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Trabajo Final de Adscripción:

A Woman's Place in Kazuo Ishiguro's

A Pale View of Hills

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Resumen

El posmodernismo ha ejercido un impacto significativo en los campos de la Geografía y la Antropología, donde el estudio de las culturas y los lugares ahora se centra en hogares dinámicos y en movimiento, en el desarraigo y el re-arraigo, en oposición a las civilizaciones estáticas. Sin embargo, la elección de mudarse y elegir un nuevo lugar o identidad es un lujo que no se concede a todo el mundo. Este trabajo se centra en las luchas internas que enfrenta el personaje de Etsuko en A Pale View of Hills, publicado en 1982 por Kazuo Ishiguro. Etsuko y su alter ego Sachiko se encuentran fuera de lugar en Japón y buscan volver a enraizar y reconstruir su identidad lejos de las relaciones de poder asimétricas y los procesos masculinos de exclusión. Este estudio argumenta que el cambio espacial pretendido por los personajes no es posible ni se les está permitido a la luz del orden patriarcal y evalúa hasta qué punto pagan las consecuencias de esta transgresión. Luego se enfoca en el efecto del Lugar en el desarrollo de nuevas identidades y cómo el Género funciona como factor condicionante en su desarrollo. También examina cómo las casas de los personajes permiten analizar su sufrimiento interior, actuando como un reflejo de sus mentes. La sección final se centra en la profunda relevancia del estudio de la Espacialidad en nuestras aulas ELT cada vez más diversas y multiculturales y en su contribución vital a una pedagogía dirigida a la transformación social.

Palabras clave: Espacialidad, Género, ELT, Pedagogía, Literatura

Abstract

Postmodernism has exerted a significant impact on the fields of Geography and Anthropology, where the study of cultures and places now focuses on dynamic, homes in motion, uprooting and re-rooting, as opposed to static civilizations. However, the choice to move and choose a new place or identity is a luxury not everyone is granted. This paper focuses on the inner struggles faced by the character of Etsuko in *A Pale View of Hills*, published in 1982 by Kazuo Ishiguro. Etsuko and her alter ego Sachiko find themselves out of place in Japan and seek to re-root and re-build their identity away from asymmetrical power relations and male processes of exclusion. This study argues that the characters' intended spatial change is not in fact possible or allowed in light of the patriarchal order and evaluates the extent to which they pay the consequences for this transgression. It then focuses on the effect of Place on the development of new identities and how Gender functions as a conditioning factor in their development. It also examines how the characters' houses allow for an analysis of their inner suffering, acting as a reflection of their minds. The final section focuses on the profound relevance of the study of Spatiality in our increasingly diverse, multicultural ELT classrooms and on its vital contribution in a pedagogy aimed at social transformation. Key words: Spatiality, Gender, ELT, Pedagogy, Literature

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1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has brought about an increasingly migratory world which is no longer homogeneous or immobile. The World Wars generated constant movement and migrations, and the socio-cultural effect and consequence of a culture where places have become temporary is that "home" is no longer a fixed concept but a result of experiences and emotions that may occur in different places in a lifetime. The fields of Geography and Anthropology have endured this particular impact of postmodernism, where the study of cultures and places now focuses on dynamic, homes in motion, uprooting and re-rooting, as opposed to static civilizations in a world which no longer stands still. In the midst of this constant flux, Doreen Massey (1993:151) argues that "…one desperately needs a bit of peace and quiet; and 'place' is posed as a source of stability and an unproblematical identity." However, the choice to move and choose a new place or identity is a luxury not everyone is granted. Although men and women both suffered the hardships of the wars, due to processes of exclusion and asymmetrical power relations, women have not always been allowed equal power of decision or choice concerning their lives.

This is the problematic faced by the character of Etsuko in *A Pale View of Hills*, published in 1982 by Kazuo Ishiguro. The novel depicts the inner struggles of Etsuko and her alter ego Sachiko, who find themselves 'out of place' (Cresswell, 2009) in Japan. As Etsuko recounts the events of her past life in Japan, the memories of her friend Sachiko intertwine with those of her own life. Both characters seek a new place and identity away from the "invisible boundaries that define what is appropriate and what is inappropriate" (Cresswell, 2009:5). As Etsuko gazes out of her window and sees the remains of the destruction of the Nuclear Bomb, which took the lives of her entire family, she pictures herself outside the boundaries of her physical life, away from the place which she cannot call a home. She later uproots herself and her Japanese daughter, abandons her husband and moves to the United Kingdom in order to marry an Englishman, re-root and re-start her life in a new home. Similarly, Sachiko also finds herself attempting to escape Japan with her daughter by escaping with an unreliable male character to the United States. Both attempts to generate this new, 'unproblematical identity' are initiated in a context of severely

asymmetrical power relations which, not only does not encourage this type of autonomy, but strongly frowns upon it, excluding them from the right to make decisions regarding their lives. The boundaries that confine women transcend geographical borders and, although Sachiko´s story beyond Japan is not revealed, Etsuko finds herself unable to escape the limitations that were intended for her in Japan. Her transgression ends up being severely punished as her daughter, the only thing left rooting her to her past, commits suicide in their new home and Etsuko becomes haunted by her memory and forever doomed to a lifetime of being 'out of place'. Etsuko is unable to find her own 'sense of place' (Cresswell, 2009) in her English home, because, although she manages to physically transgress the invisible, cultural boundaries which kept her in Japan, her gender limitations as a woman in a patriarchal world do not allow her to develop her new identity and her new place finally remains just a space.

The purpose of this paper is to explore whether Etsuko´s, and therefore Sachiko´s, intended spatial change is possible or allowed in light of the patriarchal order, the extent to which they pay the consequences for this transgression and become condemned to being 'out of place' and how this becomes visible to the reader in Etsuko's relationship to, and depiction of her much anticipated English home.

In order to address these questions, this study will first delve into the concepts of Place and Space (Cresswell, 2009; Tuan, 1975) and on how the "most general and basic kind [of] change is change in respect of place" (Cresswell, 2009:2). It will explore the effect of Place on the development of new identities and how movement across space may or may not enable the conditions for a new beginning or the creation of a new spatiality. It will focus on the notions of Gender (Massey, 1994) as a conditioning factor in the development of these new identities and how power is involved in the construction and reproduction of places and their meaning. It will also examine how the concept of the House (Bachelard, 1958) allows for an analysis of the characters´ suffering, acting as a reflection of their minds.

The final section of this paper will focus on the profound relevance of the fields of Human Geography and Anthropology in our increasingly diverse, multicultural ELT classrooms and on the vital contribution of the critical study of places in a pedagogy aimed at social transformation. According to

Margaret Sommerville, "It is through the pivotal work of pedagogy,(…), that we make the connection between our ideas about place and processes of change. (2011: 3) It will also address the pedagogical implications of working with characters such as those in *A Pale View of Hills* in order to question, not only the social order proposed by the novel, but also our own, as citizens of a postmodern world. Teachers may aim at educating toward critical reflection and promoting change. However, according to Giroux (n/d:4), in order for educators to make changes, "...they must speak out against economic, political and social injustices both within and outside of schools." The Literature classroom provides an ideal medium for teachers and students to reflect upon the spaces they inhabit, question the established order and the privileges granted to a certain few. As clearly stated by Gruenewald "A critical pedagogy of place challenges all educators to reflect on the relationship between the kind of education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generations" (2003:3)

2. Place, Space and Personal Experience

The study of spatiality has gained momentum in the last decades, particularly within the fields of Geography and Anthropology. The recent shift into increasingly nomadic cultures across the world has made the study of places and the identities associated with them, essential. Human geographer Yi Fu Tuan delved into how people construct and form attachments to the places they inhabit according to the feelings and emotions they experience in them. One of the main premises in Tuan´s theory is the distinction between Space and Place. In an article published in *The Geographical Review*, Tuan argued that "Space is abstract. It lacks content; it is broad, open, and empty, inviting the imagination to fill it with substance and illusion; it is possibility and beckoning future. Place, by contrast, is the past and the present, stability and achievement." (1975:165) Space is then only a physical location, void of meaning which can only be attached to it through experience and emotions.

In connection to this premise, human geographer and poet Tim Cresswell (2009: 1)
includes the notions of 'Location', 'Locale' and 'Sense of Place' into a further analysis of the difference between Space and Place.

> Place is a meaningful site that combines location, locale, and sense of place. Location refers to an absolute point in space with a specific set of coordinates and measurable distances from other locations. Location refers to the 'where' of place. Locale refers to the material setting for social relations – the way a place looks. Locale includes the buildings, streets, parks, and other visible and tangible aspects of a place. Sense of place refers to the more nebulous meanings associated with a place: the feelings and emotions a place evokes.

Tuan´s definition of Place and Cresswell´s Sense of Place are similar in that they both refer to how emotions and personal experience in connection to a particular physical location, directly affect the way people perceive it. Hence, a geometrical space may be considered the objective reality, while the personal and cultural characteristics of spaces are social constructs and strictly subjective.

As human life alternates between movement and settlement, people are constantly turning spaces into places, endowing them with their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, the transformation of a space into

a place inevitably implies an interruption of movement. "…if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (Tuan, 1977: 6)"

Although the terms 'place' and 'space' require each other for definition, they clearly represent diametrically opposed notions. While a space constitutes movement and freedom, place is more connected to stability and safety.

Place is, therefore, a social construct but these constructs differ according to the individual. The senses of sight, touch and smell, and individual thought also contribute to providing a characteristic sense of place. According to Tuan, "The space that we perceive and construct, the space that provides cues for our behavior, varies with the individual and cultural group" (1979:389)

Consequently, place cannot be studied objectively only by means of physical evidence. Place, as humanist geographers currently understand it, is a "center of meaning constructed by experience" (Tuan, 1975:152), and these centers of meaning are extremely personal and connected to each individual's personal life story and circumstances. Experiences associated to love, death or simply life routines affect how individuals interact with places and construct their centers of meaning. According to Tuan, (1975: 152) "Place is known not only through the eyes and mind but also through the more passive and direct modes of experience, which resist objectification".

Hence, a place perceived as a happy childhood home to some, may be painful to recollect for others, for, although the place might be the same geographically speaking, the personal experience of each individual is entirely different. ".. places are practiced. People do things in place. What they do, in part, is responsible for the meanings that a place might have." (Cresswell, 2009:2)

Identity is constructed according to different factors which affect the individual, such as historical time and geographical space of birth. Cultural and social variations with respect to gender or race are also determining factors in the order of social, political, and physical spaces and boundaries an individual will be allotted. This imposed hierarchy and cultural appreciation according to identity implies that space will

often become a factor of exclusion as well as a manifestation of the social order and power relations in force. These matters contribute significantly to the understanding that places may be perceived completely differently according to the gaze of each individual. Place, and more specifically, movement from one place to another, is not a privilege granted to every individual equally. In the words of Massey,

> It is not simply a question of unequal distribution, that some people move more than others, some have more control than others. It is that the mobility and control of some groups can actively weaken other people. Differential mobility can weaken the leverage of the already weak. (1993:62)

Some individuals, therefore, logically encounter difficulties constructing their own identity in a new home, particularly if that identity appears as a threat to the power relations in force. According to Cresswell, "People connect a place with a particular identity and proceed to defend it against the threatening outside with its different identities" (2009:8)

Asymmetrical power relations are hence responsible for certain individuals being granted access to movement, the search for a new spatiality and the construction of new identities, while others remain excluded from that process and are often subjected to the choices of others. These individuals, who are excluded and bound to a life of being 'out of place', are forced to break the invisible boundaries that constrain them in order to construct their own centers of meaning and identities. These transgressors threaten fixed, homogeneous notions of identity due to their strongly heterogeneous nature, but "such multiple identities can be either, or both, a source of richness or a source of conflict." (Massey, 1993: 67)

3. Place, Gender and Power

Throughout the world, power is distributed asymmetrically according to specific social characteristics. Masculine supremacy and male predominance in economic and social areas of life necessarily imply that women and men grow up having a different experience of the world, its possibilities and limitations. According to Massey,

> women and men, then, grow up with personalities affected by different boundary experiences, differently constructed and experienced inner and outer worlds, and preoccupations with different relational issues. This early experience forms an important ground for the female sense of self as connected to the world and the male sense of self as separate, distinct and even disconnected. (1994:170)

These differences in how women and men experience the world, affect, of course, their relationship to the spaces around them since "power is implicated in the construction, reproduction, and contestation of places and their meanings." (Cresswell, 2009:5) Therefore, movement no longer necessarily implies a choice of place and finding a new identity, but in many cases certain processes of exclusion instead. The "excluded" are not involved in the search for places, and settlement may not be a choice at all, but a resignation to the choice of another in a position of power. According to Massey, "Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway-differentiated mobility: some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it." (1993:63)

As a result, women often do not choose but are assigned social spaces located in specific places which they cannot contest or refuse and are limited by symbolic boundaries that respond to the patriarchal order. This is how, according to Osorio Plascencia, "the social structure of domination" is reproduced. (2016:1) Women are thus allotted the social space of domesticity which deprives them of autonomy,

ignores their wishes and compels their subjectivity. This contributes to a woman´s construction of her female sense of self in opposition to a male other who threatens her wishes and her very being.

However, this century has seen great changes in many areas of economic and social life. The rise of technology and communication have increased the way in which new ideas and attitudes spread, particularly in connection to certain social norms such as female labour, divorce and the role of women in general. Although asymmetrical power relations are still a reality in most places across the globe, these changes have had a deep impact in the way we view the world and disrupted the existing relations between women and men.

According to Massey, one of the consequences of these changes is that they "will allow fuller appreciation of those who have for so long been banished to the margins, whether these be non-western societies, women/feminists, or subordinated class strata." (1994:214) As women acquired visibility and began to question their invisible boundaries, "the established pattern of relations between the sexes was thrown into question" (Massey, 1994: 180), and hence, women have come out of their static positions within their previously permitted social roles and dared to move in search of new spaces, places and identities of their own.

However, women´s recent claim for movement and new places of their own has often been perceived as a threat to the established order by those who installed it in the first place. Male-centered societies constructed places with deeply rooted social norms regarding male and female roles, clear boundaries for women, and no room for questioning. According to Cresswell,

> As a consequence of these notions of fixity, boundedness, and rootedness, place too often becomes the locus of exclusionary practices. People connect a place with a particular identity and proceed to defend it against the threatening outside with its different identities. (2009:8)

Hence, far from celebrating their independence, women who have broken the established order and claimed ownership of their own search for identity and a sense of place, have inevitably been labeled

as transgressors and cast as ‘out of place’. Transgressors constitute a threat and must be excluded, and even punished. In the words of Cresswell, “Things, practices, and people labeled out of place are said to have transgressed often invisible boundaries that define what is appropriate and what is inappropriate.” (2009:5)

4. The Home as a Reflection of Identity

In a world where nothing seems to be permanent anymore and mobility is a key factor in most aspects of everyday life, constructing a center of meaning and an identity in connection to a place, presents itself as a source of stability and peace: a home. According to Tuan,

> The primary meaning of home is nurturing shelter. It is the one place in which we can openly and comfortably admit our frailty and our bodily needs. Home is devoted to the sustenance of the body. In our home we feed, wash, and rest: to it we go when we are tired or sick, that is, when we can no longer maintain a brave front before the world. (1975:154)

It appears essential for an individual to choose a place they can call home in order to obtain peace of mind. A home often acts as a center of meaning for a human being and, in Cresswell's words, a place "where (in an ideal world) we feel safe, secure, and loved." (2009: 5)

However, as was discussed earlier, a person's home is not always a place they have chosen to act as such. An individual, who has, for any particular reason, been excluded from the process of choosing their own place or circumstances by being subjected to the choice of another, may lack the privilege of feeling "safe, secure, and loved" in the physical location they call home.

A house may, nevertheless, be a permanent dwelling for a person, even if the daily experience of it is not a positive one. As such, it becomes a reflection of the unconscious mind of those who inhabit it. The study of the home as the dwelling place of an individual may then become a mirror image of their thoughts and memories, whether they be happy or not, because each individual carries into it their past experiences, their present and their hopes for the future. According to Gaston Bachelard (1994:15), "The house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind…Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another." In this sense, the house becomes an ideal starting point in topographical studies since the home is where "the unconscious is housed." (Bachelard: 1994, 10)

When an individual moves into a new home, they carry with them all their experiences of the past, all the significant events that made them who they are. Those memories are inescapable, and no matter how far a person travels or for what reasons, they will be carried with them as an extra limb or a patch of skin. Memories are also bound to inhabit our places. It is through those memories that the places of the past stay in the present and are constantly re-visited and kept alive. The house, therefore, acts as an ideal medium for the preservation of the past in our unconscious mind. "Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are." (Bachelard: 1994: 10)

Delving further into this analysis of the house, Bachelard proposes that memories not only inhabit the house, but that they may also hide in specific parts of it. In fact, *megaron* and *atrium*, the Greek and Latin words for the interior of the house, both entail a strong implication of darkness. Darkness is the dwelling place of secrets, memories and the unconscious mind. "Of course, thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed, and if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar and a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated." (1994: 11)

Psychoanalyst, C. G. Jung, has also written about the dual image of cellar and attic to analyze the fears that inhabit the house. He emphasized that an individual needs to be truly brave in order to venture into a cellar upon hearing suspicious noises coming from there. That individual represents the conscious mind which might choose to look the other way upon being brought to look into the dark corners of his/her unconscious mind.

All individuals require a place to inhabit, even temporarily. Homes are spaces which individuals turn into a resting place, a sanctuary or simply a place for basic sustenance of the body. Based on a person's personal experience in that home, it might become a safe haven or a haunted house for them. Whatever that experience may be, all humans carry their past into them as permanent house guests. The permanent coexistence between an individual´s present and their past memories inhabits a house in the same way a person does, leaving traces of it in every dark nook and cranny. Careful study of these spaces can, hence, provide an accurate picture of their dweller´s mind and emotions.

And yet, I remember an unmistakable air of transience there, as if we were all of us waiting for the day we could move to something better.

(*A Pale View of Hills*: 1982: 12)

5. A Pale View of Hope

The novel *A Pale View of Hills* was published in 1982 and it is the first novel written by Nobel Prize winner, Kazuo Ishiguro. Although Ishiguro lived most of his life in Great Britain, he was born in Nagasaki, Japan and lived there until he was five years old. This is probably the reason why many of his characters are Japanese and find themselves somehow at odds with the Western World. This novel is written from the point of view of Etsuko, a Nagasaki born woman who reflects upon her earlier life in Japan and how she abandoned her Japanese husband to move to England with a British man, uprooting her daughter Keiko with her. Once in England, she has another daughter named Niki, whose visit to their family home sparks bittersweet recollections of Etsuko´s first pregnancy and the events leading up to Keiko´s suicide in England.

Etsuko´s remembrance of the past is intertwined with memories of her friend Sachiko, Etsuko´s alter ego, to the extent that it is sometimes unclear whether she is talking about Sachiko or herself. Both women find themselves severely out of place after the war and the nuclear bomb robbed them of everything they considered their home. This tremendous loss, leads both women to find shelter in new spaces which fail to become a home for them or provide them with a proper sense of place and condemns them to an inevitable feeling of "out of placeness". (Cresswell, 2009)

According to Taun, place is a "center of meaning constructed by experience" (1975:152). At the beginning of the novel, both women find themselves living in post-war Japan, after the loss of her parents, in Etsuko's case, and her husband in Sachiko's. These experiences leave both women in a deep state of vulnerability and uncertainty which clearly affects their construction of Nagasaki as a center of meaning.

In the case of Etsuko, though she barely speaks of her parents, she does make reference to the feelings of loss and nostalgia she experienced whenever she visited the area where she used to live with them.

> In those days, returning to the Nakagawa district still provoked in me mixed emotions of sadness and pleasure. It is a hilly area, and climbing again those steep narrow streets between the clusters of houses never failed to fill me with a deep sense of loss. Though not a place I visited on casual impulse, l was unable to stay away for long. (23)

Sachiko, on the other hand, discusses her parents with Etsuko during a field trip they take together with her daughter Mariko and expresses how, although she rarely saw her father as a child, he had instilled in her a romanticized idea of a future life in the United States.

> "I never saw a great deal of my father," Sachiko said. "He was abroad much of the time, in Europe and America. When I was young, I used to dream I'd go to America one day, that I'd go there and become a film actress. My mother used to laugh at me. But my father told me if I learnt my English well enough, I could easily become a business girl. I used to enjoy learning English." Mariko had stopped at what looked like a plateau. She shouted something to us again. "I remember once," Sachiko went on, 'my father brought a book back from America for me, an English version of A Christmas Carol. That became something of an ambition of mine, Etsuko. 1 wanted to learn English well enough to read that book. Unfortunately, I never had the chance. When I married, my husband forbade me to continue learning. In fact, he made me throw the book away. (109-110)

Her childhood illusion, encouraged by her father, of becoming a business woman in the United States is shattered by what she actually becomes in Tokyo, a housewife and a mother, partly because of the limitations imposed by her husband. This opposition between expectations and reality builds in Sachiko´s mind an experience of Japan as a place of frustration and inability to fulfill her dreams.

Faced with this profoundly negative sense of place in connection to their homes, both women attempt to rebuild their lives after the war, by finding themselves a new place to start their lives over.

Etsuko explains early in the novel how, after she was orphaned during the war, she was taken in by Ogata-San who became her care-taker at the time. This generous act after the painful loss of her home is evidently very significant to Etsuko who becomes deeply attached to Ogata. His house becomes her new space and, according to Tuan, space invites "the imagination to fill it with substance and illusion; it is possibility and beckoning future" (1975:165). In her attempt to claim a space for herself and turn it into a place and a "beckoning future", however, she marries Ogata´s son Jiro, whom she never learns to love. Therefore, every space she fills with Jiro carries with it a sense of instability, stagnation and hopelessness.

> My husband and I lived in an area to the east of the city, a short tram journey from the centre of town. A river ran near us, and I was once told that before the war a small village had grown up on the riverbank. But then the bomb had fallen and afterwards all that remained were charred ruins. Rebuilding had got under way and in time four concrete buildings had been erected, each containing forty or so separate apartments. Of the four, our block had been built last and it marked the point where the rebuilding programme had come to a halt; between us and the river lay an expanse of wasteground, several acres of dried mud and ditches. Many complained it was a health hazard, and indeed the drainage was appalling. All year round there were craters filled with stagnant water, and in the summer months the mosquitoes became intolerable. From time to time officials were to be seen pacing out measurements or scribbling down notes, but the months went by and nothing was done. (11)

As we can see from this description of the apartment Etsuko inhabited with her husband Jiro, it belonged to a "rebuilding programme" which had intended to reconstruct Nagasaki from the ruins after the bomb. Although the complex appears to be brand new, the surrounding area and the fact that the programme had been abandoned, provide the reader with an image of stagnation, both literal and metaphorical. The wasteground surrounding the complex was covered in stagnant water and mud which

was even considered a health hazard. On the other hand, the character's life appears stagnant as she stares out her window wishing herself somewhere else. There is even a sense of hopelessness in the fact that officials were often seen in the area considering the necessary improvements, which actually never took place. Etsuko clearly mentions how she wishes she could be in a better place, "And yet, I remember an unmistakable air of transience there, as if we were all of us waiting for the day we could move to something better." (12)

Etsuko quickly drowns all illusion of coming to terms with her new home and becomes cynical about her present and future as she sees no immediate possibility of escaping it. However, the hope of eventually finding a new place that will bring her happiness is still a vague possibility in her mind which she considers as she looks out her window. In the following extract, it is clear how the pale view of hills to which she also alludes in the title, stands for her dim hope of a better future.

> On clearer days, I could see far beyond the trees on the opposite bank of the river, a pale outline of hills visible against the clouds. It was not an unpleasant view, and on occasions it brought me a rare sense of relief from the emptiness of those long afternoons I spent in that apartment. (99)

It is evident, hence, that despite her attempts to "rebuild" her life, Etsuko is unable to develop a positive sense of place from her new home in Nagasaki. According to Cresswell, "sense of place refers to the more nebulous meanings associated with a place: the feelings and emotions a place evokes." (2009: 1) Based on this initial description of her apartment, it can be interpreted that the feelings and emotions evoked in Etsuko are of stagnation and hopelessness.

After the death of her husband during the war, Sachiko spends some time living with her uncle in Nagasaki. However, in an attempt to move to a place of her own, after finding life with her uncle a disappointing experience, the house she manages to get for herself and her daughter does not contribute to Sachiko's development of a positive sense of place in relation to Japan. Similarly to Etsuko, Sachiko's

negative sense of place is represented firstly by the marginal, abandoned condition of the house she inhabits.

> One wooden cottage had survived both the devastation of the war and the government bulldozers. I could see it from our window, standing alone at the end of that expanse of wasteground, practically on the edge of the river. It was the kind of cottage often seen in the countryside, with a tiled roof sloping almost to the ground. (12)

It is clear that Sachiko's cottage is an exacerbated version of Etsuko's already marginal home. Her cottage is disconnected from all other living quarters in Nagasaki, placed in the middle of the area Etsuko had described as a wasteground and a health hazard. This temporary state of being in between spaces portrays Sachiko as extremely out of place, in an area no one else would consider a home. The character's personal experience in connection to Nagasaki is that of marginality, abandonment and desperation to move on to a different place. In fact, her and her daughter's recollections of the war are so evidently traumatic that it is impossible to imagine how their feelings could have been any different.

> "Everyone who lived in Tokyo saw unpleasant things. And Mariko did too. (…) Mariko ran down an alleyway, and I followed after her. There was a canal at the end and the woman was kneeling there, up to her elbows in water. A young woman, very thin. I knew something was wrong as soon as I saw her. You see, Etsuko, she turned round and smiled at Mariko. I knew something was wrong and Mariko must have done too because she stopped running. At first I thought the woman was blind, she had that kind of look, her eyes didn't seem to actually see anything. Well, she brought her arms out of the canal and showed us what she'd been holding under the water. It was a baby. I took hold of Mariko then and we came out of the alley." (73-74)

At one point, once she has finally made up her mind to leave Japan with a North American man she knows, Sachiko even mentions it to Etsuko, "You have no idea, Etsuko, how relieved I'll be to leave this

place. I trust I´ve seen the last of such squalor.' Then she looked across to me once more and laughed." (164)

After leaving Japan, Sachiko disappears from Etusko's life and no more is heard of this character. The readers are not made aware of how successful her move to America was, though its failure can be anticipated from the information given about the unreliable gentleman she leaves with.

There is, on the other hand, a description of the outcome of Etsuko's pursuit of a new place. Although the circumstances through which she came to meet the British man she leaves Japan with are left untold, the novel begins in her present English home. The reader may be at first led to believe that Etsuko's hopes were realized. However, it quickly becomes evident that the anguish and desperation that tied her down in Japan have followed her across the world. The character appears doomed to be eternally haunted by the decisions she made in order to achieve her ambition of finding a place she could call her own.

Once in England, when she becomes pregnant with her second child, the father of the baby suggests giving her a Japanese name in a pathetic allusion to what he considers attractive and exotic about his new wife. Etsuko, however, does not appear at all eager to connect with that aspect of her past.

> Niki, the name we finally gave younger daughter, is not an abbreviation; it was a compromise I reached with her father. For paradoxically it was he who wanted to give her a Japanese name, and I— perhaps out of some selfish desire not to be reminded of the past — insisted on an English one. He finally agreed to Niki, thinking it had some vague echo of the East about it. (9)

This denial of her roots is evidence once more of Etsuko's powerfully negative experience in connection to her motherland and her necessity to sever all ties with it.

According to Tuan, "The space that we perceive and construct, the space that provides cues for our behavior, varies with the individual and cultural group" (1979:389). The two female individuals in this novel exhibit personal experiences of loss, hopelessness and stagnation in connection to Japan, their homeland, which deeply taints their perception of Nagasaki. Both characters entertain the hope of moving

away to a faraway land where they may leave behind these feelings and find themselves a place of their own. However, at least in the case of Etsuko, that hope is drowned by the ghost of her past which forever haunts her in every nook and cranny of her much anticipated new home.

Well, why, should I get married? That's so stupid, Mother." She rolled up the calendar and packed it away. "So many women just get brainwashed. They think all there is to life is getting married and having a load of kids."

I continued to watch her. Then I said: "But in the end Niki there isn't very much else."

(*A Pale View of Hills*: 1982: 180)

6. No Space for Women

6.1 A Place of their Own

A Pale View of Hills is set some years after the 1945 bombing of Nagasaki in post war Japan. During this time, Japanese society was strongly affected by the influence of North American culture and mainstream. Certain aspects of pre-war, conservative Japan were deeply affected, and modern, western views of the world were influencing new generations. The novel makes reference to couples who were, at the time, allowed to walk hand in hand down the street or women claiming more rights for themselves than in the past. However, it is clear that this transformation was only beginning to take place and most of the traditional views as regard power relations and gender still prevailed.

According to Massey, "Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway-differentiated mobility: some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it." (1993:63) In the case of Etsuko and Sachiko and Japan in general as it is described in the novel, it was the men who were on the initiating side of movement, while the women were more frequently expectant of the moves their men brought along, or dreaming of unlikely moves of their own.

These asymmetrical power relations are very clear in the relationships the two female characters have with the men around them. After the war, Etsuko goes to live with Ogata and eventually marries his son Jiro. Both of these men hold extremely traditional views as regards gender roles and assume Etsuko will properly fit into her expected role as a woman. Although she does so at first, it becomes clear from early

in the novel that her hopes go further than fitting into a woman's place. She intends to find her own place as a woman.

Sachiko also describes both the relationship with her father and especially with her husband as strongly asymmetrical. After the death of her husband during the war, Sachiko attempts to claims ownership of her own life, refusing to fall back into old patterns of gender submission and decides to migrate to North America, far from the land which held her back.

However, both women being mothers in a context of asymmetrical gender power, are not easily granted access to the move they are so keen on. The society of the time was not yet prepared to encourage this type of autonomy on behalf of women, especially those who were mothers and were supposed to have an obligation towards their families and feel a "sense of loyalty towards the household" (65). Finding themselves irreversibly out of place, in order to finally sever all ties with their past and have a hope of moving on to a new place of their own, Etsuko and Sachiko are forced to make the ultimate surrender, the sacrifice of their children.

According to Cresswell, "power is implicated in the construction, reproduction, and contestation of places and their meanings." (2009:5). One of Etsuko's first flashbacks in the novel takes the reader directly into the first space her and Jiro inhabit after getting married. She describes how the very location of their home was a product, not of their personal choice, but of the fact that her husband´s firm had offered it to its employees. The fact that her husband worked and not herself, also a product of the established social order, implied that the construction of their places as a married couple was determined by her husband's job and never by her personal choice:

The occupants of the apartment blocks were much like ourselves - young married couples, the husbands having found good employment with expanding firms. Many of the apartments were owned by the firms, who rented them to employees at a generous rate. (12)

After settling down in their apartment, Etsuko becomes pregnant. There is consistent evidence throughout the novel of a suspicion on behalf of the characters around her feeling unhappy or unsettled in her present situation which they often manifest to her in conversation. One of these characters concerned for her wellbeing is Ogata who at one point declares to her,

"And the child will make you happy."

"Yes. It couldn't have happened at a better time. We're quite settled here now, and Jiro's work is going well. This is the ideal time for this to have happened."

"So you're happy?"

"Yes, I'm very happy." (34)

In Plascencia's words, "Women are (thus) allotted the social space of domesticity which deprives them of autonomy, ignores their wishes and compels their subjectivity." (2016:1) It is evident from this interaction that, according to the established order, being "settled" in a place and having a husband with a steady job is enough reason for a woman to wish to become a mother. There is no apparent reason why she should not be happy in this context.

Although Ogata appears overall to be an endearing character, he reproduces the social structure of domination quite severely in different instances throughout the text. During one particular interaction between his son's coworkers, he overhears one of them being mocked for threatening his wife who had apparently attempted to vote for a different party than her husband. Ogata is quite shocked at this possibility and later expresses himself to his son.

"Look what happens. Husband and wife voting for different parties. It's a sad state of affairs when a wife can't be relied on in such matters anymore."

Jiro continued to read his newspaper. "Yes, it's regrettable," he said.

"A wife these days feels no sense of loyalty towards the household. She just does what she pleases, votes for a different party if the whim takes her. That's so typical of the way things have gone in Japan. All in the name of democracy people abandon obligations."

Sachiko's description of her relationships with the men around her are also clear representations of the same type of asymmetrical power distribution of the time. Particularly in the way she describes how her husband encouraged her to abandon the things she felt most passionate about, such as learning English, in order to accept her place as a woman, mother and housewife.

"My husband was like that, Etsuko. Very strict and very patriotic. He was never the most considerate of men. But he came from a highly distinguished family and my parents considered it a good match. I didn't protest when he forbade me to study English. After all, there seemed little point anymore." (109-110)

After her husband's death, as Sachiko tries to free herself from male oppression in the search for a place of her own, her daughter Mariko is shown in the same marginal manner as her mother, as an extension and representation of Sachiko's out-of-placeness. During a conversation between the two, Etsuko mentions seeing Mariko by the wasteground having a fight with two boys. The very place where the fight takes place is already symbolic of the characters' marginality. The fact that she is fighting two males is also significant.

"With two other children. One of them was a boy. It looked a nasty little fight."

"I see." Sachiko began to walk again. I fell in step beside her.

"I don't want to alarm you," I said, "but it did look quite a nasty fight. In fact, I think I saw a cut on your daughter's cheek."

"I see."

"It was back there, on the edge of the wasteground." (14)

Sachiko's unconcerned reaction also reminds the reader of her own indifference towards the established rules of what is proper for a woman and what is not.

During Etsuko´s first pregnancy, Sachiko develops a relationship with a man from the United States who offers to take her and Mariko with him to the USA. Although this move seems to Sachiko as a promise of salvation away from a state of constant marginality, the man appears to be deeply unreliable, often disappearing without leaving a trace. Towards the end of the novel, the man reappears to offer to take Sachiko and Mariko to the United States once more, and despite the previous warning signs, Sachiko chooses to bet on the move once more, before an unbelieving Etsuko.

> "Besides, Etsuko," she went on, "he did come all the way down here. He came down all this way to Nagasaki to find me at my uncle's house, all that way from Tokyo. Now why would he have done that if he didn't mean everything he's promised? You see, Etsuko, what he wants most is to take me to America. That's what he wants. Nothing's changed really, this is just a slight delay." She gave a quick laugh. "Sometimes, you see, he's like a little child." (69)

During this pitiful monologue, Sachiko appears to be convincing herself, rather than Etsuko, of the impossible. Not only is she perfectly aware that what the man "wants most" is not to take her to America, but also of the demoralizing realization that the only way she has to finally leave Japan is through the whim of a man. In line with Massey's thoughts, only males appear to be in charge of initiating flows and movement while others aren't, these "others" being women.

Japan is introduced in the novel as a place of fixed notions of gender which excludes women from decision making processes as regards their homes, practices and lifestyles. According to Cresswell, "As a consequence of these notions of fixity, boundedness, and rootedness, place too often becomes the locus of exclusionary practices. People connect a place with a particular identity and proceed to defend it against the threatening outside with its different identities (2009:8)". Etsuko and Sachiko find themselves out of place as they threaten the norm and claim a place of their own. However, conceiving

them as a danger to the established order, the system claims a price for allowing them to claim their geographical independence.

"*Niki shrugged. I watched her for a little longer, then said:*

'But you see, Niki, I knew all along. I knew all along she wouldn't be happy over here.

But I decided to bring her just the same." (176)

6.2 No place for Iphigenia

The circumstances around Etsuko's move to England are not described in her account of the events. However, it is clear that after the birth of her daughter Keiko, she chooses to uproot and move her away from Japan despite knowing it might not be the best choice for her daughter.

Once in England, almost as a mirror image of Etsuko´s profound denial of her past, her daughter Keiko, whom she had uprooted, torn away from her father and brought to England with her, finds herself irreversibly out of place in the home of a family that is not her own and denies them from her life in return. During the years she lives there, she consciously separates herself from every member of the house, living in a constant state of isolation and abandonment which inevitably reminds the reader of the wasteground in Nagasaki.

> The room, I realized, was in a terrible condition. An odour of stale perfume and dirty linen came from within, and on the occasions I had glimpsed inside, I had seen countless glossy magazines lying on the floor amidst heaps of clothes. (54)

Keiko's failure to find he own space after being uprooted from her home in Japan is the price that Etsuko has to pay for claiming a place of her own and the ghost that quietly haunts her for the rest of her life. It is because of this inability to adjust that Keiko moves away from her mother's house,

severing all ties with her just as Etsuko had severed all ties with her past, and eventually takes her own life alone, in the same hopeless state she had been in at home.

> She had lived amidst her own family without being seen for days on end; little hope she would be discovered quickly in a strange city where no one knew her. Later, the coroner said she had been there "for several days". It was the landlady who had opened the door, thinking Keiko had left without paying the rent.
> I have found myself continually bringing to mind that picture — of my daughter hanging in her room for days on end. The horror of that image has never diminished, but it has long ceased to be a morbid matter; as with a wound on one's own body, it is possible to develop an intimacy with the most disturbing of things. (54)

The migration process is not entirely fortunate for Sachiko and her daughter either. Although Sachiko claims she wants the best for her child, it is also evident that Mariko would much rather live with her uncle in Nagasaki than move to America with a man she doesn't know and appears to dislike. However, under the excuse of her daughter's wellbeing, her views as regard her subjective representation of Japan become evident.

> And Mariko would be happier there. America is a better place for a young girl to grow up. Out there, she could do all kinds of things with her life. She could become a business girl. Or she could study painting at college become an artist. All these things are much easier in America, Etsuko. Japan is no place for a girl. What can look forward to here? (170)

According to Tuan, "The primary meaning of home is nurturing shelter. It is the one place in which we can openly and comfortably admit our frailty and our bodily needs." (1975:154) Mariko appears in dire need of home and shelter throughout the novel which she constantly manifests through her deep desire to find a home for her kittens, an objective her mother tries to discourage her from. In an uplifting moment, after Sachiko has made the temporary decision to move back to her uncle's house in Nagasaki, she promises her daughter the kittens will be taken with them where they will finally have a home. This prospect rejoices Mariko who anticipates that this move will be a source of stability for them all. However, in an unexpected turn, Sachiko eventually decides to move to America with the unreliable man and delivers the news to her daughter by saying she needs to get rid of the kittens and eventually drowning them in the river under the very eyes of a heartbroken Mariko.

> She put the kitten into the water and held it there. She remained like that for some moments, staring into the water, both hands beneath the surface. (...) Then for the first time, without taking her hands from the water, Sachiko threw a glance over her shoulder towards her daughter. Instinctively, I followed her glance, and for one brief moment the two of us were both staring back up at Mariko. The little girl was standing at the top of the slope, watching with the same blank expression. (167)

This traumatizing event which Mariko is forced to witness, once more brings the child in contact with the theme of infanticide she had come to know during the war and stands as a powerfully heartbreaking moment of her loss of innocence, a figurative death, which acts as the human sacrifice Sachiko feels that she needs to make in order to be granted access to her much anticipated move.

She left shortly after lunch with an oddly self-conscious air, as if she were leaving without my approval. (…) When she reached the gate, Niki glanced back and seemed surprised to find me still standing at the door. I smiled and waved to her.

(A Pale View of Hills: 1982: 183)

6.3 A Woman's Place

Etsuko makes every conceivable effort to eventually secure herself her own place as a woman. However, it becomes evident from middle aged Etsuko´s discourse and portrayal of her life that she has been unable to overcome the sacrifices she had to make in order to finally settle down in England.

Etsuko's daughter Niki is the one female character who appears to shine a glimmer of hope onto the future of women in the contemporary world. During her brief visit to her mother, the two women have a few disagreements as regards a woman's place, where Etsuko seems to have fully accepted the patriarchal order which held her back in her past.

> "Well, why, should I get married? That's so stupid, Mother." She rolled up the calendar and packed it away. "So many women just get brainwashed. They think all there is to life is getting married and having a load of kids."
>
> I continued to watch her. Then I said: "But in the end Niki there isn't very much else." (180)

Despite her monumental efforts to overcome her boundaries and realize her ambitions as a woman, the death of her daughter Keiko becomes too much of a painful memory for her to be able to feel accomplished. At the end of the novel, Etsuko appears defeated and familiarized with her haunted, plagued life. However, the last lines of the novel allow the reader an optimistic outlook of Nikki's future, as she decides to leave her mother and go back to London.

> The afternoon had turned grey and windy, and I stood in the doorway as she walked down to the end of the drive. She was dressed in the same tight-fitting clothes she had arrived in, and her suitcase made her drag her step a little.
>
> When she reached the gate, Niki glanced back and seemed surprised to find me still standing at the door. I smiled and waved to her. (183)

As Niki goes back to her home where she lives by her own rules, she claims her own space as a woman, away from her mother's expectations and defeatist views, possibly towards a place of her own.

"That was you this morning, wasn't it?"

"This morning?"

"I heard these sounds this morning. Really early, about four o'clock."

"I´m sorry I disturbed you. Yes, that was me." I began to laugh. "Why, who else did you imagine it was?" I continued to laugh, and for a moment could not stop. Niki stared at me, her newspaper still held open before her.

"Well, I´m sorry I woke you, Niki," I said, finally controlling my laughter.

"It's alright, I was awake anyway. I can't seem to sleep properly these days,"

(*A Pale View of Hills*: 1982: 95)

7- **No Place like Home**

After transgressing every invisible boundary of Japan's patriarchal order and making the ultimate sacrifice to accomplish her own positive sense of place in England, Etsuko is haunted by the ghost of regret and fated to live in misery. As a middle aged woman looking back at her life choices, she realizes that although she has physically transgressed the cultural frontiers which kept her in Japan, her gender limitations as a woman in a patriarchal world have not allowed her to develop her new identity as she had so deeply wished. According to Bachelard, the house becomes an ideal starting point in topographical studies since the home is where "the unconscious is housed." (1994, 10) Etsuko´s portrayal and description of her English home becomes a mirror image of her internal struggles as she is haunted by the ghost of her dead daughter Keiko, the ultimate sacrifice she willingly accepted as a price for her independence in the Western World.

Etsuko´s typically English home is portrayed as large, quiet and immersed in a country setting, distanced from other properties. Many of its rooms and areas are often described as silent and dark and there seems to be an atmosphere of restlessness, expressed by Etsuko´s and Niki´s inability to sleep in several scenes. The house has many windows which Etsuko often finds herself looking out of, as if once more, she were wishing to be somewhere else.

Although it is clear that Etsuko has attempted to finally develop her own sense of place in her English home and forge a new identity as an independent woman, the dark nooks and crannies around her haunted house are a constant reminder of her transgressions within the patriarchal order.

Keiko's deeply unhappy existence after her uprooting from Japan is also clearly reflected in the portrayal of her bedroom in the English house. Her emotional turmoil is mirrored by the clutter in her physical space.

> The room, I realized, was in a terrible condition. An odour of stale perfume and dirty linen came from within, and on the occasions I had glimpsed inside, I had seen countless glossy magazines lying on the floor amidst heaps of clothes. (54)

After her death, from the very beginning of the novel when Niki first comes to visit her mother, Keiko is described as a ghost-like presence interfering in the women's visit. "For although we never dwelt long on the subject of Keiko's death, it was never far away, hovering over us whenever we talked." (10)

In fact, during one of Etsuko's ventures into her dead daughter's room, every image in her description of the physical space reminds of death: The use of pale colors such as gray, and white to describe the furniture and the sky, the single sheet covering the girl´s bed as if covering a corpse, the mention of Etsuko feeling cold, and of course, the image of the birds pecking at the dead fruit outside.

> Keikos room looked stark in the greyish light; a bed covered with a single sheet, her white dressing table (…) I stepped further into the room. The curtains had been left open and I could see the orchard below. The sky looked pale and white; it did not appear to be raining. Beneath the window, down on the grass, two birds were pecking at some fallen apples. I started to feel the cold then and returned to my room. (89)

As Etsuko avoids exploring the deep dark corners of her subconscious which hold and hide the pain of her daughter's suicide, the reminder of that death unavoidably comes back to her through everything she sees in that room.

According to Bachelard,

> …thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed, and if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar and a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated. (1994: 11)

In the case of Etsuko´s English home, it is clearly large enough to act as refuge to many of her dark memories of the past. So much so, that they often haunt the character and her daughter which becomes evident to the reader in their inability to sleep properly at night.

> "By the way, Mother," said Niki. "That was you this morning, wasn't it?"
>
> "This morning?"
>
> "1 heard these sounds this morning. Really early; about four o'clock"
>
> "I'm sorry I disturbed you. Yes, that was me.' I began to laugh. Why, who else did you imagine it was?" I continued to laugh, and for a moment could not stop. Niki stared at me, her newspaper still held open before her. "Well, I'm sorry I woke you, Niki,' I said, finally controlling my laughter.
>
> "It's all right, I was awake anyway. I can't seem to sleep properly these days." (95).

Even Etusko's laughter appears demonic in this exchange which is not comical at all, as if she secretly knew it was her elder daughter's ghost who had kept them awake, and nervously wanted to hide it from Niki.

In a similar manner, another late night exchange between the two women acts as a reminder to the reader of the haunting presence of Keiko's ghost in Etsuko's home.

> At first, I was sure someone had walked past my bed and out of my room, closing the door quietly. Then I became more awake, and I realized how fanciful an idea this was. I lay in bed listening for further noises. Quite obviously, I had heard Niki in the next room; she had complained throughout her stay of being unable to sleep well. Or possibly there had been no noises at all, I had awoken again during the early hours from habit. The sound of birds came from outside, but my room was

still in darkness. After several minutes I rose and found my dressing gown. When I opened my door, the light outside was very pale. I stepped further on to the landing and almost by instinct cast a glance down to the far end of the corridor, towards Keiko's door.

Then, for a moment, I was sure I had heard a sound come from within Keiko's room, a small clear sound amidst the singing of the birds outside. I stood still, listening, then began to walk towards the door. There came more noises, and I realized they were coming from the kitchen downstairs. I remained on the landing for a moment, then made my way down the staircase. Niki was coming out of the kitchen and started on seeing me.

"Oh, Mother, you gave me a real fright." In the murky light of the hallway, I could see her thin figure in a pale dressing gown holding a cup in both her hands.

"I'm sorry, Niki. I thought perhaps you were a burglar." (174)

This exchange is essential for several reasons. In the first place, for the evident ghost-like presence of Keiko in her mother's subconscious and hence, in her house. Also, because it shows how Etsuko's house does not in any way provide her with a sense of safety. In Cresswell's words, a home is a place "where (in an ideal world) we feel safe, secure, and loved." (2009: 5). Evidently, this is not the case for Etsuko who admits to often finding herself awake at dawn, hearing strange noises which she compares with those of a burglar.

After a number of struggles which remain unspecified to the reader, Etsuko finally acquires a place of her own in England. According to Bachelard, "… after we are in a new house (…) memories of other places we have lived in come back to us." (1994:5). Despite her success in leaving Japan and escaping its extremely traditional, patriarchal order, she is unable to escape her memories and guilt from the past which haunt her in every nook and cranny of her new home, preventing her from forming a new identity and living a happy, guilt-free existence.

...educators and cultural workers must be engaged in
"the unlearning of one's own privilege"

(Spivak, n/d: 42)

8) Pedagogical Implications of the Study of Places

This paper was written in the context of the *Primeras Jornadas Interdisciplinares de Espacialidad en Lenguas Extranjeras: "Educar la mirada desde un abordaje crítico de los espacios*" organized by MA. Florencia Perduca within her chair in Contemporary Literature in English at IES en Lenguas Vivas, "Juan Ramón Fernández", and therefore it is written in line with its objective of "inquiring about spatial pedagogies and the contribution of their methodological strategies for the purpose of contributing to intercultural mediation and to thinking critically about spaces." (Primera Circular, 2019: 2, my translation)

In the midst of our postmodern world, new generations of learners are increasingly diverse in their social backgrounds and have strikingly different ways of learning and processing information. As a consequence of this, education as a whole has undergone a necessary process of deep transformation as regards its core concepts and practices. The ELT classroom, as any other field inexorably linked to culture, constantly redesigns itself according to physical location and time. This heterogeneous character of our practice should therefore be reflected in its objects of study as they are critically approached by teachers and learners.

The *Diseño Curricular de Lenguas Extranjeras* of the city of Buenos Aires (2001) states that "recognition of the Other mobilises two significant skills for social coexistence and the teaching and learning process: tolerance for difference and acceptance of what is relative" (21, my translation). Given this increasing diversity in the nature of our learners, it becomes imperative that the voices heard in our classes no longer be exclusively canonical and Eurocentric. Educators have the duty of remaining informed, up to date and open-minded about the new voices and forms of expression that may emerge

across the places and spaces we inhabit in order to raise awareness in our classes about the existence of Others.

According to critical pedagogue Giroux, "[r]ather than being objective institutions removed from the dynamics of politics and power, schools actually are contested spheres that embody and express struggle over what forms of authority, types of knowledge, forms of moral regulation and versions of the past and future should be legitimated and transmitted to students." (n/d: 3) In schools, Literature has always worked as a powerful bridge between ourselves and others and as a substantial tool to promote critical thinking, empathy and understanding of others´ view of the world. But it is also an essential means of considering our own existence, and a place where students can "develop a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to overcome economic, political and social injustices, and to further humanize themselves as part of this struggle." (Giroux, n/d: 4) Therefore, education within the ELT context can no longer be conceived as the mere teaching of practical skills. It should also involve helping learners reflect about the places and spaces we inhabit and the social norms which dominate our culture.

Subjects such as Contemporary Literature in the Teacher Training College at IES en Lenguas Vivas "JRF", through the work with literary texts, enable students to reflect upon the spaces we inhabit as ELT students and future educators in public schools in Argentina. According to critical-place pedagogue Gruenewald, "[b]eing in a situation has a spatial, geographical, contextual dimension. Reflecting on one's situation corresponds to reflecting on the space(s) one inhabits; acting on one's situation often corresponds to changing one's relationship to a place." (2003: 4) It is that dimension which future teachers of the Contemporary Literature in English Chair (Perduca) at LV "Juan Ramón Fernández" are invited to explore with their students. As Giroux stated,

> [a]t stake here is deconstructing not only those forms of privilege that benefit males, whiteness, heterosexuality, and property holders, but also those conditions that have disabled others to speak in places where those who are privileged by virtue of the legacy of colonial power assume authority of the conditions of human agency. (1992:19)

This type of deconstruction of the forms of privilege which are at stake in our society can be the beginning of a powerful decolonizing act. Reflecting about how power operates in the places we inhabit encourages learners to question authority and empower themselves toward change.

In *A Pale View of Hills,* both the characters of Etsuko and Sachiko find themselves immersed in a culture which disables them from speaking out about their concerns, fears and desires. The male dominated social order they live in expects them to comply with what is expected of them without any resistance. According to Burbules & Berk, critical pedagogy is,

> an effort to work within educational institutions and other media to raise questions about inequalities of power,…, and about the way belief systems become internalized to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very aspiration to question or change their lot in life (1999:50)

In this sense, the novel provides an interesting framework to spark discussions about inequalities of power and how individuals may take charge of making changes in their own lives and in their society. The *Núcleos de Aprendizaje Prioritarios de Lenguas Extranjeras* (NAPs) from the *Consejo Federal de Educación in* Argentina states the importance of a plurilingual and intercultural approach to foreign language teaching as it "makes visible the relationships between language and culture" (2011:2, my translation) In this respect, the work of Kazuo Ishiguro in general includes characters of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds which may contribute to addressing interculturality as well establishing the bridge between language and culture.

Although the focus of this paper is based on the theory of Spatiality, Ecocritical notions may also introduce an interesting complementary pedagogical approach to this type of text in the ELT classroom. Ecocriticism focuses on the importance of recovering the lost connection between humans and their natural spaces. It is of vital importance in light of the multitudes of displaced individuals and families who have lost their natural space, their connection to nature and their roots. In Argentina, indigenous tribes are in constant conflict with local governments in connection to corporations or individuals who continue to

claim their ancient lands for private property, and this situation is common ground to the diminishing population of indigenous peoples everywhere in the world.

On the other hand, our country receives thousands of immigrants every year either as refugees or because they have been displaced from their home countries. Literature provides the possibility of rethinking spaces and reconnecting with lost places, if only through the texts. According to Margaret Sommerville, "[w]hat we do to the planet we do to ourselves. Care for oneself and for the other, the other including one's place of being, cannot any longer be understood as separate responsibilities or separate processes."(2011: 2). This focus on our responsibility as human beings toward our planet in order to recover lost places and our connection with nature is extremely productive as a means to approach a text. Sommerville's "Place Pedagogy of Change" states that "it is through the pivotal work of pedagogy, […], that we make the connection between our ideas about place and processes of change" (2011:3) and that these pedagogies "necessarily include learning within communities of others, of plants and animals, of peoples and the qualities of places, learning to build community and collective knowledge." (175) Although Ecocriticism is not at the core of this paper, it functions well alongside the theory of Spatiality as another means to focus on the effects of our actions as individuals and societies on our spaces, always thought of and analyzed as triggers for action and change towards a more egalitarian and sustainable form of living.

As regards our own spatiality as Argentines, including authors such as Ishiguro within the Curriculum in subjects such as Contemporary Literature in English at Teacher Training College at IES en Lenguas Vivas "Juan Ramón Fernández", is an interesting course of action in order to pave the way for learners as developing teachers to think themselves as Argentine women and men, within a social order and its corresponding power structures. Argentina is a country which only claimed its independence from its Spanish colony two hundred years ago. As a former colony, many of its colonial features are still present in our culture today. Despite its tremendous size, the places with extensive access to employment, education, culture and technological resources are extremely limited and still focused mainly on the capitals which were already central during the colony. Argentina is also largely dominated by white, male,

heterosexual individuals as regards government, income and employment, just as it was in the 1800's. My purpose as an ELT teacher is to encourage learners to reflect about the texts and discourses which appeal to their current realities, whether they be in a position of privilege or part of the silenced population, or perhaps a bit of both. Once they have reflected about them, motivate them to think critically about the possibility of change towards a fairer world order.

Contemporary Literature in English (Perduca's Chair) at the Teacher Training College at IES en Lenguas Vivas "JRF" provides a concrete theoretical framework which focuses, among other critical approaches, on Spatiality. Classes provide future teachers with the necessary tools to enable them to see themselves as cultural agents, encouraging them to think critically about the spaces which appear in every text they read, intertextually with the spaces around them. During my time as an *adscripta* and as I advanced on the development of this paper, I was able to share with learners of different terms some of my research on the notions of Place and Space (Cresswell, 2009; Tuan, 1975) as they worked on the novel. I also introduced the concept of the House (Bachelard, 1958) as a reflection of the minds of characters. Once students had read half way into the novel, we discussed the spaces which appear in the novel in connection to the theory of Spatiality as described in the first section of this paper. Once we had discussed some of the main concepts I had been dealing with in my research, such as Etsuko and Sachiko functioning as alter-egos, spaces in connection to personal experience and gender, and the home as a reflection of identity, I proposed an activity based on an "À la carte" system. (This system, as presented at 2019 FAAPI Conference, implies providing learners with varied menu of activities through which to approach a text. Learners are given the possibility to choose an activity which appeals more to them personally, and then all the different approaches are shared in a class exchange in order for everyone to see each other's final products and reflections.) Learners were given this type of menu of possible perspectives from where to think critically about *A Pale View of Hills*, including a spatial approach, an Ecocritical approach, a feminist approach, and different ways of working on them according to the students' specific abilities or preferences.

First, we explored the physical places occupied by each character, male and female. (Cresswell, 2009). We discussed their boundaries, their limitations, the places that were truly their own or the places that they aimed at achieving for themselves (Cresswell, 2009; Tuan, 1975; Massey, 1994). We also worked on the physical places described in the novel, such as post war Nagasaki and the effects of the bomb, Etsuko and Jiro's apartment, Sachiko´s cottage and Etsuko's English home. From the extensive menu of activities they were provided with, they had to select one activity which appealed to them and they felt comfortable with, through which they could approach critical analysis of the text, and they could work on it in pairs or individually. These activities went from three dimensional physical depictions of one of the places discussed, two faced puppets which portrayed the similarities between Etsuko and Sachiko as alter egos, comic strips which showed characteristics of female portrayal in the novel, investigative reports on the ecological impact of the nuclear bomb in Nagasaki and how that may have reflected on the characters (destruction, death, annihilation, stagnation, rebirth), songs which exemplified the female struggle in a male dominated society by an artist that they liked, essays on the impact of nature on Etusko's English home, amongst others.

Students were given three classes for this project where the first was the discussion of the main perspectives they could choose to work with (Spatiality, Feminism, Ecocriticism, etc,) and the choice of groups and activities. It is my belief that a heterogeneous and holistic approach to ELT teaching is essential to cater for a diverse community. In order to achieve this, the element of choice allows students to feel empowered as they take an active role in their student-centered, personal outlook of literature. The aim was for them to have a variety of options available through which to reflect about the novel and its characters in connection to their own lives, under the expectation that this heterogeneous collection of activities would cater to them as heterogeneous students. This type of "À la carte" approach will be exemplified and dealt with in more detail during the defense of this paper.

In an age of travelling cultures (Clifford, 1992) where spaces have become temporary and are not always chosen by those who inhabit them, individuals and families around the world have lost their homes

and hence felt the need to travel elsewhere to survive. In the midst of this worldwide crisis of displacement, the search for new places and spaces has become a part of our everyday lives. Characters like Etsuko who have had to give up their roots in order to decolonize themselves from the male dominated order of their country allow students the possibility of thinking critically about notions of space, place and locality, hopefully even in connection to their own experience. Diversity is tangible in all aspects of everyday life and standardization in education has become far from the norm. This transformation has become essential where catering for varied classrooms is key if the aim is to truly reach our learners and turn them into independent and critical thinkers who question the social order of the places and spaces we inhabit and aim for a fairer world for us all.

9. Conclusion

The Postmodern world we inhabit has had tremendous ramifications on the fields of Human Geography and Anthropology. Our world is characterized by constant movement and migrations and the places we inhabit are no longer fixed and static but often dynamic and mobile. However, this constant flux is not always a choice or an opportunity granted to everyone equally. Due to processes of exclusion and asymmetrical power relations, some people seem to be more in charge of movement (or lack thereof) than others, even when it's not their own.

The experience of participating in Perduca's chair as an adscripta and the research process to write this paper has introduced me to notions such as Border theory, Diaspora, Ecocriticism and Spatiality, the focus of this present study, which shed light into how individuals develop their subjectivities in connection to the places they come from and the places they inhabit. Moving to a place involves the process of developing a new identity, a new personal, metaphorical space in the world, as well as a physical one.

The character of Etsuko in *A Pale View of Hills* finds herself 'out of place' (Cresswell, 2009) in her life in Japan which has been chosen and decided for her, regardless of her own preferences. In her search for her own identity and 'sense of place' (Cresswell, 2009), Etsuko and Sachiko, her alter ego, abandon their lives and travel to another country. However, given their cultural context of markedly asymmetrical power relations as regards Gender (Massey, 1994) which strongly disapprove of this type reaction to the social order, their eventual move needs to be done by force and at the sake of their own uprooted daughters.

This paper has focused first on the concepts of Place and Space (Cresswell, 2009; Tuan, 1975) and aimed to stress how the places inhabited by Etsuko show her perpetual 'out of placeness', regardless of her attempts to make a new home for herself. Etsuko becomes forever haunted by the memory of her daughter Keiko, whom she sacrificed by uprooting and condemning her to a lifetime of being 'out of

place'. Etsuko's haunted mind was studied in this paper by means of the concept of the House (Bachelard, 1958) and how her English home acts as a physical portrayal of the dark nooks and crannies within the character's mind. Both Etsuko and Sachiko's attempted change of place is denied to them by their social order and their attempted transgression comes at the high price of their daughter's lives.

Finally, this study focused on the importance of Literature as a subject within the ELT curriculum in order to allow students to reflect upon the Spatiality of characters while at the same time they can think critically about their own, in order to challenge it. The Núcleos de Aprendizaje Prioritarios de Lenguas Extranjeras (NAP) from the Consejo Federal de Educación in Argentina states that this type of perspective to teaching a foreign language "promotes multidisciplinary approaches and combines language teaching with the ability to reflect and think critically, which is necessary in order to coexist in greatly diverse societies." (12, My Translation) It is because of these "greatly diverse societies" that it becomes crucial for us as educators to step away from standardized curriculums and teaching practices and provide varied options through which our students can become owners of their own learning process and use it as a means to think critically about their own place as students in an institution, in a country, in a world of their own.

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