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EXPLORING AUTHENTICITY AND LITERARY DIALECT FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT. This paper presents a theoretical discussion of literary dialect and authenticity and proposes a new approach that will enhance our knowledge of these concepts. It reveals the existence of a gap in the study of literary dialect and authenticity, where most researchers have paid attention to the role of the writer/creator while leaving aside the reader/audience. Scholars interested in the authenticity of literary dialect have traditionally concentrated on assessing how closely literary dialects resemble real-world dialects. However, the idea that authenticity only depends on the linguistic accuracy that the writer/creator lends to the fictional portrayal of dialect has been abandoned. More recent studies have started to examine how readers/audiences authenticate (or deauthenticate) dialect representations. Their focus is on which readers/audiences evaluate a portrayal as authentic and why. This paper is in line with the view that authenticity depends on the readers'/audiences' evaluations and suggests that the perceived authenticity of literary dialect can be measured using methods similar to those employed in language attitudes research.

Keywords: authenticity, literary dialect, literary fiction, telecinematic fiction, performed language, audience.

LA AUTENTICIDAD Y EL DIALECTO LITERARIO DESDE UNA NUEVA PERSPECTIVA

RESUMEN. Este artículo presenta una revisión teórica del dialecto literario y la autenticidad y propone un nuevo enfoque destinado a mejorar nuestro conocimiento de estos conceptos. Dicha revisión revela la existencia de una laguna en el estudio del dialecto literario y la autenticidad, donde la mayoría de los investigadores han prestado atención al papel del escritor/creador dejando de lado al lector/público. Los investigadores interesados en la autenticidad del dialecto literario se han centrado tradicionalmente en evaluar hasta qué punto los dialectos literarios se parecen a los dialectos del mundo real. Sin embargo, la idea de que la autenticidad sólo depende de la precisión lingüística con la que el escritor/creador representa el dialecto se ha ido abandonando. Así pues, estudios más recientes han empezado a examinar cómo los lectores/audiencias autentifican (o desautentifican) las representaciones dialectales, centrándose en qué lectores/audiencias evalúan una representación como auténtica y por qué. Este artículo está en línea con la opinión de que la autenticidad depende de las evaluaciones de los lectores/audiencias y sugiere que la autenticidad percibida del dialecto literario puede medirse utilizando métodos similares a los empleados en la investigación de las actitudes lingüísticas.

Palabras clave: autenticidad, dialecto literario, ficción literaria, ficción telecinemática, representación lingüística, audiencia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Authenticity in the sense of closeness to spontaneous spoken language has been a recurrent topic in studies on literary dialect, that is, dialect that is represented in literary fiction, but not as frequent in research on telecinematic fiction.[1] However, as will be explained in Section 2, what has been traditionally said about the authenticity of dialect in literary fiction can be applied to telecinematic fiction since they are both examples of fictional narratives and, more generally, of performed language.

The artificiality of performed language and its divergence from natural speech made linguists consider it unworthy of study. This view was shared by scholars influenced by Labov who took for granted that "self-conscious speech is of little value in obtaining a picture of the linguistic system of a given community" (Schilling-Estes 62). However, many researchers (Amador-Moreno and McCafferty 2; Androutsopoulos, "Repertoires" 143-144; Bednarek 55; Bell and Gibson 558; Cohen Minnick xvi; Gibson 603; Piazza et al. 1; Planchenault 253; Walshe 3) have started

[1] *Telecinematic fiction* refers to fictional television and cinema narratives. This term derives from *telecinematic discourse*, a label coined by Piazza et al. (1) to refer to the language used in those narratives.

to acknowledge that performed language, whether in literature, telecinematic fiction or any other kind of performance, deserves linguistic analysis. This paper concurs with this view and suggests a new approach to the study of the authenticity of literary dialect that goes beyond the mere analysis of the linguistic accuracy of fictional representations of dialect. This new approach calls for an investigation of how audiences perceive literary dialect from the point of view of authenticity.

The paper is structured as follows: I start by defining literary dialect and suggesting how it can be applied to the representation of dialect not only in literary fiction, as has been traditionally done, but also in telecinematic fiction (Section 2). Section 3 deals with the notion of authenticity in linguistic and philosophical terms, and delves into the long-standing debate of whether literary dialect should be examined from the point of view of authenticity. Next, I discuss stereotyping and (in)consistency, two criteria commonly used for measuring how authentic literary dialect is in Section 4. Finally, section 5 reviews old and new approaches to the study of the authenticity of dialect portrayals in fiction and proposes a methodological framework for exploring authenticity from the perspective of language perception.

2. BROADENING THE CONCEPT OF LITERARY DIALECT

Definitions of literary dialect abound and one such definition is that by Shorrocks (386), according to whom, literary dialect is "the representation of non-standard-speech in literature that is otherwise written in standard English ... and aimed at a general readership". Another scholar who has defined this term is Ives (146) who states that literary dialect is "an author's attempt to reproduce, in writing, speech forms that are restricted regionally, socially, or both". These two definitions agree that literary dialect is dialect employed in writing. However, they differ in two main respects. While Shorrocks considers literary dialect to be a "representation", Ives classifies it as a "reproduction". Although these two terms have certain aspects in common, they should not be seen as synonymous. Both "representation" and "reproduction" are based on the idea that there is an original form, but representation does not have that meaning of 'making as identical as possible a copy of something' that reproduction had. Moreover, these two terms refer in different ways to the type of language that is represented. Shorrocks uses the more general label *non-standard speech*, whereas Ives is more precise and refers to regional and social forms, which are encompassed within nonstandard language.

Unlike the definitions discussed above which are rather technical and unbiased, Blake (59) defines literary dialect in a more subjective way saying that it is "a hodge-podge of features used to create a non-standard effect". Blake's definition has a negative bias since the term *hodge-podge* conveys a sense of mess. The rationale behind his use of this term probably has to do with the inconsistency which literary dialect has been very often blamed for and which will be considered further on.

As already mentioned, Ives and Shorrocks describe literary dialect as dialect employed in writing and, more particularly, in literature, hence the term. However, with the advent of audiovisual technologies, some linguists started to develop an interest in the use of language in telecinematic discourse. Hodson (15) and Walshe (8) are among those linguists and, more importantly, they have put forward the idea that the use of dialect in film should be treated as literary dialect. Hodson (15), for instance, advocates for a joint analysis of film and literature, arguing that they are both forms of "fictional narratives". In so doing, she emphasises the similarities between cinema and literature such as their sharing "a commitment to portraying life [and language] 'as it really is'" (Hodson 219). As for Walshe (8), he goes even further in his study of the representation of Irish English in films and argues that dialect in film can be seen as literary dialect since speech in films "is scripted in exactly the same manner as other written texts, with the screenwriter employing typical grammatical and lexical features to lend the dialogues more authenticity".

As a result of being scripted, dialect in literary and telecinematic works will always be some distance from natural speech. Schneider reinforces this distance by measuring the proximity of written texts to spoken language. He uses three criteria which are the reality of the speech that is being represented, "the relationship between the speaker and the person who wrote the utterance down" and "the temporal distance between the speech event and the time of the recording" (Schneider 60). Taking these criteria into account, he classifies texts into five different categories that are "recorded", "recalled", "imagined", "observed", and "invented". The first of these is the closest to speech whereas the "invented" category is the furthest away from it. Dialect in literary fiction belongs to the "invented" type of texts.

Furthermore, even if films and literary works are very realistic in their representations of dialect, their dialogues can never be treated in the same way as dialogues in real life. Kozloff (19), who concentrates on film discourse, supports this view and argues that "linguists who use film dialogue as accurate case studies of everyday conversation are operating on mistaken assumptions". Finally, the link between film and literature is ultimately highlighted by the fact that literary works may often be made into films.

Having argued that film and literature have some common denominators and therefore the term literary dialect can be applied to both of them, it is my intention to show that *literary dialect* is a form of performed language and films and literature, types of performance. Although some scholars such as Chomsky (4) and Goffman (4) believe that language is always performed, the label *performed language* has usually been employed to refer to what Coupland (*Style* 147) calls high performance. High performance events, or staged performances as Bell and Gibson (557) refer to them, are those that are scheduled, scripted, and rehearsed such as theatre plays, films, radio, and TV shows. While some researchers have been mainly interested in language in stage plays and different types of theatrical performance (Clark 44), some others have investigated language in the mass media (Coupland, "Dialect Stylization" 345; Johnstone, "Speaking Pittsburghese" 1; Lippi-Green 101-148). One

scholar within the latter group is Queen (219) who describes "performed media language" as "some kind of fictional representation". On the basis of this description, literary dialect is necessarily performed language since, what is literary dialect but a fictional representation of speech? Notwithstanding, the fact is that it has not usually been studied as performed language. The most likely reason for this is that literary dialect has been commonly associated with written literary language whereas performed language has dealt with spoken language used in the mass media for the most part. Despite this, it seems important to note that mass media does not only comprise broadcast, as is commonly believed, but also print. Books, for example, are also mass media. In the digital age, though, the focus is on image and sound, and this has led people to correlate mass media with the audiovisual element. A significant part of audiovisual media is scripted, which means that it begins with a written text, a script, in the same way that theatre originates from a written play. The written text is an essential component of performed language and cannot be dismissed. Along these lines, literary dialect, and literary language more generally, can be reasonably considered performed language and literature, a form of performance. Plays are usually accepted as performed language as long as they are staged. However, regardless of whether literary works are staged or not, literary dialect in literature is performed since it is a fictional representation of speech that is *staged* in the readers' minds.

3. DE- AND RE-CONSTRUCTING AUTHENTICITY

Researchers working with fictional representations of dialect in films and, particularly, in literature, have all discussed authenticity but many of them have not usually dealt with it in depth (Amador-Moreno and Terrazas-Calero 254; Cohen-Minnick 45; Ellis 129; Hakala 389; Hodson 219; Ives 149; Leigh 1; Walshe 9). One of the purposes of this paper is to further explore the concept of authenticity by carrying out a thorough review of existing research on this concept.

Dictionary entries for *authentic* contain words like reality, accuracy, originality, truth, purity and genuineness. These words often have positive connotations so that authenticity, by being related to them, does as well. Coupland illustrates this idea when he observes that authenticity "remains a quality of experience that we actively seek out, in most domains of life, material and social" ("Sociolinguistic Authenticities" 417) and adds that not being authentic becomes a criticism. Coupland's use of the term *quality* should not lead readers to believe that authenticity is an intrinsic quality. In fact, it has been shown to depend on evaluation. For something to be considered authentic, there must be some "consensus" (Coupland, "Sociolinguistic Authenticities" 419) and a "seal of approval" (Van Leeuwen 393), which is granted by some authority. This authorisation process is one of the five qualities that Coupland ascribes to authenticity. A further attribute, and one that is closely related to the previous one, is what he calls "value". Value refers to the cultural significance attached to the concept of authenticity and of

which society at large is responsible for. Thus, society's point of view must be taken into account when assessing the authenticity of some object or experience.

In philosophical terms, authenticity has been associated with truth, a very broad concept whose existence has been questioned throughout history. Truth is multifaceted, and one of those facets that is relevant when discussing authentic language concerns "the moral issue of a speaker being true to him-, or herself" (Coupland, "Sociolinguistic Authenticities" 422). This means that the speaker uses unmediated, spontaneous speech that connects with "the romantic belief that what people say spontaneously is more truthful that what they say after preparation and planning" (Van Leeuwen 394). Based on this idea, language employed in literary dialect can never be true or, by extension, authentic. In spite of this, literary dialect has been commonly judged in terms of authenticity (Coupland, "Mediated Performance" 284; Hodson 219; Toolan 31; Walshe 9) and therefore the relationship between them deserves close examination.

In the context of literary dialect studies, authenticity has been understood in the sense of the closeness of performed language to natural speech. However, the aforementioned distance between scripted and spontaneous language has prompted scholars to question the validity of authenticity as "an appropriate yardstick by which to judge literary dialects" (Hodson 220). This is a debate that has been going on for a long time and, while some researchers have been concerned with assessing how accurately dialects are portrayed in literary dialect (Amador-Moreno, *Study and Analysis* 4; Dolan 47; Ellis 128; McCafferty 342; Sullivan 195), more recent studies propose that it is neither appropriate nor pertinent to examine the real world authenticity of literary dialect (Hodson 235-236; Leigh 22; Pickles 22). Authenticity is now being reconsidered and approached from different angles so much so that the term *post-authenticity* has been coined (Leigh 23). Van Leeuwen (396), who could be seen as a forerunner of the post-authenticity approach, puts forward the idea that authenticity is not an objective attribute of speech, be it natural or performed, and that it depends on "validity". He goes on to say that "[a]uthentic talk, whether broadcast or otherwise, is talk which can be accepted as a source of truth, beauty, sincerity, and so on" (Van Leeuwen 396). In a similar vein, Leigh (42) rejects the long-established view that authenticity is intrinsic to literary dialect and proposes a new approach where authenticity finds its meaning in the reader-writer relationship. Apart from that, as some researchers have observed (Blake 14-16; Hodson 219; Toolan 31), the traditional notion of authenticity does not sustain itself due to the fact that it is impossible to make an accurate representation of natural speech in writing. Moreover, as Toolan (31) remarks, even linguistic transcriptions are just representations and therefore cannot be precise.

It is also important to take into account that writers are not linguists but artists so that, even if they have a very detailed knowledge of language, their purpose is to create a piece of art, not necessarily to be scientifically accurate (Ives 147). In the field of film dialogue, Walshe (202) endorses this idea and applies it to actors concluding that "an actor's work, like the drama of which it is a part, is … interpretive rather than scientific". Trilling (11) goes even further, claiming that "the

concept of authenticity can deny art itself, yet at the same time figures as the dark source of art". Trilling's claim seems to convey an ambivalent feeling towards authenticity which stems from the fact that, in spite of the incompatibility of the concept with aesthetics, art sometimes emerges from dark, condemnable events in everyday life which are valued for their very authenticity.

All of the above has led to a loss of interest among some scholars in real world authenticity and to a distancing from Ives's (174) statement that "a valid theory of literary dialect must be based on linguistic evidence". While it is true that linguistic accuracy is not the most important nor the only perspective from which literary dialect can be studied, it is one of the possible approaches and therefore should not be dismissed. Furthermore, Amador-Moreno ("How Can Corpora" 531) stresses the inextricable relationship that exists between literary dialect and natural speech by acknowledging that "whatever the precise characteristics of this representation of spoken language, verbal interaction in fiction can only be understood and interpreted in relation to the same rules of discourse that govern everyday interaction". It is legitimate, and sometimes even necessary, to compare literary dialect with actual speech. What cannot be maintained any longer is the thought that the closer literary dialect is to natural language, the more authentic and, therefore, the better (Hodson 236).

4. INAUTHENTIC LITERARY DIALECT: STEREOTYPED AND INCONSISTENT

When literary dialect is deemed inauthentic, it is commonly said to be guilty of stereotyping, inconsistency, or both. I will first concentrate on the former and then move on to the latter. Stereotypes are present in all aspects of life, including language. This explains why the notion of stereotype has been discussed and defined by many researchers over time. In the context of dialect rendering, Hodson (65-66) deals with stereotype in film and literature and provides a general definition of the concept:

> A basic definition of stereotyping is that it occurs when a group of people are characterized as possessing a homogeneous set of characteristics on the basis of, for example, their shared race, gender, sexual, orientation, class, religion, appearance, profession or place of birth. Stereotypes take a single aspect of a person's identity and attribute a whole set of characteristics to them on the basis of it, presenting these characteristics as being 'natural' and 'innate'.

This definition hints at one of the main characteristics of stereotypes: simplification. Stereotyping involves a process of simplification of a very complex reality where there are countless variables. This need to simplify derives from a more urgent need for classification. People group other people by categories in order to know what to expect from them. Although simplification has its share of advantages, stereotypes are usually criticised on its basis. Bucholtz ("Race and the Re-embodied" 259) disapproves of the *wigger* linguistic style in Hollywood films for being "a stereotyped and highly simplified fiction that draws heavily on intertextual references to previous

representations of this speech style circulating in popular culture". While there is no denying that stereotypes are condemned as too simple, some scholars have acknowledged their value and *raison d'être*. According to Hewstone and Giles (270), some researchers "accept stereotyping as a necessary, timesaving evil" since it helps to make quick predictions that determine people's behaviour. The reason why the word *evil* is used probably has to do with the fact that stereotypes are generally perceived as negative.

The field of literary dialect has retained this negative view of stereotyping which is frequently said to correlate with misrepresentation of dialect, and with lack of authenticity. Hodson (115) describes them as "the inaccurate rendering of a particular dialect based upon a small number of linguistic features". Insofar as stereotypes entail the exaggeration of some features and the exclusion of others, their representation of reality is always inaccurate to some degree. Dialects are reduced to a handful of features that become categorical. Many of those features are usually stigmatised and even outdated, that is, no longer found in the real-world dialect. The simplification, stigmatisation, and sometimes outdated nature of stereotypes lead linguists to consider them inauthentic representations.

The creation process of the stereotype of the Stage Irishman provides insight into how character and linguistic stereotypes are developed. According to Bartley (438), the development of the Stage Irishman can be divided into three phases: "the realistic, the indifferent and the false". In the first phase the construction of the character from real features takes place. The second phase involves writers adopting the character that has been already designed without discussion or modification. The real-world character on which the fictional character is based might have changed but the latter stays the same. Writers are no longer concerned about realism. Finally, by the third phase, a "conventional framework" has been established and new features are only included if they conform to that framework. Some aspects of the framework have probably become outdated and, therefore, false.

Stereotyping may be accidental or deliberate. In trying to represent a dialect, some writers may end up choosing the most salient traits and, more particularly, those that have become the object of metapragmatic discourse, which often acquire negative connotations. Conversely, many other authors choose clichés intentionally. One reason for this has to do with the usefulness of linguistic clichés as a tool for constructing characters quickly and effectively (Hodson 235; Kozloff 82). Lippi-Green (111-126), for example, shows how this is done in Disney animated films.

The effectiveness of linguistic stereotypes can be explained through the theory of enregisterment and indexicality (Agha 231; Silverstein 193). Enregisterment has been defined by Agha (231) as "processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms". Linguistic features are therefore enregistered when they become associated with particular social meanings. There are three different levels at which that association can occur and those levels correspond to Silverstein's orders of indexicality. Using Johnstone et al.'s taxonomy (82), the three levels are first-order, second-order and

third-order indexicality. First-order indexicality refers to the existence of a correlation between a linguistic form and a social and/or regional identity, a correlation which speakers are not aware of. Awareness comes into play with second-order indexicality. At this stage, speakers become conscious of the association between a linguistic variant and some social and/or regional traits and start using that variant in stylistically meaningful ways. The last level, that is, third-order indexicality, is reached when members of a speech community, and people from outside that community, link the use of certain features to a particular identity. It is at this stage when linguistic forms become stereotypes. In fact, in Labov's terminology (180), third-order indexicals are called *stereotypes* which he observes are "the overt topic of social comment". Their wide distribution and easy recognition within and outside the speech community and their ability to immediately establish or evoke a connection between features and a specific identity make linguistic stereotypes effective, especially for the construction of fictional characters.

Another possible reason why linguistic clichés are employed is because they can ensure a better understanding of the text. An attempt to represent every single distinctive feature of a dialect, besides being impossible, can easily result in incomprehensibility and this is counterproductive. A key principle of performances is to be understood by the audience, so much so that, as noted in some studies (Bell 192; Clark 162-163), changes to the language are often made during the course of a live performance in order to adapt it to the audience. Creators of performed dialect do not intend to represent each and every feature of the dialect they want to portray and that is why they need to select those that they consider most suitable for their purpose (Ives 153; Krapp 24). In line with this, Azevedo (510) points out that "literary dialect does not seek to replicate speech but rather to emulate it through a strategy of foregrounding specific features". A few features may be enough to evoke a particular dialect.

There is no denying that using sets of salient, stereotypical features help to delineate characters' identities very quickly as well as to make performances more intelligible to readers/audiences, but their use poses one main problem. Although linguistic stereotypes, and stereotypes more generally, may not be inherently negative, they end up being so by virtue of their long-standing association with characters that are portrayed as unintelligent, immoral, or low class. The origins of this association go back to the Renaissance and, more specifically, to Elizabethan theatre (Blake 93). Plays written during the Elizabethan period started to establish links between dialectal features and rural, uneducated characters for comic purposes, thus contributing to the creation of negative linguistic stereotypes. Even though the nineteenth century marked a change of direction for the representation of dialect in literature and writers started to use regional and social varieties for more serious purposes, portraying unlettered, comic characters as the users of dialect has remained the main trend. Furthermore, this trend has been replicated in telecinematic fiction. Kozloff (82) draws attention to this and points out that "the film industry has exacerbated negative stereotypes, and instead of being sensitive to the accuracy of nonstandard dialects, movies have historically exploited them to

represent characters as silly, quaint, or stupid". This serves as further proof of the similarity between literary and telecinematic fiction.

In spite of their negative nature, stereotypes are, and likely always will be, present because of, in the words of Hewstone and Giles (280), people's "insatiable need to categorization and simplification". Taking this need into account, these two scholars advocate for the substitution of negative stereotypes with positive ones instead of eliminating stereotypes completely. Whereas performed language usually contributes to the perpetuation of worn-out, stigmatised stereotypes, it is important to note that it can also challenge those stereotypes and even create new ones. This is due to the aforementioned potential of performances to establish indexical relationships between linguistic forms and social meanings (Bell and Gibson 561; Gibson 603; Johnstone, "Dialect Enregisterment" 660). Creators of performed language must know exactly the purpose of their dialect portrayals so that they can use (or not use) stereotypes accordingly.

Apart from stereotyping, literary dialect has been regularly attacked on the basis of inconsistency. The fictional representation of dialect in performance can be inconsistent in two ways. Inconsistency can be a matter of not using the same number of dialectal features throughout the performance, or it might have to do with the fact that sometimes there is variation within the speech of a character. The first type of inconsistency can be referred to as intratextual inconsistency and has to do with the fact that the greater number of features is generally employed "at the beginning of a text or chapter" (Hodson 173) or "when a character … is introduced, since that helps to categorize him, or at moments of stress, since that draws attention to his difference which may be one of the causes of the stress" (Blake 12).

Several reasons have been given as the cause for intratextual inconsistency. One of them has to do with "reader resistance", as Toolan (34) called it, which is due to a number of factors. First of all, readers are so used to the standard orthography and, more generally speaking, to standard language, that anything that diverges from it is faced with some defiance. Reader resistance is, at the same time, influenced by "a close cultural association between Standard English and literacy" (Hodson 107) and therefore translates into a negative attitude towards characters who speak regional dialects. Another factor that has an effect on reader resistance is the enhanced effort needed to read literary dialect or to listen to it in telecinematic fiction. Audiences sometimes struggle to understand literary dialect. Nevertheless, comprehension is usually prioritised even if it means being inconsistent. Blake (13) also attributes the lack of consistency to an attempt to prevent non-standard language from "becoming a caricature". Finally, Sullivan (209-210) provides three possible reasons for inconsistency. In his article on the representation of Hiberno-English in theatre, he identifies three explanations for it, the third one being a combination of the other two. The first reason is related to the aforementioned idea that the writer is an artist whose purposes are artistic. However, the second one points to real-speech variation as the source of inconsistency (Sullivan 209). This argument may serve to *validate* inconsistency and restrain criticism against literary dialect writers as will be further discussed below.

The second type of inconsistency, which is referred to as intraspeaker inconsistency in this paper, can take many forms. It can involve the use of different spellings for the same pronunciation, or the absence of features where they would be expected due to similarity with other parts of the performance where they are represented. One example can be given for illustration: a character may be represented as saying *above* sometimes and *aboove* some other times in the same literary work or film. But should this be blamed for inconsistency? And, above all, should inconsistency be considered a bad thing? Intraspeaker variation exists in real language and rather than being criticised, if anything, it is positively valued. People do not always speak–or pronounce words–in the same way, they have the ability to adjust their speech to different situations. In this sense then, inconsistency found in literary dialect may mirror real speech and should not be seen as something negative. Walshe (205) supports this view and highlights that "criticism of writers not being consistent in their respellings when employing literary dialect are not justified, as there can be a great deal of free variation both within the speech of different characters and within a single character's own speech".

Thus, it seems important to stress that stereotyping and inconsistency do not usually result from authors' carelessness or lack of linguistic knowledge. In most cases, everything is meticulously planned and there is always a reason behind everything that is done. That is precisely why care must be taken when saying that literary dialect is guilty of stereotyping or inconsistency. Rather than criticising literary dialect, scholars should reflect upon why the author has come to use specific stereotypes in the first place.

5. OLD AND NEW APPROACHES TO LITERARY DIALECT

Dialect has been and is very frequently used in literary and telecinematic fiction and its study has been the focus of different researcher profiles such as dialectologists, historical dialectologists, applied linguists, corpus stylistics linguists, and literary critics, to name a few. According to Kirk (203), there have been two traditional approaches to literary dialect:

> the first is stylistic and considers the role and effectiveness of the dialect and nonstandard within the literary work as a whole. The second is dialectological and considers the significance provided by the use of the dialect and nonstandard within the literary work as evidence for the dialect, often historical.

Literary criticism falls within the stylistic approach to literary dialect since literary critics do not pay attention to the authenticity of features, but instead analyse how this resource behaves within the whole text and whether the writer's goal in using it is achieved. However, this does not mean that literary critics have not discussed the issue of authenticity at all. Authenticity for them deserves study inasmuch as characters want to be perceived as real people. If the literary dialect employed deviates greatly from real language, readers are not able to empathise with

characters and the literary work is unsuccessful. This is especially true for literary realism whose aim is to mirror real life as closely as possible.

As regards the dialectological approach to literary dialect, it seems to have lost momentum, although literary dialect is still a valuable source of dialectal information, especially for those concerned with historical dialectology. A different linguistic perspective that has gained strength lately is that of sociolinguistics. Researchers in this discipline have been interested in the notions of *authentic speech* and *authentic speakers* (Bucholtz, "Sociolinguistic Nostalgia" 398; Coupland, "Sociolinguistic Authenticities" 417; Eckert 392), which were inherited from traditional dialectologists but which they have challenged, offering a new angle from which to look at them. They introduce the idea that authenticity is an "ideological construct" and urge that it is time to leave this "elephant" behind (Eckert 392). This does not mean that authenticity should be abandoned but, rather, as Bucholtz ("Sociolinguistic Nostalgia" 407) indicates, that sociolinguistics should "devote more time to figuring out how such individuals and groups have come to be viewed as authentic in the first place, and by whom – a process that brings together issues of social structure and individual agency that are increasingly central in sociolinguistics". She also agrees with Coupland ("Sociolinguistic Authenticities" 419) and Van Leeuwen (396) that authenticity is not an inherent feature of an object but a quality that is granted. The difference between Coupland and Van Leeuwen, on the one hand, and Bucholtz, on the other, is that whereas the former two scholars attribute the power to grant authenticity to some kind of "authority", the latter claims that this power also belongs to "language users and their audiences", as well as to sociolinguists ("Sociolinguistic Nostalgia" 408). More recently, sociolinguists, although not forgetting about authenticity, have concentrated on how dialect representation in fiction contributes to the construction of social identities and to the perpetuation and transformation of language attitudes.

Whether literary or linguistic, research on literary dialect has usually focused on writers, on how they use it and for what purpose, while the reader/audience is seldom considered. Despite this, it is important to stress that readers/audiences are an integral part of literary and telecinematic fiction since these as any other types of performance need to be understood as a dialogic act where meaning-making is only possible provided that there is a communicator and a listener. In her study of literary dialect in Victorian fiction, Pickles (184) insists that "it is the response of the reader to the literary dialect which contributes to the creation of meaning in the text". This can also be applied to audiences in the case of literary dialect in telecinematic fiction. Meaning does not only depend on the writer but also on the reader/audience. In a way, the reader/audience, through interpretation, gives meaning to the text or, at least, completes its meaning. Moreover, as stated earlier, the addressees have a say when it comes to authenticity because they play a role in the authentication process.

Although there is still much work to be done, the role of readers and their relationship with literary dialect are being increasingly investigated in the field of literary criticism (Coplan 141; Keen 207; Leigh 42; Pickles 141). On the other hand, within the area of linguistics, audience has been mainly studied in relation to how

it influences the construction and delivery of performed language following Bell's work. There is, nonetheless, some research that explores audiences' responses, but these works usually involve live performances (Clark 44). There is a dearth of studies of reader/audience responses and reactions to literary dialect employed in literary and telecinematic discourse. Future work should attempt to fill in this gap since working with real readers/audiences can prove very fruitful. A possible approach to this, and the one I propose here, is to analyse literary dialect through the lens of language attitudes. This interdisciplinary approach would allow researchers to test if readers/audiences evaluate fictional portrayals of dialect as authentic or inauthentic, as well as to find out their attitudes towards those portrayals in terms of the evaluative dimensions of status, attractiveness, and dynamism. In addition, this approach can also shed some light on the enregisterment of represented features. A comparison of the way the writer enregisters certain characteristics and how readers/audiences understand (or not) that enregisterment would also be worthy of study.

An appropriate methodology for this interdisciplinary approach would include questionnaires of the kind used in language attitudes research and sociolinguistic interviews. Nonetheless, there are other resources available that offer information about people's responses to fictional representations of dialects in films and literature such as internet fora, blogs, and even social networks. Vaughan and Moriarty (22), for instance, use comments people make on YouTube clips and also Facebook feedback, which they classify as "meta-commentary on the performances", as linguistic data in their analysis of the language employed by the Rubberbandits, a comedy duo from Limerick. Furthermore, many scholars have recently come to explore language on YouTube (Androutsopoulos, "Participatory culture" 47), Twitter (Zappavigna 788), Facebook (West and Trester 138) and the like. This type of information can be very illuminating, and one of its advantages is that it can be more easily collected than questionnaire and interview data. However, it also has its drawbacks, some of which have to do with its very varied nature, which, although beneficial in many aspects, can make it very difficult to group responses according to similarity and, as a consequence, to analyse them quantitatively. Moreover, the fact that sometimes the available information about the users who write the comments is very limited can be another disadvantage.

It must be observed that the above mentioned online resources do not only provide users' responses to performed language, in the sense of representation of dialect, but are themselves sources of performed language in so far as they are public and have an audience. These resources, referred to as new media, constitute a new and fruitful area for the study of language use, performance, enregisterment, fictional representation of dialect, and language attitudes.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper reviews the two related concepts of literary dialect and authenticity and offers new perspectives from which to look at them. With regard to the first of

these concepts, following Walshe (8) and Hodson (15), I argue that representations of dialectal varieties, whether in literary or in telecinematic fiction, are examples of literary dialect. The rationale behind this claim rests upon the similarities that exist between language in literary fiction and language in telecinematic fiction, both of which can be seen as performed language. Research on language in performance usually focuses on the role of the audience (Bell 145). Thus, when viewing literary dialect in the context of performed language, exploring audience response to literary dialect seems indispensable. The audience plays a fundamental role in validating authenticity. No matter how authentic creators of literary and telecinematic fiction think their portrayal is, it will not be successful if the audience does not validate its authenticity. Despite being an underresearched area, audience's perceptions of literary dialect, and more specifically, of the authenticity of literary dialect can help to further understand what it means to be authentic. Furthermore, audiences' perspectives on authenticity can complement the more traditional approach to authenticity which, as pointed out above, consists in measuring how close a fictional portrayal of dialect is to the real-world variety. This would allow scholars to investigate whether there is correspondence between what can be referred to as produced authenticity, that is, the linguistic accuracy with which the creator of literary dialect represents a particular variety, and perceived authenticity, that is, the authenticity audiences bestow on the portrayal.

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