anyone*" (89). If language inside the 'country' is so fragile and individualized, it is most likely that nobody there could have understood or even read her letter. Moreover, Auster himself has said that "Someone has read Anna Blume's notebook; somehow or other, her letter has arrived" (McCaffery and Gregory 34), so evidence tends to point in this direction.

The narrative choices of the author give room for the reader to interact with the text in a great variety of manners, so many other interpretations can arise. To give an example, in a more disturbing and rather implausible interpretation of the text, Martin argues that the third voice that intrudes at specific points of the narration is in fact Anna's, who is referring to herself as both 'I' and she'. This would be explained as a consequence of how her traumatic experiences may have distanced her from her sense of self-hood (19). Then, the blur of uncertainty related to the destiny of the characters is directly linked to Auster's narrative choices, as it happens within Coetzee's *Disgrace*.

While Auster presents us with a postmodern novel where fragmentation trespasses from the storyline's environment to the character's subjectivity and permeates the narration, Coetzee's writing style aims to lead the unaware reader to a place where his beliefs turn against him. Still, in both cases the result is the same: disregarding the interpretation arising from the interaction between the reader and the text, there will be a moment when the reader gets shocked by how both fictional works resemble our factual world. Then, another literary tradition is broken, as the distinction between fiction and reality becomes blurred and, we become able to fuse 'pieces' of

the narratives with ‘pieces’ of our world in the same manner that the useless things Anna finds while scavenging can gain a use when joined together. Furthermore, the novels allow the public sphere of the reader’s world to intrude in the reader’s private sphere, messing with his subjectivity by tampering his understanding of his world.

As posed by Head in *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, the South African has also defied literary tradition in a more personal manner. More specific to his novel’s context of production, Coetzee has been highly criticized inside his natal land for challenging the orthodox privileging of realism characteristic of the South African novel, and for departing from explicitly imprinting his novels with the anti-apartheid political ideas commonly spread throughout postcolonial writing (24). Nevertheless, although his works appear to have an ambiguous political character, it is clear that he has not forgotten the connection between European culture and colonial domination (26). It has been said that the author personal signature of fussing the free direct speech and the free indirect speech in a third person, present tense mode narration impulses the reader to simplify or look for an explanation to what eludes his grasp (Head 78, Pechey 377). Nevertheless, in this case we find more relevant that, while reading *Disgrace*, this mixture of textual features brings about a feel of proximity to David’s perspective that fulfills a fundamental role in the configuration of the reader’s response to the story. One can easily relate to his feeling of being wrongly accused of abusing a young student who actually consented to sleeping with him, and even resorted to him for protection from an unknown threat afterwards. We can also empathize with David when enraged with the men who raped his daughter, and even fell disgust towards them. Then, the ease behind the racist reading of the text is worrisome, but at the same time, one cannot ignore the understanding that these men’s actions symbolize the wounds of a crueler past. Also, they cannot be blamed for having a violent behavior if they grew in an environment that normalized violence. Taking this ideas into account, we can elaborate that the context in which the characters converge allows a thorough articulation of the critique Coetzee poses to postmodernity: we are being consumed by a desire for domination that has perverted our construction of society, and reduced our existence to a struggle for power. Moreover, in the process, this struggle has nearly make us give over the private to the public, surrendering our condition of subjects in order to become objects of the other.

For Brendan Martin, Auster’s novels are constructed as postmodern autobiographies of characters, composed of a mixture of factual and fictional elements. In his fictional narratives,

Auster evokes the postmodern notion of the urban dislocation by highlighting the continual presence of random and arbitrary situations (ix). As a matter of fact, in an interview with Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory (as well as in others) Auster pointed out that for him *In the Country of Last Things* “has nothing to do with science fiction. It’s quite fantastical at times, of course, but that doesn’t mean it’s not firmly anchored in historical realities” (36). In fact, a first tentative name of the novel was ‘*Anna Blume walks through the twentieth century*’, and the book contains specific references to the Warsaw ghetto, the siege of Leningrad, present-day New York City and the Cairo’s garbage system, among others (36). In the novel, the author presents a sense of urban dislocation by creating a city that restricts the character’s opportunities for creating a community<sup>16</sup>, and for developing a feeling of belonging towards the place. Under this context, the urban setting in the novel manages to symbolize the fragmentation of modern civilization quite thoroughly. Among the images that enlighten this situation are the presentations of inhabitants with a highly individualist behavior, and of a city with highly volatile buildings. Moreover, the disruptive and total control the country’s government imposes over the character’s lives, through the dislocation of the environment, is a clear allegory of how the elite’s in our society imposes a total control over the lives of the rest of population. Some of the events in which this criticism is portrayed include: the evident corruption inside governmental forces; the nepotism and hypocrisy of a government that devices inexistent threats, such as foreign invasions, in order to divert the population’s attention from the real problems; and the inefficiency of the government’s work unless it comes to the generation of profit for its benefit. Furthermore, these episodes also imply a critic to the passivity of the bigger part of the population and their implicit decision of not fighting for regaining control of their lives –an embarrassing reality when considering that even Anna Blume, who is trapped in a post-apocalyptic environment, manages to regain a certain control over her life.

Without any doubt, the driving force of both narratives is the desire of control. In this sense, the protagonists are faced with situations that intend to break and subjugate them. Among these situations, certain recurrent topics that play a fundamental role inside the unraveling of the novels can be identified. The need for control and power are transversal to both narratives, but there are others specific to each novel as well. In *Disgrace*, Coetzee toys the reader by hinting the topics of

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<sup>16</sup> One could said that at the end of the novel Anna, Sam, Boris and Victoria manage to create a long-standing community but with an open ending there is nothing that can assure us it did not crumble as it happened with Isabel, Anna and Ferdinand’s.

post-colonialism and racism, and *In the Country of Last Things* revolves around the topics of death and loss from different perspectives.

In Coetzee's novel the former topics are implicitly referred to as being the main cause of the resentment of the black people towards whites inside the South African context. The historical past of the country where black people were oppressed by white foreigners would apparently be the cause of this resentment, and the reason for wanting to overpower and control the exile: revenge. In Auster's novel, the respect and fear of death, together with the easiness with which everything can be lost, appear to be the weaknesses exploited by the 'exiler' to overpower and control the exiles; the means to an end. What is important to the conclusion of the novels, and to whether our hypothesis is accurate or not, is that both protagonists eventually gain awareness of the existence of these realities.

Under this context, it becomes necessary to consider the proposal in this work in light of new arguments and facts. Anna's exile does manage to break the character and makes her turn from a stubborn, determined, bold and feminine young woman into a melancholic, skeptical and weary woman who has grown old before her time. Yet, as denoted by her attempt to look for a better future, she has not given up to the possibility of belonging to a place one again. In *Disgrace*, David was forced into exile so as to alienate him from his community, but, at the end, this process allows him to truly understand his position inside South African society. Then, he gets more immersed into this society instead of being excluded from it, at the same time that he is provided with a new community to which to belong. In this manner, both novels portray postmodern worlds that are highly fragmented for different reason and at different levels, but that aesthetically portray characteristics of the modern exile. Auster's novel takes the postmodern into his writing by making Anna unify her story similarly to how object hunting works; by merging a set of divagations inside a nonlinear narration of sequential events, which is full of memory lapses and redundant descriptions. In *Disgrace*, Coetzee manages to permeate a chronological narration, archetypal of modern literary works, with a problematic and somewhat disturbing story line that throws the reader out of balance. But by the end of both novels, neither of the protagonists' subjectivities is shattered, as both Anna and David get broken during their exiles, but eventually manage to refashion themselves, in light of their experiences.

It was proposed as well that the internal exiles would trigger an introspective journey of the characters that would play against their condition as subjects, and we came to the realization

that, although these symbolic journeys are affected by the exiles, they are not triggered by them. On the one hand, David's exile intrudes the introspective journey he started while still inside Cape Town, consequently shattering him. Nevertheless, it also creates a need for the character to refashion himself. Then, David follows the path of a retrospective journey, which is what finally provides him with a greater knowledge that, once acknowledged by him, allows David to truly immerse in his society through his surrendering to his postmodern reality. On the other hand, Anna's exile manages to tamper the instability and fragmentation of the city into her personality, which finally destabilizes her. Yet, her new skeptic and distrustful personality does not prevent her from trying, once again, to regain control of her life by looking for and trying to create a (better) future for her and her small community. This, together with her ability to remain a part of this group, even when living in a highly fragmented and individualist place, proves that the postmodern exile has not fulfilled its purpose. Instead, the exile is challenged by a modern character that resists surrendering to a postmodern reality. At the end, David lives a modern exile that leads him to succumb to a postmodern reality and Anna goes through a postmodern exile that has not achieve the purpose of making her submit to her postmodern reality. Still, there is no way to be certain if this surrendering did not eventually happen, because we are prevented by the novel's open ending and absence of conclusion.

Finally, it is through the manner in which the novels are portrayed that we can unveil their aim to criticize postmodernity. The narration of *Disgrace* leads the reader to feel a rejection towards the events presented throughout the novel, including David's final disposition; and, the aesthetically postmodern inconclusive ending of *In the Country of Last things*, mixed with the reader interpretation of Anna's final words, could provide the hopeful reader with a desire for her to success, implicitly inclining for the prevalence of a modern reality over a postmodern one:

I cannot even begin to think of what will happen to us out there ... Perhaps we will find William after we leave the city, but I try not to hope too much. *The only thing I ask for now is the chance to live one more day.* This is Anna Blume, your old friend from another world. *Once we get to where we are going, I will try to write to you again, I promise.* (187-188) [emphasis added]

## Conclusions

Auster's *In the Country of Last Things* and Coetzee's *Disgrace* are works which respond to the postmodern condition, from the nature of their stories to the configuration of the stories' narrations. Inside both novels, the characters follow the path of a symbolic journey that is altered by an exile which manages to shatter their subjectivities, but is unable to avoid a reimagining of the same. The impact of the experiences in them is clear: By the end of *Disgrace* David has been transformed from an arrogant man with a fixed temperament and a need for control, into a subject that has surrendered to a condition as an objectified white man who has to comply with the wishes of the ruling class inside his community. *In the Country of Last things* presents us with a young stubborn, determined and reckless optimist woman who has been turned into a melancholic, skeptical and weary woman who has grown old before her time. The main difference between both characters at their final stages is that, while David has accepted his condition and overpowered by his environment, Anna appears to leave some room in the middle of her skepticism to a possibility of constructing a future and belonging to a place one again.

It becomes clear that while writing this novels both authors were well aware of the English literary tradition that preceded them and look to place their works in a position that challenged it. The discussion of the unrepresentable to upset the reader, and the criticism to the grand narratives characteristic of the postmodern, are well portrayed in these works, with their main proof being the driving force of the stories: the desire of control. Furthermore, the harsh discussion of topics such racism, sexual abuse, individualism, homelessness, death and the destruction of hope create contexts for the stories that have a direct impact on the reader. The fragmentation and complexity of the narrations (that is, of the stories, of the character's subjectivities and at thematic and structural levels) allows for a countless quantity of interpretations depending on the type of reader of the interpretive community from which the texts are being analyzed, some complementary, some opposing. And while most possibilities of interaction between the different readers and the text give rise to an enrichment of the latter, there are some that actually impoverish the texts, such as the racist reading of *Disgrace*.

On a similar manner, it is important to give an account of the different readings that different transitional readers, subjects residing in a place in between the modern and the postmodern, can provide to the texts. This importance relates to the idea that whereas a modern reader would be repelled or would not be able to understand the disruptive nature of the

postmodern reality, the postmodern subject would not be able to detect the worrisome qualities of the characteristics of the same. Perhaps the only context from which the fragmentation of humanity and the deconstruction of society can be analyzed as a regression, is now that we are still able to grasp how the magnification of the differences as contradictory to the construction of community.

As it was posed in our theoretical framework, the theme of the exile as a type of travel has been illustrated in literature since 300 b.C., and most likely will continue to be explored well beyond our time. As it has been explained by authors such as Guillén, the configuration of this theme has mainly revolved around the idea of the acquisition of a greater knowledge and the spiritual growth of the character. From Ulysses travels to the expatriates portrayed in the works of the Lost Generation, English literature has not been an exception to the treatment of the theme, and so, over the last century we have had the opportunity to read about exile experiences of different characters. But when it comes to the interpretation of this travels as portrayed in English literature throughout the postmodern period, it appears that we are lacking a number of perspectives.

Over the last century people have been forced to move out of their countries in great numbers, and whereas for the northern part of the world this responds to a migratory effect, a 'diaspora', to the southern part (and an important section of the eastern part as well) this responds to exiles triggered by some of the most violent episodes of our recent history. Inside the Latin American context, the dictatorships that took place during most part of the twentieth century meant the fragmentation of societies that have not been able to recover from the political and personal wounds these events carried. Under this light, Latin American literature of the last fifty years has been marked by this reality, and the political dimension of the theme of the exile has been greatly explored either as literature from exile or literature about exile<sup>17</sup>. According to Eduardo Galeano, the most Latin American novels of the last time were written from the exile and Juan José Saer postulates that all the twenty-first century Argentinian literature was written by exiles. Moreover, the list of Latin American writers that are related to any of the two types of literature of exile is quite long: Julio Cortázar, Rodolfo Rabanal, Vicente Battista, Mario Benedetti, Rubén Bareiro, José Donoso, Luis Sepúlveda, Isabel Allende, Mario Vargas Llosa, Gabriel García Márquez, Heberto Padilla, and many others –including some that were internally exiled, as Ernesto Sábato (Cymerman 523-525). With the awakening of globalization, the northern hemisphere of the world

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<sup>17</sup> See footnote at page 12 (For the difference between Literature of Exile, Literature about Exile, and Literature from exile)



has started to gain interest in the unknown world that is, for them, the effect caused by the intrusion of third parties into the politics of other communities. This context has allowed disciplines of the likes of 'Latin American studies' or 'Middle Eastern studies' to open an opportunity for the literature of exile to be analyzed and interpreted by readers of different backgrounds, but the inverse process has not been as fruitful.

If there is a gap to be filled to what it comes to the reader's response to English travel literature, this is the reading of the exile under the perspective of communities who have experienced this reality in lights of the fragmentation and distortion of postmodernist times – a situation that make them able to perceive and interpret the unrepresentable in this literature in a different manner: The inclusion of an analysis of these works from a context of reception with a closer experience to the postmodern exile would allow for an enrichment of the text that could not be done from its context of production.

Since the 1900, travelling has gone from being motivated by a search for the enrichment of the self to being turned into a mean of consumption, but it has also gained a third motivation. The present work has tried to serve as a point of beginning from which to ponder the possibility of analyzing the theme of the exile in English literature considering it as a political experience, and the effect it has in the subjectivity of the character. Considering one of the novels contrasted to be produced in a context that is not strange to the impacts of colonization, and the other to be written portraying some of the cruelest treatments that have been given to different communities, our work has proved to be both accessible and challenging. The former because the stories provided a great number of possibilities of interpretation that related to the hypothesis in hand. The latter because this same great number of possibilities, summed up to the complexity of the stories, and the length of the work, forced us to ignore or analyze only superficially certain episodes or images that could have strengthen the outcome analysis even more. It would be pertinent, for example, to delve into the different images and aesthetic features that portray critics to postmodernity in both novels, such as: the relationship between David and Petrus; the evolution of the opera on Lord Byron and its connection to the grand narratives (in *Disgrace*); or the references to the government and its decision; and the ideals or ideologies portrayed by characters such as Boris Stepanovich, and Ferdinand (in *In the Country of Last Things*). Throughout this work we have dealt with how the subjects are victims of the exiles as imposed contexts, but it remains to be considered how the subjects could be the ones that configure the environment as able to

overpower them as well. Then, the experience of the exile and the subjectivity of the character would equally impact each other. Most likely, while considering that the exile fractures the character, the postmodern subject also helps in the configuration of the exile as a fragmenting reality. Being so, this reality would consider the subject as both a recipient of the public imposition, and an architect of the understanding of the travel as forced. Furthermore, pondering the need for analyzing English literature of exile from contexts such as the Latin American one, the idea of making a comparative analysis of an English and a Latin American literary work dealing with the theme of the exile could enrich the discussion of the theme with new perspectives and questions not previously pondered.

Finally, throughout the analysis we compared Anna's and David's forced travels and consequent introspective journeys; we discussed which were the impacts the exiles had in the subjectivities of the protagonists; and explained how their disposition by the end of the narratives, together with the author's narrative choices, reveal these postmodern novels aim to criticize postmodernity. Even more, we can understand *Disgrace* and *In the Country of Last Things* as novels that successfully throw the reader out of balance, by going beyond of the discussion of difficult topics such as the abuse of power, gang rapes, people's objectification, death, poverty and homelessness, destruction of hope, and physical and psychological violence. Coetzee and Auster have managed to aesthetically merge these topics together so as to create a postmodern reality that highlights the discrepancies in our conception of the world, and the perception of the events that take place during the narrations. These opportunities allow us to reconsider how disrupted and fragmented our own society has turned while giving us the possibility of beginning a journey of our own that prevents us from ending in the same manner of those communities –that is, if we are not already there.

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