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ASOCIACIÓN ESPAÑOLA DE ESTUDIOS
ANGLO-NORTEAMERICANOS
edita: Alejandra Moreno Álvarez

Tributes Literature
and Culture

A.S. Byatt
(1936-2023)

**The Joys of
Teaching
Literature**

Research

**Adjective Ordering
Theoretical and
Experimental
Perspectives**

ASOCIACIÓN ESPAÑOLA DE ESTUDIOS
ANGLO-NORTEAMERICANOS

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nexus
2024. 01

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UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA

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ÍNDICE

TRIBUTES
LITERATURE AND
CULTURE

16

CARMEN LARA RALLO
Universidad de Málaga

***“Stories Are Like Genes”: A
Tribute to A.S. Byatt (1936-2023)***

30

SARA MARTÍN ALEGRE
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

***On the Experience of Writing
a Blog: The Joys of Teaching
Literature***

35

DANIEL GARCÍA VELASCO
Universidad de Oviedo

ELNORA TEN WOLDE
University of Graz

***Adjective Ordering: Theoretical
and Experimental Perspectives***

RESEARCH
PAPER LANGUAGE
AND LINGUISTICS

43

MARÍA JOSÉ ESTEVE-RAMOS
Universitat Jaume I

***Be boke of ypocras in Late
Middle English Manuscripts***

Irene Diego Rodríguez

BOOK REVIEWS
LANGUAGE AND
LINGUISTICS

ÍNDICE

46

BLANCA FERNÁNDEZ SORIANO
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

***Pejorative Suffixes and
Combining Forms in English***

José A. Sánchez Fajardo

51

SOCORRO IBÁÑEZ MIRALLES DE IMPERIAL
Universitat Pompeu Fabra

***Ten Years of English Learning
at School***

Elsa Tragant and Carmen Muñoz

BOOK REVIEWS
LITERATURE
AND CULTURE

55

CRISTINA MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ
Universidad de Salamanca

***Ecoxicanismo: autoras
chicanas y justicia
medioambiental***

Maite Aperribay-Bermejo

60

MARÍA AMO HERNÁNDEZ
Universidad de Huelva

***Género, Heterodoxia y
Traducción: Difusión del
Ocultismo en España y en el
Ámbito Europeo (1840-1920)***

Rosaño Arias y Juan Jesús Zaro (eds.)

ÍNDICE

65

SIMONA LEONE
Universitat de València***The Irish Short Story at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century: Tradition, Society and Modernity***

Madalina Armie

70

PAULA VILLALBA PÉREZ
Universitat de València***The Owl and the Nightingale***

Simon Armitage (trans.)

75

ISABEL ALONSO-BRETO
Universitat de Barcelona***Abecedario del posthumanismo***

Elisa Baioni, Lidia María Cuadrado Payeras y Manuela Macelloni (eds.)

79

MARTINA PERMANYER RODRÍGUEZ
Universidad Complutense de Madrid***American Borders: Inclusion and Exclusion in US Culture***

Paula Barba Guerrero and Mónica Fernández Jiménez (eds.)

ÍNDICE

84

ELENA CORTÉS FARRUJIA
Universitat de Barcelona***Inidigenous Journeys,
Transatlantic Perspectives:
Relational Worlds in
Contemporary Native
American Literature***

Anna M. Brígido-Corachán

89

DANIEL FLOQUET
Universidade do Porto***Narratives of the Unspoken in
Contemporary Irish Fiction:
Silences that Speak***María Teresa Caneda-Cabrera and José Carregal-Romero
(eds.)

94

BÁRBARA JIMÉNEZ DURÁN
Universidad de Málaga***The Emmett Till Trauma
in US Fiction: Psychological
Realism, Magic Realism, and
the Spectral***

Martín Fernández Fernández

98

OLGA FERNÁNDEZ-VICENTE
UPV/EHU***Deirdre Madden: New Critical
Perspectives***

Anne Fogarty and Maïsol Morales-Ladrón (eds.)

ÍNDICE

102

M. MAGDALENA FLORES QUESADA
Universidad de Málaga

***Embodied Vulnerabilities in
Literature and Film***

Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández and Miriam Fernández-
Santiago (eds.)

107

MIRIAM BORHAM-PUYAL
Universidad de Salamanca

***“Song Up Out of Spain”:
Poems in Tribute to Ezra
Pound/ “Canción desde
España”: Poemas en
homenaje a Ezra Pound***

John Gery and Viorica Patea (eds.)

112

LOLA ARTACHO MARTÍN
Universidad de Málaga

***Unhappy Beginnings:
Narratives of Precarity,
Failure, and Resistance in
North American Texts***

Isabel González Díaz and Fabián Orán-Llarena (eds.)

117

MAR GALLEGO
Universidad de Huelva

***Pathologizing Black Bodies.
The Legacy of Plantation
Slavery***

Constante González Groba, Ewa Barbara Luczak and
Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis (eds.)

ÍNDICE

123OLGA FERNÁNDEZ-VICENTE
UPV/EHU***Love, Activism and the
Respectable Life of Alice
Dunbar-Nelson***

Tara T. Green

126GERARDO RODRÍGUEZ SALAS
Universidad de Granada***Passionate Professing: The
Context and Practice of
English Literature***

Sara Martín Alegre

130RICHARD JORGE
UPV/EHU***Detoxing Masculinity in
Anglophone Literature and
Culture: In Search of Good
Men***

Sara Martín and M. Isabel Santaulària (eds.)

134MARTA MIQUEL-BALDELLOU
Universidad de Lleida***Revisiones posmodernas del
gótico en la literatura y las
artes visuales***José María Mesa Villar, Ana González Rivas Fernández
y Antonio José Miralles Pérez (eds.)

ÍNDICE

140JORGE LUIS BUENO ALONSO
Universidade de Vigo***Shakespeare's First Folio
Revisited: Quadricentennial
Essays***

Remedios Perni (ed.)

144JOSÉ RUIZ MAS
Universidad de Granada***British Periodicals and
Spanish Literature. Mapping
the Spanish Canon***María Eugenia Perojo Arronte and Círistina Flores
Moreno (eds.)**149**LETICIA DEL TORO GARCÍA
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria***El Biopic Feminista
Afromericano: una
Herramienta Empoderadora***

María Platas Alonso

154MARÍA DURÁN EUSEBIO
Instituto de Lenguas Modernas, Universidad San Jorge***Black Women Centre Stage.
Diasporic Solidarity in
Contemporary Black British
Theatre***

Paola Prieto López

ÍNDICE

158

SOFÍA MARTINICORENA
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

***La expansión y revisión
de un mito. El Oeste
norteamericano en la
literatura española***

David Río (ed.)

163

SARA MARTÍN ALEGRE
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

***Vivir sola es morir. El
modernismo comunitario de
Katherine Mansfield***

Gerardo Rodríguez Salas

167

MARÍA JOSÉ COPERÍAS AGUILAR
Universitat de València

***Intersections of the Global
and the Local in Slovak
Immigrant Communities in
Britain***

Július Rozenfeld

ÍNDICE

171

M^a VICTORIA ARENAS VELA
 Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia
 (UNED)

***Última Parada: La estética
 del terror radiofónico o cómo
 pasar del microrrelato a la
 lectura dramatizada***

Francisco Javier Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez

174

INMACULADA PAZ HURTADO
 Universidad de Málaga

***Determining Wuthering
 Heights: Ideology, Intertexts,
 Tradition***

María Valero Redondo

179

FAHAD GH M A ALYAQOUT
 Universidade de Vigo

***Predicting Pitch Prominence
 in Tri-Constituent Compound
 Nouns: A Speech Perception
 and Production Analysis***

181

PEDRO HUMÁNEZ BERRAL
 Universidad de Cantabria

***Individual Differences in
 English Pronunciation
 Acquisition: A Focus on CLIL,
 EFL and Gender in Primary
 Education***

184TIMOTHY WILLIAM LAWRENCE
Universidad de Cantabria

***A Meaning-Based Analysis
Derived from Método de
los Relojes Employing
Structural-Functional
Linguistics through CEFR
Level Descriptors to Indicate
Development of Syntactic
Complexity in L2 Written Texts***

186ANA EUGENIA SANCHO ORTIZ
Universidad de Zaragoza

***Expert Identity and Science
Dissemination on Social
Media: The Study of Individual
Identity Construction through
Multisemiotic Resources on X
and Instagram***

ÍNDICE

ABSTRACTS
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023)
LITERATURE/CULTURE

188

MARÍA ABIZANDA CARDONA
Universidad de Zaragoza

***Reading the Posthuman
in Crime Fiction***

190

CLAUDIA GARCÍA PAJÍN
Universidad de Oviedo

***Enraged Young Women: A New
Wave of Angry Anglo-American
Literature***

192

ANGIE GÓMEZ GARCÍA
Universidade de Santiago de Compostela

***“Everything about me invites
you in”: the Monster and its
Creation; Masculinities and
Viewer Reception in Dracula,
The Vampire Diaries, Fifty Shades
of Grey and After***

194

MARÍA LÓPEZ GONZÁLEZ
Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia
(UNED)/ Universidad Alfonso X el Sabio

***Other Indias: Heterodox
visions and representations
in Indo-Anglian or Anglo-
Indian Writing in English***

ÍNDICE

196

MARTA MARTÍN AMOR
Universidad de Alcalá***The Construction of the
Female Experience in
Contemporary Feminist Irish
Drama***

198

PAULA RUSTARAZO GARZÓN
Universidad de Málaga***Maternity, Fertility and Loss in
Contemporary Memoir***

200

ASUNCIÓN SÁNCHEZ PADILLA
Universidad Complutense de Madrid***Ideological Reception of
Translated LGBTI+ Theatre
in the Post-Franco Era:
British and American Plays
on the Spanish Stage***

202

IRIA SEIJAS-PÉREZ
Universidad de Alcalá***Queering Girlhood:
Representations of Sapphic
Adolescents in Contemporary
Irish Young Adult Fiction in
English***

ÍNDICE

204PAULA SERRANO ELENA
Universidad de Zaragoza***Rethinking Motherhood:
The Representation of
the Intersection between
Psychic Suffering and Early
Motherhood in Post-Pandemic
US Literature*****206**SARA TABUYO SANTA CLARA
Universidade de Vigo***An Intersectional Approach to
Girlhood in The Handmaid's
Tale Franchise: Beyond
Gender Constraints and (Mis-)
Represented Narratives***

CARMEN LARA RALLO

UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA

***“Stories Are
Like Genes”:
A Tribute to
A.S. Byatt
(1936-2023)***

“Stories are like genes, they keep part of us alive after the end of our story.”

(Byatt [2000] 2001, 166)

There is an object on my desk that reminds me of A.S. Byatt. It is a round stone, blackish and full of holes, which I found on Whitby beach, one of the Northern English settings recurrent in her fiction. The stone, which is quite heavy, reminds me of the “almost spherical stones” that appear in the background of Randolph Henry Ash’s portrait in *Possession. A Romance* (1990): “There was a heap of rough geological specimens, including two almost spherical stones, a little like cannon balls, one black and one a sulphurous yellow, some ammonites and trilobites, [...]” (Byatt [1990] 1991c, 16). This novel, winner of the 1990 Booker Prize, and a best-selling title, is considered a ground-breaking text in neo-Victorian fiction, as it follows two contemporary scholars in their (re-)discovery of the fictional Victorian poets Ash and Christabel LaMotte. *Possession* was my first contact with Byatt’s writings: it was one of the set readings in the Novel course that Professor Pilar Hidalgo taught to us in the third year of the Degree in English Studies (at that time, *Licenciatura en Filología Inglesa*). I remember reading the novel page after page without being able to put it down, and later listening to Pilar Hidalgo’s enthusiastic account of the wide-ranging variety of themes, references, and echoes present in Byatt’s fiction. From that moment on, my interest in her work has never faltered, and I have delighted in reading and critically exploring her novels, short stories, and essays¹. Last November (2023), when the sad news of her passing away reached me, I felt a deep sense of loss.

Dame Antonia Susan Duffy (née Drabble) was born in Sheffield in 1936, the eldest daughter of a QC and a literature teacher, and sister to the writer Margaret Drabble, with whom she maintained a difficult and strained relationship. A lonely child, suffering from asthma made Byatt spend much time in bed, which she devoted to reading: “Yet I, as a child, [...] was in some way kept alive by fictions. [...] I read Scott, Dickens, Jane Austen, I lived in those worlds. I told myself long tales of other lives, in which I lived with other people in other worlds, from fairytales through epics to the seventeenth century” (Byatt [1991] 1993, 21-22). She was educated at a

¹ Some of my latest publications on Byatt’s short fiction include “Women’s Transcultural Experience in A.S. Byatt’s Short Stories” (In Sacido-Romero, Jorge and Laura M^a Lojo-Rodríguez, eds. 2018. *Gender and Short Fiction: Women’s Tales in Contemporary Britain*. London: Routledge, 253-70), “Traces and Polytemporality in A.S. Byatt’s Short Stories” (*Journal of the Short Story in English* 76, Spring 2021, 143-61), “Wonderful Creatures and Liminality in A.S. Byatt’s Short Fiction” (In Cheira, Alexandra, ed. 2023. *Wonder Tales in the Fiction of A.S. Byatt*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 1-16), and “La transición hacia el envejecimiento femenino sobre el trasfondo del arte: la narrativa breve de A.S. Byatt” (*Nerter* 38-39, Primavera-Verano 2023, 33-41). My monograph on the Quartet, *Tetralogía de la memoria. Historia e intertextualidad en A.S. Byatt*, was awarded the “Enrique García Díez” research prize by AEDEAN in 2007.

boarding school in York, a painful experience projected onto several stories of her first collection, *Sugar & Other Stories* (1987)—notably, “Racine and the Tablecloth” and “The Changeling”—, and later graduated with honours at Cambridge University. After a postgraduate year at Bryn Mawr College (Philadelphia), she started a PhD on seventeenth-century metaphors—described by her as “*the most beautiful thing I had come across*” (Tonkin 1999, 16-17)—under the supervision of Dame Helen Gardner at Oxford University. The dissertation was left unfinished (although Byatt received Honorary Doctorates from numerous universities in the course of her life), partly due to the fact that “Helen Gardner [...] believed, and frequently said, that a woman had to be dedicated like a nun, to achieve anything as a mind” while Byatt “didn’t want to be, and wasn’t capable of being, an unsexed mind” (Byatt 1991b, ix).

Although unfinished, the dissertation provided Byatt with a rich imagery, particularly that of gardens, that found its way into her fiction, especially in the first volume of her Quartet, *The Virgin in the Garden* (1978). Moreover, she never left her academic vocation behind, not even in the difficult years of her first marriage and motherhood, when after marrying the economist Ian Byatt in 1959, she became “a very desperate faculty wife in Durham. I had two children in two years—I was 25, and thought I was old, ‘past it’” (Byatt 1991b, xiii). Influenced by her mother’s intellectual frustration, Byatt did not quit her work as a lecturer or as a critic: in the 1960s, she lectured in the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at the University of London and at the Central School of Art and Design, and in 1965 she published her first critical book, *Degrees of Freedom*, devoted to the early novels of her admired Iris Murdoch, who has been acknowledged as one of her main referents, together with George Eliot and Marcel Proust (Kelly 1996, 7).

In the 1960s, she also published her first novels, *Shadow of a Sun* (1964)—later republished as *The Shadow of the Sun* in 1991—and *The Game* (1967), and from that moment onwards she could not separate her critical and fictional dimensions as a writer: “I *need* to write a theoretical book at the same time as I write a novel. The gap between creative writers and critics has closed markedly in the last ten or twenty years” (Dusinberre 1983, 193; my italics). This is reflected in her alternating publication of critical texts, novels and short story collections—for example, her last work, the anthology of short fiction *Medusa’s Ankles* (2021), followed the publication of *Ragnarok: The End of the Gods* (2011) and *Peacock & Vine: Fortuny and Morris in Life and at Work* (2016) —, as well as in the intellectually demanding quality of her works of fiction, which has led critics to describe her writings as examples of “ficticism” (Kelly 1996, 115) or “critical storytelling” (Alfer and Edwards De Campos 2010, 3-4). “I am not an academic who happens to have written a novel,” she stated in the wake of the success of *Possession*, “I am a novelist who happens to be quite good academically” (qtd. in Stout 1991).

Writers and academics, indeed, populate her novels and short stories, as attested already by *The Shadow of the Sun*, where the protagonist, Anna Severell, is a young writer who struggles to find her own voice in the shadow of her father. Likewise, several of the narratives collected in *Sugar*

& *Other Stories* feature fictional and real-life writers, such as Mrs Smith in “On the Day that E.M. Forster Died”—who is interested in “[s]tories, plots. History, facts” (Byatt [1987] 1995b, 130)—, and Robert Browning (together with allusions to Henry James) in “Precipice-Encurled,” a forerunner of *Possession* and *Angels & Insects* (1992) in their recreation of the Victorian past. These works are particularly interesting in the light of Byatt’s articulation of the dichotomy between fact and fiction, which became the object of her critical reflection in “True Stories and the Facts in Fiction”, from *On Histories and Stories* (2000), an essay “about the relations of precise scholarship and fiction [...] [which] reflects the moment to moment preoccupations with problems of accuracy and invention of the writing” (Byatt [2000] 2001, 92). “Precipice-Encurled” foreshadows *Possession* in its fictionalisation of the scholarly process of reconstructing a historical narrative by piecing together and interpreting the traces of the past. As part of those traces, Browning’s dramatic monologues can be heard in the story in the same way as Tennyson’s voice in *In Memoriam* becomes audible in “The Conjugal Angel,” the second novella of *Angels & Insects*.

Beyond her neo-Victorian texts, writers, like scholars, continued emerging throughout Byatt’s writing career. If the Quartet gives life to the fictional Alexander Wedderburn—whose plays *Astraea* and *The Yellow Chair* mediate the intertextual dialogue with, respectively, the iconography of Queen Elizabeth I and Van Gogh’s paintings and letters, in *The Virgin in the Garden* and *Still Life* (1985)—, Olive Wellwood is characterised in *The Children’s Book* (2009) in the light of how “the real world sprouted stories whenever she looked at it” (82). Olive, like Agatha Mond in *A Whistling Woman* (2002) or Cicely Fox in “Raw Material” (from *Little Black Book of Stories*, 2003), is one of Byatt’s female characters depicted in terms of her professional or aesthetic engagement with the arts of writing and storytelling.

Storytelling is precisely the focus of study of Gillian Perholt, the protagonist of “The Djinn in the Nightingale’s Eye” (the title piece of Byatt’s 1994 collection of stories), who as a narratologist examines and exchanges Eastern and Western stories, from the *Thousand and One Nights* to *The Canterbury Tales*. Like Gillian, other fictional academics have found their way into Byatt’s narratives, with examples such as “Loss of Face” (from *Sugar & Other Stories*), where Celia Quest is a lecturer in English literature that discusses landmarks of Western culture with an Eastern audience, and *The Biographer’s Tale* (2000). This novel portrays Phineas Nanson as a scholar working on the fictional biographer Scholes Destry-Scholes, who in turn is interested in historical characters like Carl Linnaeus, Francis Galton, and Henrik Ibsen, and so the “bioquest” narrative “displays the construction or reconstruction of the past doubled with the construction or reconstruction of the self” (Parey 2018, para. 12).

Nanson’s failure in reconstructing the biographer’s life in facts, beyond his “textually constructed identity” (Boccardi 2013, 86), signals the recurrent presence of the themes of loss and failure in Byatt’s fiction. This can be already detected in *The Game*, another of her texts placing writers and academics on the same level. It portrays the rivalry of the Corbett sisters, the writer Julia and

Cassandra, a medievalist teaching at Oxford who displays a fascination for the Arthurian myth that becomes the basis for the intertextual dialogue with the medieval literary tradition. In the novel, the Corbett sisters' lives until young adulthood were ruled by the Game, a fantasy world of chivalry and romance that consisted of a series of cards and clay figures representing the characters of the Arthurian myth. Cassandra created a fantastic sequence of Malory-like stories dominated by Sir Lancelot and Morgan le Fay, whereas Julia composed narratives about "the hopeless passion of Elaine of Astolat" (Byatt [1967] 1992, 46). Significantly, the Arthurian echoes embedded in *The Game*—particularly those of the *Morte D'Arthur*—are filtered to a great extent through Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, whose story of "Elaine"—and its earlier variant of "The Lady of Shalott"—captured the Victorian imagination, and so it found its way into *Possession*. In Byatt's best-selling novel, the pre-eminence of this Arthurian myth as adapted by Tennyson is reflected in the character of Christabel LaMotte, who explicitly identifies herself with the figure of the Lady of Shalott. Like Cassandra in *The Game*, Christabel embraces a self-imposed seclusion where she gives free rein to her artistic vocation, leading a Lady-like existence of confinement and artistry that is only upset by the appearance of the Lancelot-figure of Randolph Henry Ash.

As in the case of the Corbett sisters, literature also presides over the lives of the Potters, the central family in Byatt's Quartet, which comprises *The Virgin in the Garden*, *Still Life*, *Babel Tower* (1996), and *A Whistling Woman* (2002). More than ten years elapsed between the publication of *The Game* and that of *The Virgin in the Garden*, since although Byatt began working on this first issue of the Quartet in the 1960s, it did not come out until 1978. *The Virgin in the Garden* was Byatt's first acclaimed novel, and it enabled her to become a full-time writer in 1983. In the interim between *The Game* and the first volume of the Quartet, Byatt divorced in 1969 (although she kept writing under her first husband's surname), married the economist Peter John Duffy, and had two more daughters. Above all, in these years, the writer's life was shattered by the death of her eleven-year-old son, Charles, who was run over by a drunk driver in 1972. Shortly afterwards, she became a full-time lecturer in English and American Literature at University College, London (Senior Lecturer in 1981); as she expressed: "I think what saved me was the students" (qtd. in Stout 1991). Byatt never fully recovered from this devastating episode, which "remade" her life, as she put it in her poem "A Dog, a Horse, a Rat" (1991):

[...]

A dog, a horse, a rat

I see in bliss and fear

Live fur and bone delight

Wet eye and curling ear

But every breath I draw

In pleasure or in pain

Sings in my flesh and blood

He will not come again.

[...]

Byatt's desperation at the painful absence of her son was given voice again in her 1994 poem "Dead Boys" ("I am a cold grey house / In every room a boy / Gestures and halts and falls / Again and again and again"), and it lies behind the motif of lost children in her fiction, like Alys in "The Thing in the Forest" (from *Little Black Book of Stories*) and Tom in *The Children's Book*, or even more poignantly, the nameless child of "The July Ghost," from *Sugar & Other Stories*. This story depicts the uncanny events in a house haunted by the ghost of a boy that, like Charles Byatt, was killed in a road accident. The boy's mother is traumatised by the loss of her son, and she lives in "a continuous present tense" (Byatt [1987] 1995b, 47), trying unsuccessfully to delete all the traces of his past existence, and at the same time waiting for him every day. The hopelessness of this action permeates "A Dog, A Horse, a Rat" with the repetition of "thou wilt come no more", and the evoked image of King Lear in his unbearable grief at Cordelia's untimely death. The intertextual presence of *King Lear* in this poem is particularly significant because Shakespeare's tragedy, together with *The Winter's Tale*, is one of the Shakespearean referents recurrent throughout the Quartet. Byatt's ambitious project originated in her attempt to write a novel like *Middlemarch* in the twentieth century—that is, a novel with "large characters, wide cultural relevance, and complex language" (Dusinberre 1983, 187), and it changed in the forty-year period of its composition "from a backward glance at the power of Shakespeare's and Milton's English and England, to a form excited by the mystery of scientific discovery" (Byatt 2005, 297).

The Quartet develops a rich dialogue with recent English history, addressing the political events and socio-cultural processes and changes from 1953 to 1970: from the coronation of Elizabeth II to the feminist movement in the 1960s and early 1970s, exploring the traces of the Second World War, the conflicts of Suez and Hungary, Harold Wilson's government, the counter-culture, the growing importance of television, and the students' revolts in 1968. This dialogue with history is articulated in terms of the interaction between fact and fiction through three main strategies: the attention to the way in which historical events affect characters, the evocation of socio-cultural processes and changes, as perceived by the characters, and the development of parallelisms between real and fictional events and processes.

In doing so, it is possible to argue that Byatt offers here a cultural history of women, as Pilar Hidalgo has contended (2002, 79 *passim*), which is very interesting in the light of Byatt's controversial relationship with feminism and feminist criticism. Although the writer repeatedly showed her opposition to some aspects of women's studies, feeling uneasy with the dogmatic

dimension of feminism, her interest in female experience is evident throughout her production. Indeed, even if Byatt's works are not informed by a feminist message or ideology, her involvement with feminism becomes evident not only in her treatment of gender "as a constitutive cultural force" (Franken 2001, xiv), but above all in her explicitness in providing her female characters with their own voices (Todd 1997, 55-56), since "[h]er sense of female identity is expressed directly, through the bodies, minds, and voices of her characters" (Campbell 2004, 21). As Byatt herself declared, "[a]ll my books are about the woman artist—in that sense, they're terribly feminist books" (Tredell 1994, 66).

In the Quartet, the central woman artist is Frederica Potter, who in *Babel Tower* (which portrays more than one hundred characters) begins the composition of *Laminations*, following William Burroughs' collage-like technique. This volume of the Quartet is particularly rich in its web of literary connections, although the Quartet as a whole illustrates Byatt's view of her books as "thick with the presence of other books, [...] I feel that out there in the world there must be other people who read as passionately as I do and actually know that books constantly interweave themselves with other books and the world" (Wachtel 1993, 77-78). Indeed, Byatt's curiosity and passion for reading went beyond literature, encompassing other arts like painting and other discourses like genetics and neuroscience, as epitomised by *Still Life* and *A Whistling Woman*.

On the one hand, *Still Life* (which is, probably, my favourite Byatt novel), grew out of a two-sided project. Firstly, Byatt wanted to depict a textual accident as shockingly unanticipated as any such disaster is in reality, angry as she was "with D.H. Lawrence for declaring in *Women in Love* that there were no accidents, that every man made his own fate" (Byatt [2000] 2001, 85). The narration of the accident and its lethal consequences is movingly mediated by the image of a flying sparrow from Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, as well as by the dialogue with *King Lear*, as in "A Dog, A Horse, A Rat," proving how, as Byatt stated, "[death] just happens – not necessarily to the person who deserves to be dead" (qtd. in Greenfield 1989, 46). Secondly, Byatt's project in *Still Life* was to write a novel in a direct style, free from rhetorical artifice or references, but in the process she realised that it was not possible due to the metaphorical and connotative nature of language: "I had the idea that this novel could be written innocently, without recourse to reference to other people's thoughts, without, as far as possible, recourse to simile or metaphor. This turned out to be impossible: [...] We all remake the world as we see it, as we look at it" (Byatt [1985] 1995a, 131). As a result, *Still Life* explores the limits between the verbal and the visual, placing Van Gogh's artistic production as its main referent, while signalling Byatt's lifelong interest in the art of painting.

The centrality of painting in Byatt's production becomes clear not only in her works of fiction, but also in critical texts such as *Portraits in Fiction* (2001), where she discovers an inspiring relationship of opposition or complementarity between literature and painting, that she describes as "that element in the visual which completely defeats language" (Tonkin 1999,

17). This perspective underlies her use of visual metaphors and icons as structural components in her writings, as well as her ekphrastic dialogue with artworks of all times, among which the most influential ones are those by Van Gogh, Matisse, and Velázquez (Worton 2001, 20). If Van Gogh's life and works become the centripetal force of *Still Life* (with around twenty of his paintings being verbally visualised in the course of the novel), Matisse and Velázquez figure prominently in Byatt's second and fourth volumes of short fiction: *The Matisse Stories* (1993) and *Elementals. Stories of Fire and Ice* (1998). The three narratives collected in *The Matisse Stories* explore different dimensions of the dichotomy male vs. female (such as the process of ageing, artistic creativity, or the tension between the existential and the aesthetic) in the light of Matisse's paintings and his representation of colour and female corporeality. For example, "Medusa's Ankles" (which provides the title of Byatt's 2021 anthology of short fiction) depicts the protagonist's rejection of her ageing self through the connections with *Le Nu Rose* and *Le chevelure*, while playing at the same time with the classical myth of the Gorgon and the Biblical episode of Susannah and the Elders (Walezak 2021, 44).

In this same line, "A Lamia in the Cévennes," from *Elementals*, introduces a painter who is fascinated with the liminal condition of a lamia, a mythical creature in-between a woman and a snake (like the Melusine in *Possession*), whose hybridity is anticipated by the image preceding the story, Matisse's *Sirène*. In the setting of Cévennes in Southern France—where Byatt also had a summer house to "write well [in] the combination of heat, light and solitude" (Byatt 2004b)—, the painter finds a solution to his creative crisis in his encounter with the lamia, perceived as an object of aesthetic wonder with vivid, Matisse-like, and changing colours. The experience of a painter also plays a key role in the closing narrative of *Elementals*, "Christ in the House of Martha and Mary," one of my favourite stories by Byatt. This ekphrastic tale takes as its main referent Velázquez's *Cristo en casa de Marta y María*—the painting chosen by Byatt as "Author's Picture Choice" in the *National Gallery News* of November 1993—to reflect on the multiple dimensions of artistry, while recuperating at the same time "the personal Velázquez lost to history" (Wallhead 2007, 170). As she imagines the circumstances behind the creation of the painting, Byatt articulates a verbal visualisation of the artwork in a passage on the transformative power of art that I find particularly appealing:

There they both were, in the foreground at the left. She herself [Concepción] was admonishing the girl [Dolores], pointing with a raised finger to the small scene at the top right-hand corner of the painting –was it through a window, or over a sill, or was it an image of an image on a wall? it was not clear– where Christ addressed the holy staring woman crouched at his feet whilst her sister stood stolidly behind, looking also like Concepción, who had perhaps modelled for her from another angle. But the light hit four things –the silvery fish [...], the solid white gleam of the eggs [...], the heads of garlic, [...] and the sulky, fleshy, furiously frowning face of the girl, above her fat red arms in their brown stuff sleeves. (Byatt 1998a, 229)

On the other hand, if *Still Life* illustrates the significance of painting in Byatt's production, *A Whistling Woman* provides a representative example of her assiduous attention to different scientific discourses in her writings. Already in *Possession*, the field of geology occupies a central position through the character of Ash, who reads Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, and embarks on a number of geological trips under the certainty that "to be civilised these days requires an intelligent interest in the minuter forms of life and the monstrous permanent forms of the planet" (Byatt [1990] 1991c, 200). Likewise, the impact of Darwinian theories becomes the topic of the third chapter of *On Histories and Stories*, while neuroscience appears in several of Byatt's non-fiction publications: her chapter in the essay collection *Memory* (1998) deals with the process of remembering from the literary and scientific perspectives, and the article "Soul Searching" (2004) examines the body-and-mind dichotomy, an issue that recurs in her 2005 contribution to *Nature*, "Fiction Informed by Science." These scientific fields appear once and again in Byatt's fiction: while geology mediates the original evocation of ageing in "A Stone Woman" (from *Little Black Book of Stories*)—the image of the woman turned to stone being one that haunted Byatt's imagination—, neuroscience emerges prominently in the multi-layered structure of *A Whistling Woman*, which also incorporates the discourse of genetics among its main referents.

Genetics, which permeates the intellectual background of the Quartet, is addressed in terms of the consequences of genetic inheritance for family resemblance, and of the implications of DNA transmission for the individual's survival: "Likeness. Resemblance. Reproduction. Replication. We all have our own faces, [...] and yet we are all constructed by the endless replication of the family genes, so that we also have the family face" (Byatt 2002b, 321). The question of individuals' "immortality" through the presence of their genes in their offspring is given a literary rendering in one of the climactic episodes of *A Whistling Woman*: the performance of *The Winter's Tale*, where the widower of the character that died accidentally in *Still Life* understands that the hope of his wife's return does not lie in her resurrection, but in her rebirth through their daughter's life. This moment (for me, one of the most emotive passages in Byatt's fiction) offers a poetic portrait of the topic of genetic immortality, which connects with the writer's concern over the female mythology of birth and renaissance in *The Virgin in the Garden*, and in the Quartet as a whole:

[The girl] appeared, in a demure white cotton dress and a floral crown, weightless and intricate. She began to speak Perdita's flower speech. [...]

[Her father] was quite unprepared for the effect this would have on him. She was acting a woman a year or two older than herself, and was full of the careful dignity of speaking great verse clearly. She was in her own world, not trying to charm, but enchanting. He saw, not his daughter, but his wife. Only for a moment, but entirely, and remembering life he remembered death, automatically, and his eyes filled with tears. (Byatt 2002b, 394)

A Whistling Woman is a good example of the international interest in Byatt's works, which have been translated into more than twenty languages, and which in some cases (specifically, "Morpho Eugenia" from *Angels & Insects, Possession*, "Medusa's Ankles" and "The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye") have been adapted into the film medium. The Spanish translation of *A Whistling Woman* was published in 2003, and I had the opportunity to meet Byatt when she came to Madrid to present the book in an event organised by the British Council. We could talk about some of the themes and images developed in the last volume of the Quartet, a conversation that we resumed some days later when Byatt delivered a plenary lecture at the 27th AEDEAN Conference, hosted by the University of Salamanca. The session, which was chaired by Pilar Hidalgo, was entitled "Windows, Mirrors and Spheres: Constructing an Iconography of Glass," and I can remember Byatt's long sentences, full of references and echoes, and how they usually ended in a wheeze of a laugh.

When you listened to her, it was as if the air filled with electric particles of thoughts and connections, a feeling that I experienced again when in 2006 I attended the 8th ESSE Conference in London. There, the opening academic event was "Dame Antonia Byatt in Conversation with Cees Noteboom": at that time, Byatt was working on the text that would become *The Children's Book*, and she explained her meticulous process of composition, doing research into every historical, artistic, or scientific aspect, and noting down all the details that were later evoked in her vivid descriptions. After the event, we talked about the compositional process of "A Stone Woman," and when she inscribed my copy of *Little Black Book of Stories*, she also gave me her email address so that we could keep in contact.

Little Black Book of Stories, which has become Byatt's last collection of short fiction (*Medusa's Ankles* being an anthology of already published stories), contains narratives that address the theme of loss from different perspectives: from lost children in "The Thing in the Forest" to lost memories in "The Pink Ribbon." As in *Sugar & Other Stories* and *Elementals*, the unity of the miscellaneous stories is not overtly acknowledged, differently from the referential cohesion of *The Matisse Stories*, or the generic uniformity of *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, which was subtitled "Five Fairy Stories." This terminology deserves special attention in the light of its contraposition to that of "wonder tale" (Todd 1997, 39-40; Cheira 2023a, vii *passim*), which was applied to Byatt's translation of Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's 1698 "Le Serpentin vert" in Marina Warner's *Wonder Tales. Six Stories of Enchantment* (1994), as well as to "A Tale, a Story, that may hide a Truth" in one of Ash's poems in *Possession* (Byatt [1990] 1991c, 409). Two of such narratives "hiding a truth," originally embedded in *Possession* ("The Glass Coffin" and "Gode's Story"), were later compiled in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, one of the works that account for Byatt's having been conferred the Hans Christian Andersen Literature Award in 2018. This collection epitomises two recurrent elements in Byatt's fiction: the forest as a natural setting, and glass as a powerful image.

Firstly, the forest (usually portrayed as a site of psychological transformation) appears in several of her short stories like “The Story of the Eldest Princess” (from *The Djinn in the Nightingale’s Eye*) and “The Thing in the Forest”, together with other natural locations like the sea (the setting of Byatt’s ecological tale “Sea Story”, 2013), or the cultural space of the museum, which can be found in stories and novels alike: from the National Portrait Gallery in *The Virgin in the Garden* to the Museum of Ephesus and the Ankara Museum of Anatolian Civilisations in “The Djinn in the Nightingale’s Eye.” Secondly, glass occupies a pre-eminent position in Byatt’s fiction and non-fiction, with the centrality of mirrors in *A Whistling Woman*, and the exploration of the aesthetic possibilities of glass in the essay “Ice, Snow, Glass,” as well as in the story “Cold” (from *Elementals*) and in several of the tales of *The Djinn in the Nightingale’s Eye*, like “The Glass Coffin” and “The Djinn in the Nightingale’s Eye.”

This closing narrative portrays its protagonist as one of Byatt’s collectors—like Harald Alabaster in “Morpho Eugenia” or Scholes Destry-Scholes in *The Biographer’s Tale*, among many others—, since Gillian Perholt is depicted as a keen collector of glass paperweights, as Byatt herself was: “[Gillian] liked glass in general, for its paradoxical nature, translucent as water, heavy as stone, invisible as air, solid as earth. Blown with human breath in a furnace of fire” (Byatt [1994] 1995d, 182). Interestingly, the way in which Gillian’s paperweights display several elements embedded within the glass echoes the structure of the tales she delights in listening to during her stay in Turkey: multi-layered narratives like those in *The Thousand and One Nights*. This analogy is made explicit when Gillian finds paperweights containing the central images of a story she was told during her visit to the Ankara Museum:

[G]lass [...] is only a solid metaphor, it is a medium for seeing and a thing seen at once. It is what art is [...]

And he gave her a weight in which a small snake lay curled on a watery surface of floating duckweed [...] And he gave her a weight in which [...] floated a flower [...] And Gillian thought of Gilgamesh, and the lost flower, and the snake. Here they were side by side, held in suspension. (Byatt [1994] 1995d, 274-76)

The snake and the flower, components in the story of Gilgamesh as icons of a cyclic sequence of renewal and ending (Maack 2001, 129), are inserted in the glass that Gillian perceives as a metaphor for art. In their embodiment of the art of storytelling, these paperweights become Gillian’s “medium for seeing” the implications of never-ending tales, whose infinity and perennial existence allow her to come to terms with the unavoidability of the passing of time and the coming of death. Indeed, as Byatt stated, “[s]torytelling in general [...] consoles us for endings with endless new beginnings” ([2000] 2001, 166), and I would like to conclude this tribute with one of the most touching endings in her fiction: the Postscript to *Possession*. Full of Shakespearean flower imagery, and imbued with Byatt’s characteristic pictorial style, the Postscript gives readers access to an episode in the past—one of those “things long-dead but not vanished” (Byatt [1990]

1991c, 256)—which remains reverberating in the minds of these readers, proving how “[s]tories are like genes, they keep part of us alive after the end of our story”:

There was a meadow full of young hay, and all the summer flowers in great abundance. Blue cornflowers, scarlet poppies, gold buttercups, a veil of speedwells, an intricate carpet of daisies where the grass was shorter, scabious, yellow snapdragons, bacon and egg plant, pale milkmaids, purple heartsease, scarlet pimpernel and white shepherd’s purse, and round this field a high bordering hedge of Queen Anne’s lace and foxgloves, and above that dogroses, palely shining in a thorny edge, honeysuckle all creamy and sweet-smelling, rambling threads of bryony and the dark stars of deadly nightshade. It was abundant, it seemed as though it must go on shining forever. The grasses had an enamelled gloss and were connected by diamond-threads of light. The larks sang, and the thrushes, and the blackbirds, sweet and clear, and there were butterflies everywhere, blue, sulphur, copper, and fragile white, dipping from flower to flower, from clover to vetch to larkspur, seeing their own guiding visions of invisible violet pentagrams and spiralling coils of petal-light. (Byatt [1990] 1991c, 508)



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*On the
Experience of
Writing a Blog:
The Joys of
Teaching
Literature*

have been writing the blog *The Joys of Teaching Literature* (<https://webs.uab.cat/saramartinalegre/blog/>) since September 2010, as well as offering the Spanish version since July 2021. I started writing this blog because my dear friend Gerardo Rodríguez Salas, of the University of Granada, encouraged me to find an outlet to express the many ideas boiling in my head concerning teaching, research, and academic life generally. I do not exaggerate when I say that my friend was concerned about my mental health. If I remember correctly, he did not mention specifically blogging, but my university (the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) was then promoting blogs as a tool of communication, and I started writing mine using its platform. My only intention was, indeed, protecting my sanity. I never thought about impact, who would read me, or how long the initial impulse behind the blog would last. I only thought of expressing my ideas on academic matters beyond the boundaries of academic publishing, which have always seemed to me too narrow, too rigid.

After more than thirteen years blogging, I remain unconcerned by statistics or possible impact. Add to this that I have always received very few comments and that in the current version of UAB's platform there is no room for them (to avoid any potential conflicts, I assume). I treat *The Joys of Teaching Literature* mainly as a public professional journal which, I assume, someone must be reading somewhere if not regularly at least now and then, or just depending on the appeal of particular posts. I write the blog mainly for myself, but, of course, I am happy to share my thrills and my worries with anyone interested in them. The title, as it is easy to see, is ironic, for while there are many joys in teaching, the main inspiration behind most posts is the anxiety caused by the absurdly frantic pace of academic life, if one takes all its aspects seriously, and the clearly falling educational standards. The Spanish version, by the way, is called *Las Delicias de Enseñar Literatura*. Since my blog is not peer reviewed, does not count as a merit in any way (I failed the *tramo de transferencia...*), and nobody monitors whether I write it or not, *The Joys* has become a space of freedom and creativity, where I enjoy the luxury of thinking as hard as I can for a while about matters that interest me, as an academic who loves teaching and research.

The trick about blogging is regularity, but at the same time this is the hardest aspect to manage. Initially, I posted my texts whenever inspiration visited me, but I have learned with the years that it is better to set oneself a specific pace. Once a week works fine for me, though I do not always manage to find the two or three hours I need to write between 1500 and 1800 words (plus the translation into Spanish, which adds some other 30 minutes). I normally use Monday morning, when I usually do not teach, and occasionally Sunday afternoon, but I have never forced myself in any way to make room for the weekly post if I have no time in a particular week—so, no, I do not write 52 posts a year, 40 is closer to the real figure. Often, though, I start writing mentally when something happens in class that I want to discuss, or I read an interesting book or an article in the press (usually *The Guardian* or *El País*), or the research I am doing needs an aside much bigger than a footnote. The actual writing takes then far less time in that case than if I sit down

with no previous idea of a topic—that is rare but not unheard of—or if I need to check sources, which may lead me in unexpected ways. Curiouser and curiouser... that's my main problem.

I am not a person of regular habits at all, which is why I find my own persistence in writing the blog quite singular. Since *The Joys* follows the academic year, and its structure is conditioned by my teaching activities along it, I decided it makes sense to gather together all the posts published within that timeframe in a volume. The blog, then, exists in two versions: the blog properly speaking, and the yearly e-books in pdf format, which so far comprise a series of fifteen volumes (available from <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/116328>). I find that the yearly volume is the carrot that motivates me to write the weekly post—I don't really need a stick—until I fill in the yearly volume, which runs on average to 70000 words. It makes me happy to see the book series grow, which is possibly the key to this regularity which still surprises me so much.

I am not myself a reader of blogs, though I read many posts for my own research, and so I have never followed a model. I have invented the one that suits me best, though I am very much indebted to the fine writers in *The Guardian*, *Slate* and, in Spanish, *El Confidencial*: they are my teachers (which does not mean I'm a good student). I know that my texts are long, but I apparently need a minimum of 1500 words to argue a point and, besides, my posts are addressed to persons who love reading. *The Joys of Teaching Literature* is aimed mainly at other university teachers of Literature, English or not, but also at keen Literature students at any university.

I was once told it would be a good idea to accompany each post with a corresponding recording, a sort of mini podcast, but I don't want listeners, I very much prefer readers. It was for that reason that I decided to use some extra time for the Spanish translation, which I produce using Word's own excellent translator (click on the right-hand side button of the mouse). I have now and then first written a post in Spanish and then used automatic translation for the English version, if my theme was of local Spanish (or Catalan) interest, but I am not comfortable doing this because the result is not quite my own English. In contrast, Word has been learning fast and can now imitate my Spanish style so well that I hardly revise the posts translated from English.

The Joys is also, as you may see, good language practice in a register less formal than the one I use for academic writing. In the last few years, I have been publishing plenty of academic work because my teaching load has been much diminished thanks to UAB's application of the so-called 'Wert decree' (yes, I am aware that very few universities are within the legality). Even so, academic writing takes a long time to produce and to be published, and the blog works wonderfully as a tool for me to keep writing steadily in between my academic texts. It is also a very practical tool, as I say, to practice English in a less formal register, more didactic and less abstract than the one we use in academic writing (actually, my own academic English is not abstract at all, I just don't know how to produce that elevated register that you see mainly in articles on theory). I frequently use Google to check specific vocabulary or syntactic constructions, but so far, I have

not used tools such as Grammarly and much less ChatGPT, though as I have noted I use Word's automatic translator for the Spanish version, to save time.

I have had a few incidents, no more than four or five, along all these years with persons who have felt themselves misrepresented in my blog. This is curious because I follow a basic rule: I refer to persons that I praise by name and surname—from a colleague whose work I admire to a student who has done very well—but I never mention by name the persons with whom I have shared a tense moment or disagree with (I mean in personal situations, not public figures). One of the functions of the blog is venting, but never in a negative way (politicians excepted!). I realise that I complain a lot about the students' behaviour—my main complaint as a Literature teacher is that they do not read—but I am far from being alone in that sense. Just last week I read in *Slate* an article by an American college professor, also with thirty years' experience as a teacher, bitterly bemoaning that students read less and less: I had the impression I was reading one of my own posts.

Since I have been teaching less in recent years, the blog has been increasingly accommodating comment on my readings (not downright reviews), mini-essays on current affairs connected to higher education, and other themes. I worry that because I usually teach Victorian Literature, year after year, and because I am now focused on researching science fiction, these two themes are too predominant; this is why I try to include other topics, for the sake of variety. This academic year, for instance, I have written about our book club, my volume on *The X-Files*, authors' biographies, production design in film adaptation, book reviewing, the job market for graduates, or my difficulties to find enjoyable books. Out of eighteen posts so far since September 2023, only eight are directly connected with teaching, the others are miscellaneous. As you can see, I make no bones of using the blog to promote my own academic work—hence the post on my *X-Files* book—and to try out new ideas: the post on production design might one day become an article, or, ideally, a book.

On 11 October 2021, when we were still suffering from the effects of Covid-19 and our academic activity was far from normalized, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona suffered a cyberattack, which deprived us of most of our digital tools, beginning with our websites and our Virtual Campus. UAB's blogging platform became suddenly unavailable and I really believed that *The Joys* was gone for ever. I never write directly on the platform, which means that I had all the texts, and the yearly volumes, but I was really dismayed to think that what I had written so far would be lost. The blogs' blackout lasted for four months, as UAB determined they had more urgent services to restore, which I understand. Bracing myself for the possible loss of the blog so far (or the unwieldy task of having to upload everything again), I decided to go on writing anyway. When the UAB blogs resurfaced, in February 2022, I published the posts I had written in the four 'silent' months after the cyberattack, and then continued. Next came another momentous change, when my blog was integrated in my own website, where it is currently lodged.

About two years ago, Jesús López-Peláez of the University of Jaén approached me with a proposal I had never considered before: publishing a book including a selection of the posts most directly connected with teaching, which would also include a new version of *Enseñar Literatura Inglesa*, a self-published e-book I uploaded onto the digital repository of my university (<https://ddd.uab.cat/record/122988>). This consists of the introduction to my report (or *memoria*) for the state examination (or *oposición*) for tenure, which I passed back in 2002. Updating that text for a new book was a very interesting proposition, but I had serious doubts about the blog posts, as I feel awfully embarrassed to re-read myself. I finally selected 68 posts written between 2010 and 2020, right until before the Covid-19 crisis started. The resulting book, *Passionate Professing: The Context and Practice of English Literature* (https://editorial.ujaen.es/libro/passionate-professing-the-context-and-practice-of-english-literature_149716/), gives me immense satisfaction (thank you Jesús López-Peláez!) because I feel that it validates the work I have been doing for so many years apart from the main academic circuit. There might be a second part with a selection of posts published between 2020 and 2030, who knows? The future is now so uncertain it is hard to think even a few years ahead.

For how long will I continue blogging? Honestly, I do not know. I did consider stopping a few months ago because I am very much focused on writing books, and that takes plenty of energy. I realised, however, that I still need my addictive weekly dose of free writing and immediate publication, so *The Joys* will continue for the time being. I have not decided yet when I am going to retire (I am currently 57), but one thing that already worries me is whether UAB will still give me access to my website (which runs on their platform) and, therefore to my blog, once I am no longer officially active. I might have to re-start elsewhere, for I have no plans to stop writing after retirement. I may sound smug but, surely like all academics, I hope that my published academic work survives for as long as possible, and I do hope that my blog survives as well, for it is an essential part of my academic, intellectual life. Now we publish plenty digitally, not just blogs but also many other types of academic texts, without giving a second thought about how this legacy will be protected—or in the worst-case scenario lost—after we retire. I'll finish, then, with a phrase I often use to conclude my posts: food for thought!

DANIEL GARCÍA VELASCO

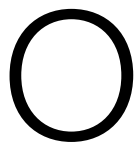
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*Adjective
Ordering:
Theoretical
and
Experimental
Perspectives ¹*

¹Thanks are due to Julio Villa-García, University of Oviedo, for helpful comments and suggestions.



One of the most obvious syntactic differences between English and Spanish is the order of adjectives in the noun phrase (NP). Romance languages prefer to place nominal modifiers behind the noun, whereas the prenominal position is the default for adjectives in English and other Germanic languages. Prenominal placement of adjectives in Spanish and postnominal placement in English are also possible, but they are usually associated with particular (i.e., marked) semantic interpretations. Broadly speaking, in Spanish adjectives occurring before the noun only have non-restrictive value, whereas in English adjectives in the postnominal position usually denote non-permanent properties (but see Cinque 2010 and Ledgeway 2012 for additional details).

Many interesting theoretical questions emerge from this simple observation. Among those, we would like to address the following in this brief contribution:

1. Why do languages choose pre or postnominal position as a default option for the placement of modifiers?
2. When more than one modifier is present, what motivates the rather strict ordering of modifiers that we observe?

This paper reviews relevant bibliography on the issue both from a theoretical and experimental perspective. It will be argued that a complete account of this problem can only be arrived at when insights from different angles are taken into account. The main takeaway from this contribution is then that our discipline requires a broad knowledge and an open mind and a willingness to take productive ideas from every theoretical or applied approach available. Unfortunately, we feel that there is a general lack of understanding of the main differences between alternative approaches in the field, which results in the absence of a fair exchange of ideas and instead promotes the artificial maximization of the benefits of one's own approach. This short contribution tries to bridge this theoretical gap.

Prenominal or postnominal placement of adjectives: which is more frequent and why?

According to Dryer (2018), noun-adjective order is typologically preferred across the world's languages (878 languages versus 373 in his sample). One of the possible reasons for this preference, he argues, is the fact that the interpretation of many adjectives is relative to the noun they modify. So-called "subsective" adjectives fix their denotation with reference to the entity the noun denotes. Thus, a "*skillful* surgeon" is someone who is skillful *as* a surgeon and not necessarily in other activities in which s/he may take part. This contrasts with "intersective" adjectives, which typically denote properties that apply to an entity in all cases (e.g., "*tall* girl" or "*yellow* submarine"). In subsective modification, then, having the noun first facilitates the interpretation of the adjective that follows. This would account for noun-adjective order in

Romance languages (e.g., “una cirujana *competente*,” “un submarino *amarillo*”) and most other languages in the world, but leaves the adjective-noun order of the English type unexplained, which is also statistically relevant, as Dryer’s sample shows.

The adjective ordering contrast between the Romance languages and English has been the subject of much theoretical research. In Generative Grammar, for example, the different orders are attributed to the placement of adjectives in different dedicated positions on the basis of their syntactic and semantic properties, which has led to a careful examination of adjective types (see, e.g., Cinque 2010). Haegeman & Guéron (1999, 453) note that three proposals have been put forward to deal with adjective modification in the generative literature, instances of which can be found today: (i) adjectives as heads selecting an NP complement, (ii) adjectives as NP adjuncts, and (iii) adjectives as specifiers of functional projections. The different orders in English and Spanish are due to a rule of N(oun)-raising in the Romance languages, which places the head noun in pre-adjectival position in Agreement Phrase (AgrP), presumably as a consequence of the strong inflectional morphology found in Romance, which projects features that need to be checked in the derivation. The difference between the two sets of languages is then attributed to their different morphological properties, a purely language-internal notion.

The relevance of inflectional morphology in adjective ordering is clear when we look at the history of the English language. Old English allowed both pre and postnominal adjectives. According to Fischer (2001), postposed adjectives, which typically belong to the strong declension, convey rhematic information, whereas prenominal adjectives, which typically belong to the weak declension, convey given information. The loss of inflections in the history of the language may have caused a rather strict linear order in the noun phrase. Given that rhematic information describes “qualities that are not inherent but which pertain to the activity of the moment” (Fischer 2001, 273), the choice of prenominal position as default seems motivated.

In typological linguistics, however, word order is usually explained on the basis of general principles or tendencies which compete for recognition in the grammars of languages (see, e.g., Dik 1997, chapter 16). Examples of such principles include *Iconicity* and *Scope*, which are particularly relevant for our current purposes. Iconicity is usually related to Behaghel’s first law (Behaghel 1932, 4), which states that units that belong together semantically tend to be placed together syntactically. Along the same lines, Rijkhoff (2002, 313) proposes the *Principle of Scope*, which states that “modifiers tend to occur next to the part of the expression that they have in their scope”, and thus accounts for scope relations among sequences of modifiers in the NP. This principle also predicts that similar scope relations should hold irrespective of whether a language places adjectives prenominal, postnominal, or both.

As these principles are considered natural or functional in the typological literature, one could argue that they conspire to achieve the communicative efficiency which is expected

from languages (for another interpretation of “communicative efficiency” based on the notion of ease of articulation, see Gibson et al. 2019 and Levshina 2022). As for the noun phrase, the prototypical referential expression, it is generally agreed that the general communicative function of the adjective is that of restricting the potential set of referents of the head noun and guiding addressees to the identification or activation of the entity denoted by the noun. Along those lines, in García Velasco & ten Wolde (forthcoming), we propose that the ordering of units in the NP follows a *Principle of Communicative Efficiency* which we formulated as follows:

The Principle of Communicative Efficiency in referential expressions

Constituents with more discriminating value are preferably given first.

The most discriminating unit in referential expressions is typically the noun, and that is the reason why it tends to be given before modifiers in most languages. Indeed, on many occasions it is the only content lexeme in an NP. However, in contexts in which several instances of the entity denoted by the noun are present, it is an adjectival property that may be most discriminating. Consider for instance a situation in which a speaker is renting a bicycle and is offered a number of models to choose from. In that context, when asked *Which bike do you prefer?*, the nounless sequence *the yellow one* is a perfectly valid answer. The noun is not given, as it is easily retrieved from the immediate context. In languages like Spanish, no proform is even necessary, and only the adjective may be present (e.g., *¿qué bicicleta prefieres? La amarilla*). Languages which put modifiers behind the noun thus conform to this principle, which, as we will show below, also motivates the ordering of modifiers when more than one is present.

The question remains, however, why some languages (e.g., English) prefer the apparently less efficient pre-nominal position for adjectival modifiers. Our principle relies on the notion of “discriminating value,” which is context-dependent. As it is possible to find many contexts in which an adjective is more informative than the noun, languages may also choose to provide adjectives first as a general rule. Evidence that this idea may be on the right track emerges from experimental studies. In a recent article providing a computational modelling of adjective-noun order, Yu et al. (2023) show that slight modifications in the informative value of either nouns and adjectives or the referential context lead to the emergence of different orders (adjective-noun or noun-adjective) in noun phrases. Of course, the key factor in that study is a characterization of the notion of “informative value,” so that it can be operationalized in a mathematical analysis. The authors distinguish between the “inherent informativeness” of a given unit and its “contextual informativeness,” which relates to the composition of the referential context and the disambiguation function of the same unit. In the previous example, we showed that the colour adjective “yellow” is more informative than the noun it modifies, because the immediate context includes a number of bicycles of, presumably, different colours. However, if all bikes offered were yellow, the informative value of the same adjective would be insignificant. On the assumption that nouns are inherently more informative than adjectives, Yu et al.’s model predicts an overall

preference for postnominal adjectives, which is consistent with the behaviour displayed by the world's languages. This general preference may be counterbalanced if the informative value of an adjective increases in particular referential contexts, which predicts the alternative existence of adjective-noun orders in languages.

The Ordering of Adjectives in the Noun Phrase

The Principle of Communicative Efficiency in referential expressions leads to the empirical expectation that when more than one adjective is present in an NP, those that more severely restrict the set of potential referents of the noun will occur first in production (see also Danks & Schwenk 1972; Fukumura 2018). This is in fact what we usually find in Spanish. Consider the Spanish example *un coche eléctrico futurista espectacular*. In this noun phrase, adjectives are given in an order of increasing subjectivity, with more objective properties being placed closer to the head noun. In English linguistics, the relevance of the objective vs. subjective distinction in adjective ordering has a long tradition. The idea was initially presented in Hetzron (1978) and is further developed in Quirk et al. (1985), Halliday (1985), Feist (2011), Ghesquière (2014) and Davidse & Breban (2019), among others.

For example, Quirk et al. (1985, 1341) claim that “modifiers relating to properties which are (relatively) inherent in the head of the noun phrase, visually observable, and objectively recognizable or accessible, will tend to be placed nearer to the head and be preceded by modifiers concerned with what is relatively a matter of opinion”. They argue that the notion of size is context-dependent (compare “*big* elephant” with “*big* ant”), hence more subjective than colour, which is perceptually more objective. Therefore, in combinations of adjectives such as *large* and *black*, one usually finds *black* closer to the head, e.g., *a large black animal* rather than *a black large animal*. Based on experimental data, Scontras et al. (2017; 2019) argue that objective properties are closer to the head because they are maximally informative or more informative than evaluative modifiers and hence communicatively more efficient. The interpretation of subjectivity in Scontras et al. (2017; 2019), however, is somewhat looser, as both colour and size adjectives may be considered vague and subjective if speakers disagree with regard to the relevance of the property in the description of a given entity.

The tendency to place more objective properties closer to the head noun, however, contradicts our principle of communicative efficiency in English-style languages. If more discriminating units tend to be given first, one would expect the order **a pepperoni Italian delicious pizza*, in the place of *a delicious Italian pepperoni pizza*. Interestingly, Yu et al. (2023, 6) admit that the fact that “cross-linguistic adjective-noun ordering preferences can be explained by more informative words appearing earlier is in tension with the observed trend of more subjective adjectives occurring earlier in multiple adjective referring expressions in prenominal adjective

languages”. In other words, in languages like English, communicative efficiency would predict that less informative or discriminating adjectives (e.g., subjective ones) should be placed closer to the nominal head. The fact that this is not the case is attributed by Yu et al. (2023) to a separate “functional pressure” which is not given, but it would be far from unreasonable to claim that natural principles such as Iconicity and Scope may be appropriate candidates.

Indeed, within Cognitive Grammar, Radden (2008) renames Behaghel’s law as the Proximity Principle and illustrates its relevance with the ordering of adjectival modifiers in the English noun phrase. In his view, the placement of modifiers in the aforementioned example *a delicious Italian pepperoni pizza* follows an iconic ordering in that the more inherent modifier “pepperoni” is placed closer to the head than “Italian” (which indicates a permanent but not inherent property of the pizza). *Italian* is, however, placed closer to the head noun than the subjective property “delicious.” This suggests that the relevance of the subjective vs. objective nature of properties in adjectival ordering is also iconically motivated (see also Dryer 2018, 817) and overrides the principle of communicative efficiency. Note, additionally, that Rijkhoff’s principle of scope suggests that modifiers will tend to appear next to the unit they have in their scope. In fact, it is well-known that the successive stacking of modifiers creates binary scope relations. In the previous example, *delicious* scopes over the rest of the noun phrase (“Italian pepperoni pizza”) and what is described as Italian is not just the pizza, but a pepperoni pizza. This also explains why a Spanish translation of this example gives a mirror-image ordering of modifiers, as in *Una pizza pepperoni italiana deliciosa*, illustrating identical scope relations.

Conclusions

In spite of the necessarily sketchy nature of the current contribution, we hope to have been able to show the complex multifactorial nature of adjective ordering, in the spirit of Wulff (2003) and Scontras (2023). Both the choice of prenominal or postnominal modification and the ordering of modifiers result from the complex interplay of functional-communicative and language-internal factors, some of which can be fruitfully tested in experimental studies. Good experimental work, in turn, can only be carried out on the basis of profound knowledge of the theoretical options available and the insights they offer. This is only obvious, as experiments necessarily test hypotheses, but there is an unfortunate tendency by some practitioners at present to dismiss “armchair linguistics” and overvalue experimental work when in fact the latter could not proceed without the former. This contribution has then intended to underscore the need for a fruitful exchange of ideas not only between linguists of different theoretical persuasions, but also between those employing different methodologies.



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MARÍA JOSÉ ESTEVE-RAMOS

UNIVERSITAT JAUME I

De boke of ypocras in Late Middle English Manuscripts

Irene Diego Rodríguez

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: UPLGC ediciones, colección Studies in English Language and Literature, 3, 2023. 357 pp.

ISBN: 978-84-9042-498-8

Irene Diego Rodríguez (UNED) has published *De boke of ypocras in Late Middle English Manuscripts*, a work that deserves our attention for many reasons. This book is concerned with a linguistic study of a series of fifteenth-century copies of an astrology text, *De boke of ypocras*, which also presents the appropriate semi-diplomatic transcriptions of the witnesses. Yet, all this is combined with an innovative methodological proposal for the dialectal analysis, widening the scope in which this type of texts is encountered and studied. Despite the rising interest in medical scientific texts in recent years (De la Cruz & Diego-Rodríguez, 2021; Esteve-Ramos, 2019; Taatvisainen, Pahta & Mäkinen, 2005 or Honkapohja, 2017 among others) this publication shows not only a work referring to a neglected area such as medieval astrology, but also an approach which is innovative and interdisciplinary. It combines codicology, palaeography, historical linguistics, corpus linguistics and dialectology, which makes it an interesting read not only from a linguistic but also cultural and historical point of view.

The book has an Introduction followed by five chapters, references and the appendixes. The Introduction outlines the aims of the study and it continues by summarising the following parts

of the book. Chapter one reviews the socio-historical background placing the research in a broad and necessary context. The author thoroughly discusses the historical development of medical practice, encompassing a global overview of its development. Here we are presented with the different approaches to medicine, with a highlight on Hippocratic material on medicine and very fundamentally his theory of the four humours. The influence of Hippocrates is also discussed as it becomes a pivotal aspect of the book's topic. It continues by explaining the link between medicine and astrology and describes the categorisation of the astrological medical writing. This chapter, which delves into the basic of medieval medical astrology, provides with a necessary context for the interpretation of the analysed material further on.

In Chapter II we read a detailed account of the text sources and witnesses, as well as a thorough description of the *De boke of Ypocras*. This includes an account of the material, collation, binding, and decoration. I would particularly like to highlight the detail of the codicological description, as it clearly reflects the author's background and training in this area of knowledge. Problems of adscription are also identified, along with others shown by bibliographical errors and catalogue description. This is a long and laborious process -albeit a very important one- and shows the search for a meticulous and well-established methodology, which is the topic of the following chapter.

Chapter III proposes an innovative approach to the analysis of the gathered data. These data are analysed linguistically by using the well-known Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English (LALME) in its current electronic version (2013). She then uses a distinction between the so-called diagnostic forms and those which are more generally found, in order to face the limitations of the Atlas when dealing with scientific texts. Diagnostic forms -in this context- are those which stand for a special value in a determining dialect. The author uses these two criteria are then they are combined when attempting to identify each of the linguistic profiles (LP) associated with each manuscript. Subsequently, results are then compared with the resulting questionnaire derived from the transcription, with a careful and detailed description of both similarities and differences between the LP and each of the manuscript witnesses. As a result, a subset of manuscripts has been associated with Norfolk and one is related to the area of Northamptonshire. The author also refers to a substratum of forms located in Somerset. I would, however, point to the fact that the fit-technique is not deployed which implies that each linguistic profile is considered individually. All in all, results are solidly explained, and the conclusions show the success of this innovative and robust methodology.

Chapter IV moves on to the analysis of the Linguistic Profiles obtained by applying the *ad hoc* method designed for this work. In this chapter, data are very neatly presented and tables, graphs and maps are presented. It is easy to follow and well presented.

Chapter V show the concluding remarks. These present a well-structured research, founded and reliable. Results have a solid justification and from them we learn about medical astrology

and Middle English dialects in an innovative way, broadening our knowledge on the topic. Bibliography is updated and thorough, and encompasses all the fundamentals of the different topics it deals with also including the most recent publication of the topic. References are followed by the transcription policies (Appendix 1) and the transcription of the witnesses (Appendix 2). The latter offers a solid base for future research, making an important contribution to the academic community with an interest in this area.

As a conclusion, this book represents a solid and thorough approach to an under-studied text of an area -such as medieval astrology- which has not received much attention. It reflects the work of a well-trained specialist and a dedicated philologist, and it certainly stands out as a detailed and well-informed linguistic and cultural study of the text *De boke of Ypocras* and its witnesses, and it should be read by historians of science, philologists and anyone interested in medieval manuscripts alike.



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Pejorative Suffixes and Combining Forms in English

José A. Sánchez Fajardo

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Whether it is for humorous purposes, to cause discomfort or convey contempt, among others, language users have the pragmatic need to express negativity. The phenomenon of communicating depreciation can be quite creatively articulated, and it is in this creativity and conceptual fuzziness of pejorative formatives that this thought-provoking volume claims its current relevance. *Pejorative Suffixes and Combining Forms in English* (2022) aims at examining the morphosemantic and cognitive traits of 15 pejorative formatives in English, as well as how they contribute to the depreciation of morphological units. The selected pejorative formatives, which include both suffixes and combining forms, respond to contemporary uses of disparage: *-ie*, *-o*, *-ard*, *-holic*, *-rrhea*, *-it is*, *-later*, *-maniac*, *-porn*, *-ish*, *-oid*, *-aster*, *-head*, *-pants* and *-ass*. José Antonio Sánchez Fajardo constructs in this research monograph a clear and innovative guide of linguistic pejoration which relies on relevant previous studies while contributing to and updating an already growing body of research on this field.

With the aim of grasping this peripheral subject, Sánchez Fajardo conducts a holistic research on the methodological basis of Constructional Morphology, Componential Analysis and Morphopragmatics. Previous research had primarily focused on pure descriptive or

lexicographical approaches (Pederson, 1964), even though it is essential to consider more recent research which incorporate corpus-based techniques, such as Harris's (2020). Within this literature, it is mandatory to remark the edited volume *Pejoration* by Finkbeiner et al (2016), which approaches this phenomenon comprehensively with a focus on German.

This monograph delves into a highly intriguing subject matter, as it confronts socially sensitive issues and real-life problems head-on, particularly compelling in the exploration of the pragmatic force inherent in hate speech. Rather than advocating for the censorship or isolation of such language, Sánchez Fajardo adopts an exploratory approach, aiming to uncover the cognitive intricacies underlying the process of pejoration, as well as “the conventions of morphological paradigmaticity” (6) of this phenomena. The relevance of this piece is also ensured through the use of real contemporary language for the analysis, performed through a wide variety of sources: dictionaries, TV or movies corpora, interviews, and particularly online corpora, such as COCA, EWC20 or NOW. The author makes sure that the samples are significant and representative, and the extraction of the lemmas is carefully performed, checking manually to ensure that they were used with a negative sense in different contexts.

By exploring the sociolinguistic context of the semantic process of pejoration in English, the introductory chapter, entitled “Pejoration and beyond,” delves into the theoretical framework surrounding the concept of pejoration and its manifestation in the form of pejorative language. It successfully endeavours to analyse the incorporation of pejoration within research areas such as slang and dysphemism. By doing so, it seeks to comprehend the role of pejoration at the intersection of semantics and pragmatics, elucidating how resultant pejoratives serve as inherent conceptual frameworks for taboo or interdicted subjects. It is observed that pejoration is not restricted to the semantic plane of connotation, but goes beyond. For instance, the perception and reinterpretation of the interlocutors must also be taken into consideration. Thus, pejoration is not “semantically static” (13) and its study calls for a necessary multi-level approach: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

Chapter 2, “How pejoratives are made,” offers an extensive exploration of the multifaceted nature of pejoration, demonstrating that it transcends singular word-formation mechanisms. This description encompasses a variety of examples and classifications, establishing connections between pejorative-forming models and numerous word-formation processes, including but not limited to compounding, conversion, reduplication, clipping, among others. The element of humour in pejoration is particularly significant in this work, as languages users resort greatly to the polysemy of suffixes and creativity while offending, managing to hide in the opacity of the slur. Remarkably, this chapter deals with the idea of “conceptual fuzziness” (41) in which anything on the discursive plane could be turned into a pejorative term if used correctly. The pejorative nature of a term is not solely determined by either its suffix or base form in isolation, but rather it seems to emerge from the combination of both elements.

The next four chapters, which comprise the second segment of the book, address four cognitive transitions thought to underlie the semantic shifts influencing the majority of pejorative suffixes and combining forms in English: diminution, excess, resemblance and metonymization. First, Chapter 3 focuses on the complex semantic process of diminution, starting with its polarity *endearment-pejoration* (see *DEP scale*, Sánchez Fajardo & Tarasova 2020). Following previous research, this work expands the notions of the contextual and cognitive factors on the attitudes that originate from physical values, that is, the relation between pejoration and size. For instance, in the case of *-ie* derivatives, the ideas of size, fondness and offensiveness cohabit without issue, as in *softie* or *oldie*. Whereas *-ie* serves too for the formation of diminutives, *-o* seems to be less ambiguous, for it is only used for hypocoristic forms or pejoratives. Nonetheless, the notion of size is not completely discarded, since, cognitively, hypocorism relates intimately with child talk and, thus, smallness. This section also delves into the “cultural significance of expressive derivation” (Wierzbicka, 1986:362), illustrated for example in how American English use *-o* to mock (often pejoratively) Spaniards, but the same formative does not need to show depreciative value in Australian English.

If diminution can become pejorative through its relation with size, could excess also transform into pejoration? Chapter 4 discusses how pejoration can also be expressed through suffixes and combining forms with the sense of excess: as it was observed, “what is diminutive can also be insignificant” (101), then a non-necessarily negative base can become “extreme” or “excessive,” and thus negative or radical (as *ultranationalist*). But it is not that simple, and Sánchez Fajardo quite clearly explains how the role and stance of the speaker on the topic influences the semantic route of the combined form. In this chapter, seven formatives are observed in depth: *-ard* (*dullard*), *-holic* (*rodeoholic*), *-rrhea* (*bangorrhea*), *-itis* (*queenitis*), *-later* (*bardolater*), *-maniac* (*obamaniac*) and *-porn* (*house-porn*).

In chapter 5, the author deals with the possibility of displaying depreciation also when expressing (partial) resemblance. In this process, the standard values, or attributes of an item, such as *beer* in *pseudo-beer*, are not fully retained, but misrepresented. This chapter examines three suffixes: *-ish*, *-oid*, and *-aster*. Since the base transmits the objectionable characteristics into the derivative, these forms appear more transparent or predictable than previous ones. For example, *niceish* refers to someone who resembles a nice person, but is not exactly or not enough. In this sort of cases, the importance of context is elevated for it is needed to understand the intention of the speaker. The formative *-ish* is also evidenced to have a euphemistic use to attenuate certain bases, such as *smartish* or *sweetish*, downgrading the original meanings. Interestingly enough, *womanish* is observed as a clear offensive term due to associative semantics. Similarly, *-oid* expresses similitive meaning and can be used in various ways, e.g. *walrusoid*. The chapters reviews its different pejorative uses with the “semantic properties of associative-ness and approximative-ness” (155). Finally, the rarer *-aster*, originally a diminutive, makes reference

to “something or someone less genuine or of inferior quality” (159), such as *poetaster*—which dates back to the 16th century—.

The last chapter, entitled “From metonymization to pejoration,” deals with one of the most interesting forms of pejoration, metonymization, an umbrella term to cover all the grey areas between metonymy and synecdoche. This cognitive transition could be exemplified by *egghead*, among many others, case in which the figurative interpretation of the term may be founded on the stereotyped conception that intelligent people have larger heads. In this chapter, several formatives are analysed in depth: *-head* (as in *meathead*), *-pants*, where the person is represented by a non-bodily item (pants), as in *meany-pants*, and *-ass*. The complexity of the combining form *-ass* is interesting to comment not only for its metonymization but by the intricacy of syntactic variation and semantic restriction, as it is explored through the case of *dumbass*.

This comprehensive monograph concludes providing a clear and concise summary of the main findings and noteworthy remarks. It discusses the importance of a multi-level approach, which includes pragmatics when studying these formatives, considering the base, the context and intention of the speaker to fully grasp their meaning. Sociolinguistic and anthropologic perspectives are also valuable additions in this area, which consider what is considered taboo or interdicted in certain societies and cultures, for the pejoration process will be greatly influenced by these conceptual limitations. One of the most remarkable assets of this work is the extensive number of real-life examples, which comprise an inestimable collection of derogatory terms of various natures, types and forms, which will be undoubtedly very useful and fruitful for further research. These examples are very orderly organised in several appendixes at the end of the book which the reader can easily access and examine, while the chapters provide attractive and helpful visualizations of the findings.

In conclusion, *Pejorative Suffixes and Combining Forms in English* is an invaluable reference book to the field of pejoration and word-formation in English. The expertise and clearness of Sánchez Fajardo makes this volume accessible while specialised and exhaustive in such a complex area, which will be of use to both advanced linguists and lexicologists, as well as linguistics enthusiasts.



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SOCORRO IBÁÑEZ MIRALLES DE IMPERIAL

UNIVERSITAT POMPEU FABRA

Ten Years of English Learning at School

Elsa Tragant and Carmen MuñozLondon: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023. XXII. 253pp.
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T*en Years of English Learning at School* presents us with a kaleidoscope vision of the development of L2 English in bilingual students in Barcelona, exploring factors associated with both the inner and outer immediate contexts. It consists of six chapters, the first one introducing the research project and the following ones each corresponding to a study that dives into different data elicited from participants along the span of ten years. This thorough, extensive and legitimate research work is both impressive and necessary in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) to better understand “the longitudinal pace and pattern of development in second language” (Ortega and Byrnes 2008), since “the growth of longitudinal studies in the field continues to be very slow” (70).

Chapter 1 introduces longitudinal research as a “[non-]frequent methodological approach in SLA” (10) in comparison to other time-related research designs. While authors argue attrition might be the main “challenge” of such a design (7), they also present both longitudinal studies that have been influential in the field and longitudinal studies carried out in the school context that have provided SLA with answers to some of its problems —i.e.: “to describe patterns of change over extended periods of time, reveal individual variability with time, provide thick descriptions of language learners’ trajectories, make long-term predictions of L2 performance, [or] evaluate L2 programmes in the long run” (11), among others. This allows them to justify the relevance of the project “English Language Learning in Catalonia”, the 10-year mixed-methods’ study presented in this volume. In addition, they provide detailed information about the context of the study, “five primary school in the Barcelona area” (12); its participants, “140 students” in

primary school (14), amount that was reduced a 28% by the end of the project (12), plus 28 focal learners that were followed until secondary school (15), though “three students were lost” (15) by the end of the investigation. They provide as well the battery of multimodal instruments used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data (18-24) in a detailed, thorough manner.

Chapter 2 provides both the methodology and results from the quantitative strand at the end of primary school. The authors’ aim was “to identify the factors that may predict learners’ language outcomes at the end of primary school” (29) from learners’ outer and inner context—motivation, language learning aptitude, L1 skills and parents’ educational levels—and their impact in terms of proficiency, listening, reading and writing. The authors found significant associations between some of the afore-mentioned factors, which supported their hypothesis that “learner-internal and socio-environmental factors do not operate in isolation from one another” (51)—i.e.: they found relationships between a) L1 and L2; b) language learning aptitudes and L1-L2; c) parents’ educational level, especially mothers’, and learning aptitude; d) mothers’ educational level and out-of-school exposure to English; and e) mothers’ educational level and number of extracurricular lessons—. They also found language learning aptitude and parents’ education to be the strongest predictors in English language achievements at the end of primary school (54).

Chapter 3 presents another set of aspects from the longitudinal study: both written and oral production development in the trajectory of the focal group of students—that is, from grade 1 in primary school up to grade 10 in secondary school—, as well as of three case-study participants within the focal group. Results and discussion highlight interesting findings: the focal group exhibited a tendency towards greater abilities in both speaking and writing measured in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency, though when group results were contrasted with individual case-studies, “at times the individual performances regressed and progressed between collection times, while at other times they remained somewhat unchanged” (96), showing higher intra-learner variability. Focal learners’ vocabulary increased as well as their written fluency, although the clause-ratio per sentence suffered a slight regression after students started secondary school, a period “which seems to make learners over-cautious of their written production” (97) due to changes in the English curriculum (Muñoz et al. 2015). Findings are also subject to the contingencies of “learner performance at specific tasks” (102), something that, the authors argue, calls for further analysis of factors influencing task motivation (Dörnyei 2019).

Chapter 4 adds further insights on the development of a sub-sample of focal learners’ language awareness, which complements findings on chapter 3. Learning is explored from learners’ self-perceptions in relation to their peers, best-perceived arrangements to learn English in class and challenging learning areas in English, using language awareness “as an umbrella term” (112) for all those aspects. Metalinguistic and crosslinguistic awareness are also explored, taking advantage of the participants’ trilingual background. Results show how learners were able to establish comparisons with their peers in terms of learning—with “reliance on school marks as the basis for their responses” (119)—, something that posits the relevance of the teacher for students’ self-concept. Learners also

manifested a preference for typical classroom settings where the teacher leads the class, since those setups were what they were most used to. The challenging areas reported had to do mainly with struggles related to English orthography and morphology, though, interestingly, participants also reported a distinction “between school English lessons, which were easy, and extracurricular English lessons, which [...] [they] found difficult” (125). Although “older learners were capable of broader reflections” (139) about their three languages, the nature of participants’ comments revealed poor metalinguistic and crosslinguistic awareness, probably because of poor enhancement in their classrooms; however, some progression was reported. In light of these findings, the authors encourage teachers to become “more aware of their students’ language learning experience” (143), provided they make a significant impact on it.

Chapter 5 reflects on opportunities to succeed in English from the focal learner group. It examines individual differences, including family-context influence and affordances to be exposed to English, in order to understand learners’ trajectories and their outcomes. The most successful learners in the study presented a more motivating context than less successful learners because their parents showed higher skills in English and actively engaged in their learning process. A small example of this was displayed in parents’ compliments to their children. While “some of these compliments came from parents with very little or no English” (162), they always came “from the more successful learners’ parents” (163). This and other examples—receiving help from older siblings, attending extracurricular English or another foreign language lessons and spending some time abroad—point at the symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1990) “that learners inherited from their families” (192) as a factor of impact in academic success. In contrast, less successful learners had not been surrounded by such a facilitating context and “they had generally had fewer experiences than the more successful students to use English in real or stimulated communicative contexts” (179). These differences got accentuated and “the gap [...] widened between the two groups of learners” (189) as participants grew older. Among other things, differences laid in the amount of time they voluntarily exposed themselves to the L2 by means of media, music or cultural products.

Chapter 6 builds learner profiles on the basis of their motivation and individual trajectories during the years the study lasted for. Four profiles are detailed conforming to categories in Self-Determination Theory or SDT (Deci and Ryan 2008) with “three broad forms of orientations (amotivation, extrinsic, and intrinsic motivation) and different shades of extrinsic motivation depending on how internalized (or self-determined) the goal of learning a language is within the learner’s self-concept” (205). Such profiles range from seeing English as unreachable, having increasingly negative trajectories with English learning in and out of school, and little to no projection in close L2 future selves—profiles 1 and 2—; to associating English with aspects students liked, having positive trajectories with learning the language and a strong motivation to reaching high proficiency levels in the future—profiles 3 and 4. These last two groups were also mediated by what had been explored in chapter 5, that is, more exposure to the language and an

encouraging, supportive family system. Though SDT and the Future Time Perspective model on linguistic motivation helped the authors sort out students in these four profiles, they argued that “it is possible that L2-domain-specific ideal self takes longer to exhibit some stability” (240), due to the variability of responses across profiles in their sample. With this study, the authors indicate as well how “learners’ language trajectories [...] show that the high school period is a time of important development where attitudes towards English tend to polarise” (241).

All in all, *Ten Years of English Learning in School* is a valuable contribution to the scarce production in longitudinal studies on L2 development, especially at school level. Its structure unravels in a scaffolded, systematic way, containing parallel sections from chapters 2 to 6 in which methods, analyses, results and discussion are fittingly presented. Each chapter adds and complements data that was exposed previously, and the book transitions from insights gained from quantitative data to those gained from qualitative data as it advances, providing a more and more detailed picture of the focal learners’ trajectories and surrounding factors. In addition, this publication does not hide the struggles that embarking in longitudinal research might entail. Though the book stems from a project entitled after Catalonia and only provides information on schools and students from the Barcelona area—a debatable example of the whole region—, it can enlighten both the novel and the more experienced researcher on the relevance of longitudinal studies in SLA, providing an example of successful, carefully designed research.



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Ecotoxicismo: autoras chicanas y justicia medioambiental

Maite Aperribay-Bermejo

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Maite Aperribay-Bermejo parte del panorama socioeconómico actual para denunciar, de manera general, una discontinuidad con respecto a las políticas de conservación y compensación medioambiental. No sólo aborda la situación actual de fragilidad y precariedad que caracteriza el momento contemporáneo (Schmidt-Haberkamp y Gymnich 2022, 1) desde una perspectiva técnica, sino que aboga por una reconfiguración de conceptos como la ética, lo relacional o la humanidad. Ya en la introducción al volumen, se establece que la crisis a la que nos enfrentamos es múltiple (2021, 13), y afecta a las comunidades generando una precariedad multinivel. En este sentido, la cada vez más evidente división entre Norte y Sur Global termina por confluir en una lucha fundamental por los derechos humanos, ya sea para protegerlos o reclamarlos (Aperribay-Bermejo 2021, 14). Es evidente, pues, que las desigualdades sociales se magnifican sanitaria y medioambientalmente, generando violencias contra los cuerpos racializados y el entorno. En particular, la autora hace referencia a la articulación del sistema capitalista y patriarcal, donde los participantes tienen un rol activo en la explotación de cuerpos y del entorno a través del consumo y el crecimiento económico. La producción masiva y la cantidad desbordante de residuos generados no sólo son consecuencias de las prácticas económicas, sino que suponen también una forma de control, vigilancia y opresión sobre las comunidades precarizadas. Aperribay-Bermejo traza la injusticia que supone plantear el crecimiento económico como un ‘mal necesario,’ que se alimenta de la vulnerabilidad de una parte de la población.

Aperribay-Bermejo se apoya en autoras ecofeministas como Alicia Puleo para dibujar una contra-narrativa que aborda nuestra relación con el entorno de una manera autónoma, ética y activa. Estas autoras proponen un paradigma social basado en la interdependencia que supere el antropocentrismo para entendernos como parte de un ecosistema (Aperribay-Bermejo 2021, 15). Las máximas propuestas por la autora pasan por el decrecimiento sostenible, la ética del respeto y los cuidados y el activismo. Si bien el primer capítulo abre una generalización que conecta el momento que vivimos con las corrientes feministas y ecologistas, el segundo se centra en el ecofeminismo que permea la literatura chicana contemporánea. Es importante entender el ecofeminismo como un movimiento situado y consciente de las realidades múltiples e interseccionales, es por ello que el *ecoxicanismo*, o ecofeminismo chicano, según Aperribay-Bermejo, rechaza la categorización binaria o las dicotomías que generan y perpetúan la asimetría y jerarquía de poderes (2021, 19). La autora, como otros especialistas, rastrea los orígenes del término hasta Francia en el siglo XX, aunque lo más interesante resulta la particularidad del enfoque cuando este se nutre de “la experiencia vital” que identifica en Puleo o del pensamiento situado de Donna Haraway. El punto común es precisamente feminista: un cambio de paradigma y la disolución de la jerarquía de poderes a favor de la transformación social (Aperribay-Bermejo 2021, 21).

Si bien la premisa que ofrece la autora puede ser general o introductoria en cuanto a su faceta feminista, es relevante que incida en la importancia de la literatura como una plataforma desde la que reconfigurar el imaginario político y social que afecta a los cuerpos de las mujeres y al entorno. En este sentido, la producción literaria de la literatura chicana contemporánea escrita por mujeres se revela tremendamente significativa en tanto ésta reformula la historia de la colonización y de la violencia contra los cuerpos femeninos y feminizados del discurso hegemónico, alejándose de la representación y el fetichismo mainstream. Para contextualizar los análisis de varias obras chicanas, Aperribay-Bermejo hace un breve recorrido histórico de la segunda mitad del siglo XX. Emplaza el Movimiento Chicano en la lucha contra la contaminación y racismo medioambiental a la que los trabajadores chicanos se veían expuestos en los campos de cultivo de Estados Unidos. Esto es significativo porque plantea una diatriba en la funcionalidad del pensamiento ecologista como respuesta política y social a una determinada situación. Sin embargo, aunque se abordará en los análisis, la asociación entre etnicismo y entorno en el marco literario es una cuestión que subyace al estudio del ecofeminismo chicano y que debería estudiarse más allá de una preocupación occidental por el origen de la soberanía (Holmes 2016, n.p.). Lo interesante de la aportación del presente volumen es la exploración del contexto chicano y la necesidad de transformar la situación laboral y social y no sólo la preservación de la naturaleza, esto es, el activismo medioambiental de la literatura chicana busca alcanzar una justicia social que afecta a las personas discriminadas también sanitaria y medioambientalmente (Aperribay-Bermejo 2021, 27).

En el análisis de la obra *So Far from God* (1993), de Ana Castillo, Aperribay-Bermejo explora algunos de los principios ecofeministas de la literatura chicana, como son la justicia medioambiental, la igualdad de género en entornos laborales y las movilizaciones pacíficas. Para

ello, elije una obra de Castillo que, por su tipología como novela de formación o *bildungsroman*, permite entender el desarrollo cultural y social, la construcción identitaria y las secuelas de la violencia y discriminación racista y de género en el contexto chicano del siglo XX. Como autora feminista, Castillo ejerce su activismo desde la esfera académica y literaria, y en su obra refleja precisamente lo que implica esta lucha de derechos para la comunidad de mujeres chicanas. El análisis de Aperribay-Bermejo nos ayuda a entender cómo la crítica ecofeminista se elabora a través de la denuncia de los derechos laborales y humanos de las trabajadoras chicanas, y cómo esto participa del Movimiento Chicano. Hace especial hincapié en la predominancia de figuras femeninas, las agrupaciones solidarias y colaborativas que estas generan, y las diferentes transgresiones sociales que implica el activismo político y medioambiental. Pese a que puede ser el análisis menos específico con respecto al ecofeminismo, consigue realzar la importancia de entender la representación del racismo medioambiental y cómo el contexto chicano genera espacios de transformación social que denuncian el desarrollo insostenible de la economía capitalista y que reclaman formas de frenar la violencia contra la mujer y el entorno (2021, 37).

Aperribay-Bermejo estudia también el impacto social y crítico de la novela negra de Lucha Corpi, *Cactus Blood* (1995). Uno de los elementos claves de la novela es su imbricación factual y el uso de géneros populares para dar visibilidad a la denuncia social. Esta historia se emplaza en un marco histórico y político que hace hincapié en los eventos reales relacionados con la discriminación, la violencia y los desastres medioambientales. Aperribay-Bermejo explora cómo estas ficciones permiten representar sucesos y crímenes que, de otra manera, serían olvidados o, en el mejor de los casos, cuestionados (2021, 59). El análisis se centra en la capacidad de Corpi para conferir a los colectivos oprimidos e invisibilizados una performatividad política y social. En especial, enfatiza la disposición de la novela a denunciar diferentes violencias y discriminaciones que subyugan al pueblo chicano (y, dentro de este, a las mujeres) así como a la naturaleza. Según Aperribay-Bermejo, esta novela ejemplifica la violencia explícita ejercida contra el cuerpo de las mujeres a través de la explotación del entorno. La dimensión ecofeminista consiste en la representación del entorno natural como cuerpo explotado, pero también como herramienta de explotación, lo que genera una analogía con el cuerpo de la mujer ya que “[c]onquering women’s bodies is central to conquering territories” (Gay-Antaki 2023, 2384). Asimismo, los momentos de reconciliación y de reconocimiento del trabajo de estas mujeres se articulan como una respuesta ecofeminista a favor del desarrollo sostenible y la transformación social.

En su tercer análisis, Aperribay-Bermejo elije la obra de Helena Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995), por su concienciación medioambiental y social a través del protagonismo del campesinado chicano y la contaminación de los campos de cultivo en California. Aunque ampliamente analizada, esta obra permite enlazar los elementos fundamentales del texto con los compromisos ecofeministas del Movimiento Chicano. El análisis traza paralelismos entre la realidad en la que la autora vivía y la que representa en su obra, siendo ésta última de un carácter prominentemente informador y crítico con el sistema agroalimentario. A través de su lectura

crítica, entendemos que la importancia de la obra radica en descubrir la injusticia social: el trabajo chicano es, al fin y al cabo, lo que permite a otros vivir; recolectan los alimentos que otros consumen, al mismo tiempo que ellos se mueren de hambre, de enfermedad y de extenuación. De la misma manera, el trabajo de cuidado de las mujeres que permite a otros ascender se reafirma y visibiliza para después catapultar el activismo chicano a una dimensión global y humanitaria. Asimismo, otros factores analizados son el desarraigo de las comunidades campesinas chicanas (ya sea por el estatus de legalidad o la temporalidad laboral), la criminalización y estereotipación de dichas comunidades y la consiguiente invisibilidad, discriminación y aislamiento, y la vulnerabilidad de los cuerpos de las mujeres y niños, que sufren un mayor impacto de la contaminación por pesticidas y la insalubridad del entorno. Para ambas, autora y crítica, es la desnaturalización y visibilidad de esta violencia lo que permite que el trabajo de los campesinos se dignifique, contemplando la naturaleza y el ámbito laboral no como espacios de tránsito, idealistas y emancipadores, sino como herramientas que subyugan a los más desfavorecidos.

Los últimos dos análisis corresponden a dos obras de teatro de la misma autora, Cherríe Moraga. La primera obra analizada es *Heroes and Saints* (1994), que trasgrede los límites del Teatro Campesino de Luis Váldez, sobre todo en la criticada representación de la mujer como elemento estereotipado (Díaz López 2018, 496). Para ello, Moraga centraliza el rol de las mujeres como agentes de cambio y de emancipación política. La obra está plagada de paralelismos y analogías que generan un compromiso explícito con la realidad que representan. Aperribay-Bermejo explora cómo las minorías raciales resultan víctimas de la explotación e identifica una relación de semejanza entre las mujeres y el entorno, que se configuran como cuerpos sin agencia en virtud de sus asociaciones biológicas. Dicha identificación podría explorarse de manera más explícita ya que la relación mujer-naturaleza es una de las diatribas a las que el ecofeminismo se enfrenta (Holmes 2016, n.p.), y por ser un binomio que fácilmente perpetúa binarismos discriminatorios y polarizadores (Marcone 2011, 198). La discriminación en cuanto a género y sexualidad se analizan en consonancia con las enfermedades que asolan a los personajes de la obra, quienes están sometidos a la ignorancia y discriminación que generan, asimismo, precarización y vulnerabilidad. Por otra parte, este análisis introduce la asociación etnicismo-ecologismo, dado que sus consecuencias metafóricas y materiales pueden entenderse como una jerarquización identitaria. La colectividad, en cambio, es un factor que Aperribay-Bermejo analiza también en *Watsonville: Some Place Not Here* (1994), también de Moraga. En esta obra se explora la continuación de la violencia sistémica y sistemática de las leyes de inmigración y la discriminación racial que engendran. Aperribay-Bermejo identifica la vulneración de derechos que surge de la territorialización y politización de los cuerpos y cómo estos buscan subvertir las formas de emancipación que perpetúan el sistema capitalista y patriarcal. El análisis identifica el ecofeminismo en la colaboración, el rol activo y la recuperación o preservación de la herencia cultural como formas alternativas de desarrollo y habitabilidad, haciendo referencia al pasado prehispánico y la devaluación cultural debido a las fronteras políticas.

Estas autoras escriben como forma de activismo y resistencia política. El suyo es un ejercicio de reivindicación, de lucha, y también de reparación de la memoria e historia chicana. Los cuerpos que atraviesan estas novelas son aquellos que han sido atravesados por todas las formas de violencia del sistema capitalista patriarcal y que han resultado ser, en multitud de ocasiones, un decorado para la lucha de derechos de los que ostentan el privilegio de raza, clase y/o género. Aperribay-Bermejo explora estas obras trazando sus conexiones históricas y culturales, y emplazando el papel de las mujeres dentro del Movimiento Chicano. Si bien es cierto que su aportación a los estudios ecofeministas se articula como un punto de partida, es importante recalcar la necesidad de relocalizar la experiencia vital de las mujeres en el centro del discurso de transformación social. *Ecochicanismo: autoras chicanas y justicias medioambiental* consigue generar atención sobre los planteamientos principales del ecofeminismo y aporta un valioso e informativo acercamiento a diversos ejemplos de la literatura chicana feminista, identificando la experiencia vital de la mujer chicana como una realidad que (trans)forma y cultiva alternativas de vida más justas y habitables.



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Género, Heterodoxia y Traducción: Difusión del Ocultismo en España y en el Ámbito Europeo (1840-1920)

Rosaño Añas y Juan Jesús Zaro (eds.)

Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 2023. 262 pp.

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“**G**énero, heterodoxia y traducción: difusión del ocultismo en España y en el ámbito europeo” es un volumen coeditado por Rosario Arias y Juan Jesús Zaro Vera, fruto del Proyecto de Investigación FEDER. Este volumen propone el estudio de la propagación de las ideas espiritistas y teosóficas, entre otros movimientos, en la España y Europa finiseculares a través de dos enfoques: uno filológico y otro traductológico, constituyendo las dos secciones en las que se divide el contenido. El libro consta de once capítulos a través de los que se abordan cuestiones como la difusión del espiritismo en la España decimonónica, el papel fundamental de la traducción en la proliferación de ideas heterodoxas; así como las circunstancias histórico-sociales de la recepción de este movimiento y la exploración de las comunidades y publicaciones ocultistas que se desarrollaron gracias al arraigo del que gozó. En definitiva, se trata de un volumen que amplía los estudios historiográficos, reconociéndole al espiritismo su condición de corriente de pensamiento relevante en la sociedad decimonónica, al mismo tiempo que se pone en valor la labor traductora, pieza clave en el establecimiento de diálogos transnacionales y la incorporación de géneros literarios procedentes del extranjero.

Además, el acercamiento que se plantea en el libro resulta especialmente novedoso porque no solo incide en la recuperación de numerosas autoras pertenecientes a círculos espiritistas, sino que se integra este movimiento dentro de las corrientes progresistas de la época que, promoviendo la confrontación, hicieron avanzar los derechos.

La primera sección del volumen se abre con “Fantasmas vistos y no vistos: Espiritualismo y ocultismo en la ficción de Violet Tweedale,” trabajo en el que Patricia Pulham estudia la figura de una prolífica escritora escocesa de novelas y relatos de no ficción sobre lo sobrenatural que ha recibido escasa atención crítica hasta la fecha. Pulham centra su estudio *The House of the Other World*, obra en la que se manifiesta la característica voluntad de Tweedale por establecer relaciones de convergencia entre elementos aparentemente antitéticos como la realidad y la fantasía o la ciencia y la metafísica. Patricia Pulham reivindica la trayectoria de esta autora olvidada y destaca el valor de su obra como exponente de la narrativa de casas encantadas y como crisol de movimientos finiseculares y debates culturales en torno a cuestiones espiritistas y profeministas.

En “Espiritismo, teosofía y librepensamiento: La narrativa breve de Ángeles Vicente García (1878–?, s. XX),” Rosa Haro Fernández investiga a otra personalidad literaria disidente y desconocida para el público académico. La autora examina la biografía de Ángeles Vicente García, una novelista y cuentista murciana que a lo largo de su vida se vinculó a círculos intelectuales de librepensamiento como la masonería y el espiritismo. Haro Fernández aborda los cuentos de Vicente García desde la perspectiva de una literatura plural y rica en la que convergen la búsqueda de la Verdad a través de la teosofía y una gran carga crítica que adelantó la lucha por los derechos sociales y la igualdad.

Siguiendo esa línea, Miguel Ángel González Campos trata en su estudio “Florence Farr y la búsqueda constante desde la heterodoxia y el feminismo pagano” sobre otra mujer polifacética y vanguardista que fue injustamente incomprendida por sus coetáneos. González Campos subraya en su trabajo que la vida de Farr ha de comprenderse como su mayor alegato de empoderamiento femenino, dado ese perpetuo inconformismo y sed de conocimiento que definió su trayectoria vital y que la llevó a rechazar las convenciones sociales para acercarse a la heterodoxia en busca de la trascendencia. De este modo, el autor ensalza la figura de Florence Farr como modelo de mujer independiente que sintetizó mediante su obra una singular y progresista concepción de la femineidad, enraizada en el ocultismo y en la promoción de un feminismo unificador.

Sobre la figura de Amalia Domingo Soler versan dos capítulos del volumen. En “Amalia Domingo Soler: Espiritismo, feminismo y reivindicación social” Sofía Muñoz Valdivieso recupera otra figura femenina olvidada por los estudios historiográficos debida su estrecha relación con el espiritismo decimonónico. Muñoz Valdivieso se suma al esfuerzo de Amelina Correa o Gerard Horta, entre otros estudiosos, por establecer la contextualización de este movimiento en una triple reivindicación de Amalia Domingo Soler centrada en aspectos desconocidos de su trayectoria.

La escritora y editora sevillana no solo ejerció de fuerza catalizadora del espiritismo en España sino que logró lo que Muñoz Valdivieso denomina como una importante posición en el panorama internacional, gracias a la proyección que sus textos alcanzaron en la prensa extranjera. Por otro lado, la autora se encarga de subrayar una vez más la alineación de los círculos espíritas con el progresismo, al que Amalia Domingo Soler contribuyó sobresalientemente dando voz a lo subalterno y creando redes textuales de encuentro para mujeres heterodoxas en el semanario *La luz del porvenir*.

Desde las humanidades digitales, “Revisitando los *Cuentos espiritistas* de Amalia Domingo Soler desde la lectura distante: un análisis de sentimiento,” Javier Fernández Cruz ofrece un enfoque completamente novedoso en la investigación literaria y pionero en el análisis de obras en lengua española. Fernández Cruz se sirve de métodos computacionales como el *distant reading* y herramientas de análisis de sentimiento como *Lingmotif* que permiten observar la evolución de la polaridad y los arcos emocionales utilizados en los *Cuentos espiritistas*. El resultado es un trabajo que al combinar distintas metodologías posibilita la indagación en perspectivas estilísticas interesantes que enriquecen los estudios sobre la producción de Amalia Domingo Soler y el campo de los estudios literarios en su globalidad.

La contribución de Borja Navarro Colorado en “Rastreo de rasgos espiritistas en la novela europea decimonónica (1840-1920)” también se fundamenta en una perspectiva cualitativa y cuantitativa para el estudio de novelas en inglés, francés y español del corpus ELTeC que puedan presentar fragmentos de temática ocultista. Navarro Colorado emplea métodos de cálculo de similitud semántica multilingüe para analizar y comparar los textos en búsqueda de datos sobre la evolución del interés de los temas espiritistas en la Europa decimonónica, atendiendo a la densidad de pasajes con rasgos esotéricos, su distribución temporal y lengua.

Por su parte, en el trabajo “«Un poder tan oscuro y más allá de nuestro control»: las cartas de Martineau sobre el Mesmerismo (1845) y la racionalización de temas irracionales,” María Losada Friend toma el conjunto epistolar *Letters of Mesmerism* (1895), obra de Harriet Martineau en la que, a riesgo de comprometer su imagen de intelectual, defendió la efectividad del mesmerismo como método curativo alternativo y expresó la necesidad de estudios que comprobasen científicamente sus ventajas y previnieran de posibles engaños. Losada Friend destaca que esta paradójica faceta de Martineau se justifica en su calidad de educadora social y visionaria, dispuesta a conciliar la ciencia y lo sobrenatural con tal de ofrecer consuelo a la población enferma.

La segunda sección, dedicada al enfoque traductológico, comienza con “Historia editorial y análisis comparativo de las traducciones al español de la novela espiritista de Sir Arthur Conan Doyle *The Land of Mist*,” un estudio de Rocío García Jiménez. La autora traza el recorrido editorial de las diversas traducciones al español de *The Land of Mist*, publicada en 1926 y única obra de corte espiritista de Arthur Conan Doyle. Tras examinar el historial editorial de las traducciones de la novela, García Jiménez constata la pérdida del carácter disciplinar del espiritualismo en la

década de los noventa. Asimismo, el autor analiza descriptiva y comparativamente la primera versión española de 1929, publicada por Ediciones Oriente y firmada por Enrique Díaz Retj, para extraer nuevas conclusiones sobre las modificaciones que ha experimentado esta traducción canónica en las reediciones del primer tercio del siglo pasado.

En “‘La campana de difuntos,’ *El Corresponsal*, Madrid (1842): ¿primera traducción de un texto de Charles Dickens publicada en España?,” Carmen Acuña Partal y Marcos Rodríguez Espinosa abordan en este trabajo un capítulo singular de la historia de la traducción en España, como es el caso de la que se ha considerado la primera traducción publicada en el país de una obra de Charles Dickens: *La campana de difuntos*, editada en 1847 en la Imprenta de Martínez de Aguilar de Málaga y traducida por quien se presenta en la portada como “F.G.”. Tras un análisis preliminar, Acuña Partal y Rodríguez Espinosa revelan que, en contra de lo asumido hasta la fecha, no se trata de una traducción de *The Chimes* (1844), sino que es un extracto de otra obra dickensiana, *Barnaby Rudge* (1840-41), traducida al español a partir de una versión francesa de Amédée Pichot. Asimismo, la investigación concluye que la traducción de *La campana de difuntos* realizada por “F.G.” es un plagio de un folletín homónimo publicado por entregas en el periódico madrileño *El Corresponsal* en 1842, sin firma del traductor.

El siguiente capítulo, titulado “Entre la filología y la teosofía: primeras traducciones de clásicos indios en España,” es obra de Juan José Zaro. El autor analiza el origen filológico y teosófico de las primeras traducciones al español de clásicos indios, prestando particular atención tanto a la filológica de la *Bhagavad-Gita* realizada por Alemany como a la firmada por el teósofo Josep Roviralta Borrell, ambas publicadas en 1896. Zaro Vera diferencia entre las motivaciones de los traductores filólogos, movidos por la accesibilidad del público lector y el engrandecimiento del polisistema literario español; mientras que los teósofos emprenden la labor traductora priorizando aspectos extraliterarios y la difusión de los postulados de dicho movimiento.

Finalmente, en el último capítulo del volumen, “La revista sevillana *El espiritismo*: una historia de traducción y censura,” Miguel Ángel Cascales Serrano evalúa la relevancia de las traducciones publicadas en la revista sevillana *El Espiritismo* para la diseminación de las ideas espiritistas. Cascales Serrano elabora un listado de traducciones que fueron publicadas como artículos y analiza cuestiones como la estructura que presentaba la revista, la inclinación hacia el anonimato de sus traductores o los periodos de censura que sufrió, fruto del enfrentamiento con la Iglesia Católica, hasta la definitiva suspensión de la revista.

A modo de conclusión, este volumen presenta una aproximación novedosa a los movimientos heterodoxos decimonónicos que contribuye desde un doble enfoque filológico y traductológico a la ampliación de los estudios literarios desarrollados en torno al ocultismo y su propagación en Europa. En primer lugar, los trabajos de Pulham, Haro Fernández, González Campos, Muñoz Valdivieso y Losada Friend podrían agruparse bajo una de las ideas principales del libro, que es la reivindicación de figuras femeninas decisivas para la difusión de esta ideología tanto en el

panorama nacional como internacional y su compromiso con los derechos sociales y la igualdad. En segundo lugar, Fernández Cruz y Navarro Colorado ofrecen estudios basados en herramientas computacionales como el *distant reading* que permiten llevar a cabo investigaciones pioneras en el ámbito de los estudios literarios en lengua española sobre cuestiones estilísticas. En tercer lugar, García Jiménez, Acuña Partal y Rodríguez Espinosa manifiestan a través de sus capítulos la necesidad de crear una historia de la traducción que, desde un enfoque microhistórico, permita analizar la influencia de la labor traductora en la aparición de nuevos géneros literarios y puntualizar opiniones consolidadas en el ámbito de los estudios de recepción. Por último, Zaro Vera y Cascales Serrano inciden sobre el papel de la traducción en la diseminación de las ideologías heterodoxas y su contribución al enriquecimiento de los polisistemas literarios.

Este volumen constituye una gran aportación tanto a la investigación literaria como a la disciplina traductológica, sumando datos al estudio de la recepción y propagación del ocultismo en España y en el ámbito europeo. Asimismo, este libro inaugura futuras líneas de investigación que deberían continuar por revisar las aproximaciones meramente historiográficas y seguir indagando en la estrecha relación entre librepensamiento y espiritismo, centrándose en el carácter progresista de estos círculos para recuperar aquellas voces que han permanecido silenciadas por la tradición cultural y la censura.

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The Irish Short Story at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century: Tradition, Society and Modernity

Madalina Armie

New York: Routledge, 2023. 252 pp.

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This volume, along with earlier works published by the same author about Irish Culture and Feminism, provides an analysis of the interactions between fiction and reality in Ireland, by evaluating the short stories written during the Celtic Tiger and immediate post-Celtic Tiger periods (1995-until 2013). It aims at comprehending parts of Irish heritage, society, and modernity through a collection of short stories, due to, as Madalina Armie states in the introduction “the quintessential literary form of the short story can offer vivid depictions of history, capturing and interpreting ideas about Ireland and its people”(1) but also “one of the artistic forms able to interpret what the boom and bust meant for the construction of contemporary Ireland”(3). Considering 2008 as an inflexion point between the Celtic Tiger and post-Celtic Tiger, short stories are adapted to explore not only the connections between historical and political/economic events but also literature and society. In order to investigate these aspects, this book focuses on the possible connecting points of fiction and historical facts at the turn of the twenty-first century, to examine how old and new themes, as well as traditional and contemporary features of short stories are all integrated in the work of a contemporary generation of Irish short story writers investigating during this period. To carry out her study,

Armie explores the short stories of writers such as Claire Keegan, Julia O’Faolain, Colm Tóibín, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, Mary Costello, Emma Donoghue, Kevin Barry and so on, with the aim of analysing themes such as social problems, internal conflicts, religion, familiar abuse, prostitution or double morality, idealised notions of family, rebellion against the oppressive forces, freedoms of emigration, racism and xenophobia, alcoholism and drug abuse.

The preface outlines the volume’s aim and its structure, which is divided into six chapters, each of which examines distinct sections for different features of short stories, arguing the answer to the question “Were these Celtic Tiger years, then, ‘the best of times’?” (6). Considering the Celtic Tiger year firstly as “the national miracle had, almost overnight, become a nightmare, and that Ireland had witnessed the death of the tiger,”(2) Armie investigates this period with an appropriate methodological approach, through short stories as creative forms capable of expressing the rise and fall, taking stock due to the development began in the last years of the millennium against its devastating consequences and losses.

Chapter 2, “Theorising and Discussing Ireland and Its People in the Context of the Post-Celtic Tiger Republic,” provides the definition of Irish Studies as academic fields and answers to the question “what is Irish Studies? And what is the connection between Irish Studies and the contemporary Irish short story?” (9) connecting Irish Culture to English Studies, having been a British colony. It is divided in four sections, in which the writer describes the pros and cons of the love/hate relationship with England, considering the Celtic Tiger years a positive event as Moane states, and the reason that led Ireland to develop without ignoring or forgetting the past and looking at it “not with nostalgia but with indifference, muteness or bitterness, while the newfound prosperity and novelty were celebrated with vigour”(14). Armie also takes into account the influence of religion, women’s movement, inequality and stereotyping, homosexuality and other alternative sexualities, investigating the complex aspects of Irish culture, society, politics, history, immigration and globalization.

In Chapter 3, “Historicising Irishness,” Ireland is described in different aspects and many facets and it is divided in sections in which the Great Famine, emigration and exile, and the consolidation of the power of the Catholic Church are evaluated “in order to understand both the ‘invention’ of Ireland (Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*) at the dawn of the nineteenth century and its ‘reinvention’ (Kirby et al.) at the turn of the new millennium” (44). More specifically, there is a distinction between two faces of Ireland: one characterized by poverty and conservatism, Hunger (deeply analysed in the short story “Shrinking Irishness: A Story about the Great Famine”); whereas the other side of Ireland is characterized by success, wealth, and prosperity, and the writer exhaustively explains the cause and origin of the “duality,” as well as its implications and consequences that led Ireland to a transformation or, as she defines “reinvention of Ireland” (6). It is also worth mentioning the last section of this chapter, “3.3 Monopolising Irishness: A Story about the Making of the Irish Catholic Realm and the Fading of Its Glory,” that focuses on Irish identity during the Celtic Tiger and how religion influenced that period from a religious and

historical point of view. In fact, even if “During the Celtic Tiger period, Catholicism was widely perceived as a retrograde aspect of de Valera’s Ireland” (61) Armie also states that “[a]lthough it might thus be supposed that the Celtic Tiger has devoured religion, the truth is that this during recent decades has definitely become a more individualised and private affair. Rather than a fall in religious belief itself, what Ireland has seen over the past three decades is a fall in religious practice,” concluding that “[t]he role of religion in modern Ireland, as seen in the contemporary short stories written at the turn of the twenty-first century, is ambiguous and carries with it multiple contradictions, just like the picture of Ireland that was painted here” (61).

Chapter 4 refers to “Short- Storying Irishness, Old and New Ways of Narrating Stories.” In the first section, the author clarifies what Irish short story is, explaining how the term was first used in 1880. The purpose of this chapter is to present a study of the Irish short story form, researching the problems of definition and development of short stories in the historical period, in order to answer specific questions, such as “would the short story continue in its historical tradition?” or “[w]hat did short story authors in fact write about?” (71). It is also appropriate to emphasize the author’s decision in developing this chapter while taking into consideration Northern Irish short stories and literature written in the Irish language, rather than treating them as research subjects just because they require a separate book or remind us of the violent past.

Chapter 5, “Exploring Ireland and Its People through the Lens of the Contemporary Short Story at the Turn of the Twenty- First Century” is the most consistent chapter, containing a corpus of twenty-six selected short stories. These short stories investigate the most representative and innovative issues in an attempt to comprehend this unstable time and they are written by both new, younger and well-known authors. Armie illustrates how Ireland was defined throughout the Celtic Tiger period by insecurity, dislocation, loneliness, unhappiness, dysfunctional family structures, pessimism, economic troubles, alcohol and drug use, chauvinism, racism, xenophobia, pollution, and traffic congestion. Therefore, in particular, short stories deal with various issues in modern Ireland, including religious, institutional and family abuse; prostitution, double morality toward sex, and pregnancies, in addition to idyllic visions of marriage and idealized families and stifling communities or their rebellion against oppression; self-awareness and freedom of emigration, which includes alienation, racism, and xenophobia prevailing in modern Irish society as well as alcoholism, drug abuse, loneliness, unhappiness. There are specific short stories that I want to mention such as “Walk the Blue Fields” by Claire Keegan, “Counting the Days” published after the Celtic Tiger by Emma Donoghue and Kevin Barry’s “Ideal Homes.”

In the first short story, “Walk the Blue Fields,” what stands out is the rural atmosphere and the use of metaphorical component enhanced by the colour symbolism that dominates the story, using colours such as white, red, blue, and green. In addition, this bucolic setting, at first glance, seems idyllic and joyful but it actually changes with the development of awareness of previous events that totally upset it, for example, the conception of marriage, that should convey joy and happiness takes on another meaning, in this case considered as “[t]he marriage is a long-term

mistake” (88). In this story, the description of a double identity of Ireland is also noteworthy: on the one hand, this perspective depicts romantic Ireland; on the other hand, it contrasts sharply with the Celtic tiger Ireland, and this contrast emerges clearly from the following quote: “[T]he tension arises from the twofold nature of the world presented: a romantic Ireland, built on ideas such as frugal comfort, strict religious teachings, imposed cultural mores, patriarchy etc., and Celtic Tiger Ireland, broadly characterised by its mad consumerism, secularisation, limitless freedom, gender equality etc.”(87).

The second short story, “Counting the Days,” faces the theme of immigration, the desire of leaving homeland but also the feeling of hope. Diving into the rich symbolism against the backdrop of the Great Hunger, this story emphasises how a family faces love, loss, suffering, and human resilience. Particularly of relevance are the lines in which the author describes the cycle of nature (and implicitly that of life) through the metaphor of the harvest “The imagery of ploughing, sowing and harvesting reminds the reader of the cyclical nature of life and of course implicitly that of the Famine” (160).

The third short story, “Ideal Homes,” is interesting for the satirical character of the title itself, in reference to the ideal home, which is ironic and sarcastic because the time represented by the Celtic Tiger does not indicate a period of growth and a golden age, but rather “leads the reader to think of all the obscure Shades of globalisation” (192). Furthermore, this short story allows to fully understand the sense of opposition between the myth of the age of the Celtic tiger and the truth, as it did not hold true for everyone that it was a profitable period or high expectations as it was presumed. It also demystifies the false myth of globalisation, Irish solidarity and cooperation, as well as reflecting society as a den of crime and violence as “a portrait to challenge the myths of prosperity and social advancement associated with the period” (193).

In the last chapter, “Concluding the story,” Armie underlines the connections of past and present and how they eventually merge bringing together an Irish identity strongly marked by crisis, uncertainty, and broken values, remaining “focussed—often with an almost historiographic commitment—on reading and expressing kaleidoscopically the different layers of Ireland’s history, or what laid buried behind the surface of prosperity and national well-being” (206). The author always includes an alternation and recall between the past and the present, leading to an outlook on the future. The author consistently alternates and recalls the past and present, culminating in a vision for the future that is fully shared and hopefully optimistic; she hopes that the circumstances and conditions that motivated these writers to explore deeply felt and painful themes will eventually give way and leave a better and positive legacy for future writers. And this hopeful view of the future leads the author to claim that “[if] so, they will be the harbingers of change” (213).

In conclusion, *The Irish Short Story at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century: Tradition, Society, and Modernity* is unquestionably a relevant academic work. It is the outcome of

a thorough examination and selection of short stories that capture the essence of significant, socially debated themes. Outstanding in her fluent academic writing, this volume provides an innovative approach for scholars and researchers investigating the historical period through the descriptions and contents of the short stories. Thanks to the volume's well-organized division in chapters and sections, the writer provides for a thorough understanding of each detailed short story, without ever losing the thread of the book.

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The Owl and the Nightingale

Simon Armitage (trans.); with illustrations by Clive Hicks-Jenkins

London: Faber & Faber, 2021. 1-84pp.

ISBN-13: 978-0571357291

The *Owl and the Nightingale* (Armitage 2021) is a poetic journey that delves deep into the heart of medieval literature while resonating profoundly with the contemporary reader with up-to-date language and references. Within the pages of this adaptation, Armitage unveils a symphony of contrasts—between light and dark, wisdom and folly, joy and sorrow—that are present within the disagreements of the two main characters, a wise yet melancholic Owl and a beautiful and exuberant Nightingale. At its core, Armitage’s translation remains faithful to the essence of the original poem, preserving the spirited dialogue between the two birds. However, it is Armitage’s deft touch as a poet and translator that elevates this adaptation to new heights, providing it with a richness and depth that captivates all types of audiences nowadays.

One of the most striking features of Armitage’s translation is his ability to capture the intrinsic medieval language while making it accessible to contemporary audiences. Through his expert use of imagery, metaphor, and rhythm, Armitage breathes life into the ancient text, inviting readers to immerse themselves in its beauty and complexity. Each line resonates with a musicality that echoes the lyrical traditions of the past while remaining distinctly relevant to the present. However, the original version of *The Owl and the Nightingale* is a Middle English poem dating back to the late 12th or early 13th century, with the authorship being anonymous. The poem falls under the genre of the debate poem, a popular form during the medieval period, stylistically

speaking, it is also composed by 900 octosyllabic rhyming couplets which generally follow the poetic construction of iambic tetrameters, which Armitage adapts accordingly.^v

Simon Armitage, is a contemporary British poet and the current UK Poet Laureate, appointed in May 2019, has once again demonstrated his literary prowess with his latest translation of *The Owl and the Nightingale*. He is also known for his versatility across genres, including novels and drama plays, but Armitage's significant contributions to the world of translation, particularly in bringing Middle English poetry to contemporary language are seen in other medieval works.

Following his acclaimed verse translations of Middle English classics such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Armitage 2006) and *Pearl* (Armitage 2016), Simon Armitage shines light on another Middle English poem: *The Owl and the Nightingale* (Armitage 2021). It has been published by Faber and illustrated by Clive Hicks-Jenkins, this latest edition is the focus of this review. Furthermore, Mr. Hicks-Jenkins has collaborated with Armitage on previous editions of his books, including the illustrated edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Armitage 2018) and *Hansel & Gretel: A Nightmare in Eight Scenes* (Armitage 2019)¹, recently rereleased in 2023.

The debate of the two birds revolves around contrasting worldviews, values, and virtues. With the sceptic owl, representing a more pessimistic, cautious and critical outlook on life, while the hedonistic nightingale embodying a more optimistic and joyful perspective. One of the striking aspects of the poem is its use of vivid and often humorous descriptions. The owl and the nightingale engage in witty banter and exchange clever insults, creating a lively and engaging narrative. It explores timeless themes through clever and entertaining dialogue, themes such as the nature of wisdom, the value of pleasure, and the contrasting attitudes towards love and life.

The story proves Armitage's skill to breathe new life into centuries-old texts since the language of *The Owl and the Nightingale* can be challenging for contemporary readers due to its Middle English dialect, but it offers a fascinating glimpse into the linguistic and literary traditions of the time. The poem's original language is not superfluously dense or grandiloquent, which suits well Armitage's poetic voice, however, Armitage's skill is largely shown through when it comes to updating the rural language the birds use, towards a more contemporary sounding English, while preserving the metre and the rhyme of the original. The original poem is erudite and articulate, but also very idiomatic and it has some vulgar language to it, which gives Armitage room to skillfully adapt it. To illustrate these ideas, the following extract from the poem shows the Nightingale's answer to the Owl, where it is seen the different insults she proffers when referring to her feathery counterpart:

1 This edition's illustrations won the 2020 *V&A Illustration Award for Book Illustration*.

Schooled in the art of rhetoric
 the Nightingale's response was quick.
 'So tell me, Owl, why is it true
 you do as evil creatures do?
 The one nocturnal dirge you sing
 is woeful & self-pitying
 & those unlucky souls who hear
 are terror-struck with morbid fear.
 The squawks you aim towards your mate
 disturb the ears they penetrate.
 [...]

(Armitage 2021, 13-14)

Armitage's modern interpretation of the poem provides a valuable bridge between the past and the present, making this literary treasure more accessible and enjoyable for contemporary readers. In fact, during Armitage's BBC Radio 4 Podcast, *The Poet Laureate Has Gone to His Shed*, the poet features excerpts of the poems that he reads to his podcast guests. He also uses the poem as an excuse to introduce the topic of duality making guests choose from a range of items representing each of the birds, in a section that he calls *This or that*. He would ask bifold questions: "Day or night?", "North or South?", "religion or no religion?" (Armitage 2020); while the podcast's guests answer these witty questions in a humorous and often sarcastic way. This binary kind of thinking helps picturing the burlesque and tongue-in-cheek tone of the medieval poem itself, while asking these questions we cannot help but wonder what the purpose of them is. On the one hand, they confront each other, there are only two sides one can pick from, however, they are artificially made-up categories, and they hardly can contain the complexity of our human experience. On the other hand, the fact that these polar opposites never seem to resolve their contrast, seems to point to the futility of such thought categories. In reality, in any argument there are always more sides to it, and this is sometimes beautifully acknowledged in Armitage's podcast by his own guests when they are introduced to the bird's dichotomy. On episode 4 of his podcast, Armitage interviews his lifelong friend John Tiffany, a fellow from his hometown Marsden. They both created a life performance at the Royal Court Theatre in London from *The Owl and the Nightingale* (Tiffany 2022) using Armitage's translation of the poem. In this performance, Armitage narrated the parts of the Owl and the Nightingale was read by Meera Syal and Maxine Peak (Bruxelles 2022)—also a guest at Armitage's podcast (Armitage 2020).

However, when questioned about the translation in an interview at *The Guardian*, Armitage argued that he did not think about this work as a didactic piece, since it does not seem to have a moral lesson for our age. He sees the poem rather as a window to the past where there are reflections and echoes of our times. Consequently, a great parallelism with nowadays society

could be the antagonistic division between both birds, since they are certain that they are right. The author draws a big comparison of the birds with people in our time, in terms of them having access to broadcast their opinionated views both, readily and feistily.

Seemingly, the original poem does not arrive at a neat conclusion, truth or even, understanding. Opposite to other medieval poems or fables where there is always a moral learning to take away, the two birds rather seem engaged in a never-ending debate. They seem to not convince the other but rather, they give each other the privilege of disputing their adversaries' arguments ongoingly. It seems like a debate between the spiritual and the material life. In fact, the poem just ends, it almost looks like a fable on how not to argue since nobody really agrees, heavily implying that the two would continue their own perpetual debate.

Armitage proves himself not only a master poet but also a skilled interpreter of medieval literature, breathing fresh life into a classic text and inviting readers to discover its enduring wisdom for themselves. The poem, which is almost a play with the two birds vying for the spotlight is a performance that is captured representing all the dramatic qualities of their monologues. Faber's beautiful publication of this work garnished with Hicks-Jenkin's illustrations, ensures that it will continue to enchant and inspire readers for generations to come, a testament to the power of poetry to transcend the centuries.



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Abbecedario del posthumanismo

**Elisa Baioni, Lidia María Cuadrado Payeras y
Manuela Macelloni (eds.)**

Milano: Mimesi Edizioni, 2021. 443 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-8857581019

Redactado en italiano por un equipo formado por más de cincuenta especialistas en distintas áreas, este valiosísimo *Abbecedario del posthumanismo* se propone como una investigación en el lenguaje de lo posthumano, esa colectiva *Weltanschauung* que paulatinamente va sustituyendo la centralidad de una filosofía humanista y un antropocentrismo caducos y que necesitan de una profunda revisión—o, mejor dicho, de una abolición en el más puro sentido del término—. Lo que tenemos entre manos es un *Abbecedario*, esto es, un abecé o cartilla, un *primer* de términos que ilustran, desde múltiples perspectivas, la filosofía posthumanista entendida en su sentido más amplio, a saber, no solo como compendio desde disciplinas múltiples y variegadas, sino también como vinculación con prácticas y activismos de carácter social, mundano y planetario.

Como explican en un incitador prefacio las editoras (a quienes enseguida presentaré), se trata de la inscripción del recorrido, ya consistente, de esa necesaria búsqueda de nuevas maneras de expresar el mundo que nos permitan remodelar nuestra propia mirada sobre el mismo, una mirada que más que observarlo a vuelo de pájaro desde un pedestal antropocéntrico, se perciba como parte de ese mundo, comparta, o como se dice en italiano, *condivida* con él. El posthumanismo es monismo, continuidad, *condivisione*, hibridación, proceso. El posthumanismo nos recuerda que la humanidad ocupa una posición auxiliar y accesoria, esto es, innecesaria. Hemos de asumir esta realidad para beneficio de todo. Y el lenguaje es el primer paso en esta dirección. Lo expresan

Baioni, Cuadrado Payeras y Macelloni de manera muy clara: “El lenguaje establece el límite del mundo, pero se convierte en un dispositivo al servicio de un universo al que no se le imponen confines, precisamente porque el posthumanismo nos enseña que la realidad es algo insondable, un eterno preguntarnos sin alcanzar, jamás, una respuesta absoluta” (15).¹ En efecto, insisten en la vocación tentativa de las definiciones que ofrece el diccionario, en su carácter vivo e inacabado. Se trata de definiciones que se pueden catalogar como vocacionalmente Heraclitianas, en su líquida voluntad de esquivar concreciones limitadoras nacidas de concepciones platónico-dualísticas de la filosofía, el lenguaje y el mundo, enteramente desechadas aquí.

El *Abbecedario* comprende 171 definiciones de términos que arrojan luz sobre aspectos clave del posthumanismo, como ahora afectividad, animalidad, antropopoesis, ecocrítica, epigénesis, *embodiment*, filogénesis y ontogénesis, *matterring*, infosfera, nomadismo, nuevo materialismo, progreso, queer, rizoma, *techné*, zootecnia... Como explican las editoras en los agradecimientos finales, en la elaboración del diccionario, con frecuencia los conceptos que ellas lanzaron en su propuesta inicial se vieron sustituidos por otros, inspirados por el trabajo concreto de cada una de las autoras y autores de las entradas. Así, pese a que en ningún momento se pierde de vista esa espina dorsal de la filosofía posthumanista (en su inherente diversidad) y la voluntad de construir un sólido entramado de pistas, definiciones y conocimientos en torno a ella, este diccionario introductorio pone en relación los más diversos ámbitos de reflexión y experiencia.

Las entradas presentan una estructura homogénea. Con alguna excepción, en general se procede desde la descripción de una concepción del término en cuestión (o de su antecedente) desde la perspectiva humanística tradicional, para virar hacia el significado que adquiere desde un enfoque posthumano, que por lo general desdibuja completamente el valor y visión anteriores. En conjunto, y respondiendo a la voluntad global del trabajo, estos términos desvelan una nueva manera de ser y de estar en el mundo para nosotros, animales humanos; una manera de ser que, como decíamos, incorpora todo lo que bajo el anterior paradigma se había considerado otredad y que, *infatti*, no es sino parte y continuidad de ese *nosotros* que pierde vigor en el nuevo, para pasar a fundirse en un monismo rizomático preñado de formas de hibridación en el que, pese a todo, como animales humanos seguimos teniendo serias responsabilidades que no podemos desatender. En relación con la hibridación, un valor añadido de este diccionario es la repetida clarificación de la en ocasiones disciplente distinción entre lo posthumano y lo transhumano. Irónicamente, ninguno de estos dos términos presenta una entrada propia en el volumen. El conjunto, sin embargo, a través de numerosas definiciones y reflexiones, da cumplida cuenta del alcance y significado de ambos, de sus diferencias y de su continuidad.

1 “Il linguaggio resta il limite del mondo ma diviene dispositivo a servizio di un universo a cui non si stanno imponendo confini, perché proprio il posthumanismo ci insegna che la realtà è qualcosa di sondabile, un eterno domandare senza mai avere una risposta assoluta.”

Las editoras de este volumen son Elisa Baioni, Lidia María Cuadrado Payeras y Manuela Macelloni, tres investigadoras adscritas al *Centro Studi Filosofia Postumanista* de la Universidad de Parma, en Italia. Con una formación de base enraizada en las humanidades, cada una de ellas parece haber abordado aspectos distintos y complementarios de la filosofía posthumanista. De este modo, creo que las tres conforman un fenomenal equipo para afrontar la edición de un trabajo de esta complejidad. Junto a ellas, en casi cada página del volumen se intuye la presencia y el magisterio de quien, como explican las propias editoras, sugirió la idea de este diccionario. Se trata del filósofo y etólogo Roberto Marchesini, figura central del posthumanismo en Italia, quien se define como interesado en las alteridades animales y tecnológicas—y en sus continuidades, cabe decir—con el ser humano, y que es fundador y director del mencionado *Centro Studi di Filosofia Posthumanista*. Marchesini es autor de más de una veintena de volúmenes sobre el tema en cuestión, de manera que su nombre es, necesariamente, el más repetido entre las referencias bibliográficas que concluyen cada una de las entradas del *Abbecedario*. Estas referencias resultarán útiles a quienes deseen ampliar la información sobre cada concepto, y aparecen precedidas de un listado de términos que guardan conexión con la que concluye y que constituyen, a su vez, otras entradas del diccionario, lo que permite navegar por el texto de manera relacional.

Roberto Marchesini es también el autor de una breve introducción al diccionario, donde apostilla que “el pensamiento posthumanista es la transformación más fecunda del siglo XXI y está cambiando el horizonte filosófico y epistemológico de nuestro tiempo, modificando asimismo el panorama artístico y los paradigmas estéticos vigentes” (21).² Enfatiza también este filósofo un aspecto esencial: que la filosofía posthumanista (que como propuesta, nos recuerda, se origina en Italia), funda una nueva ontología basada en el principio de relación. Y añade una definición esclarecedora: “Contraponiéndose a las fantasías de ascensionalidad del transhumanismo, la filosofía posthumanista nos muestra la importancia de la relación horizontal entre los organismos y la necesidad de atender a las relaciones y al intercambio cultural, para dar paso a un nuevo Renacimiento ecocéntrico ... que sepa reconocer la vitalidad mutágena e hibridadora de la naturaleza” (22).³ Tras el prefacio de las editoras y la breve intervención de Marchesini, la introducción al *Abbecedario* se complementa con un ensayo más extenso titulado “Postumanesimo filosófico,” donde Francesca Ferrando, otro nombre clave de este pensamiento aún emergente, clarificará la interconexión entre las tres nociones básicas que, como ella recalca,

2 “Il pensiero postumanista si sta rivelando la più feconda trasformazione culturale del XXI secolo e sta cambiando l’orizzonte filosofico ed epistemologico del nostro tempo, modificando altresì il panorama artistico e i paradigmi estetici vigenti.”

3 “Contrapponendosi alle fantasie di ascensionalità del transumanismo, la filosofia postumanista ci mostra l’importanza del rapporto orizzontale tra gli enti e la necessità di aver cura delle relazioni e del commercio culturale, per dar vita a un nuovo Rinascimento ecocentrico ... che sappia riconoscere la vitalità mutagena e ibridativa della natura.”

están en la base del posthumanismo filosófico: el post-humanismo, el post-antropocentrismo y el post-dualismo.

No hay duda alguna de que el *Abbecedario del Posthumanismo* tiene aspectos concomitantes con el *Posthuman Glossary* editado por Rosi Braidotti y Maria Hlavajova en 2018, y con su secuela de 2022, *More Posthuman Glossary*, editada por Braidotti, Emily Jones y Goda Klumbyte. Las preocupaciones y voluntad son similares, aunque los trabajos liderados por Braidotti inciden más en los Estudios Culturales y la interdisciplinariedad, mientras que aquí el eje central son los aspectos filosóficos del nuevo paradigma. Se trata en todo caso de una cuestión de acentos, ya que tienen, cabe repetir, mucho en común. El número de entradas de los dos primeros compendios es similar: como dijimos, 171 en el *Abbecedario* frente a las 160 del *Glossary*, mientras que la tercera entrega, *More Posthuman Glossary*, incluye sesenta y nueve definiciones. Vale decir que, curiosamente, la coincidencia de términos no es alta. Así, son trabajos complementarios, que sin ninguna duda serán de gran ayuda a quien quiera iniciarse en el vocabulario de un pensamiento, unas formas de materialidad y una consciencia que no podemos ni debemos—ni queremos—esquivar.



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American Borders: Inclusion and Exclusion in US Culture

**Paula Barba Guerrero and Mónica Fernández
Jiménez (eds.)**

Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024. 271
pp.

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The edited volume *American Borders: Inclusion and Exclusion in US Culture* offers a comprehensive redefinition of the concept of border in the context of the current era of globalization. By theorizing around notions of neoliberalism, citizenship, inclusion, exclusion, identity and spaces of belonging, the volume aims at shifting away from the traditional interpretation of borders that hinders the conceptualization and understanding of unconventional meanings of space. Through the analysis of different narratives, *American Borders* effectively provides an integrated overview of some of the most valuable contributions concerning the reflection on identity and exclusion in American literature. By revisiting different manifestations of foreignness as explored in film and literature in connection to the social reality, the volume successfully approaches a novel debate around the border that supports the diversity of the American borderland far beyond the scope of the traditional conflict between the inside and the outside of the border.

In the introduction of the volume, titled “Beyond Borders—Inclusion and Exclusion in American Culture,” Barba Guerrero and Fernández Jiménez begin by reviewing the ideas of relevant authors within the far-reaching scope of American cultural studies. Among the reviewed ideas, we find Étienne Balibar’s identification and definition of the border as an institution that has experienced a

significant transformation as a result of the globalization process (2002, 92). As Pantoja-Peschard has suggested, borders are no longer at the boundaries between two nation-states and their function no longer seems to be merely that of containing and separating one sovereign state from another (2014, 39). Yet, far from being prone to disappearing, borders are being “multiplied and reduced in their localization and their function” (Balibar 2002, 92). Authors like Patricia Price seem to share Balibar’s remarks when adding that this multiplication of the function (and meaning) of borders is directly related to the increase of other geopolitical divisions that might have initially been imperceptible, such as class and ethnicity. The introduction follows with a pertinent examination of the connection between the differences among ethnic groups and the development of the United States as an international power. Such connection leads to an analysis supported by authors such as Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, who identify a “differential inclusion” (2012, 159) that establishes which communities or groups are part of the national frame and which are not.

Subsequently, the authors proceed to review some of the recent interpretations of the concept of border that have challenged its historically accepted meaning. Ana M^a Manzanas Calvo, as one of the leading voices in the study of hospitality and the frontier, highlights the complexity of assessing spatiality. As both Manzanas Calvo and Jesús Benito argue in their work *Cities, Borders and Spaces in Intercultural American Literature and Film* (2011), “the alleged new spatial turn of American exceptionalism has always been there” (2011, 2) but because of the “redefinitions of spatial concepts allowed by post-prefixed theories, new spatial definitions do away with dichotomous oppositions” (Antoszek 2016, 1) and thus “reflect the shift from stasis to mobility, activity, and heterogeneity” (2016, 1). It is this new heterogeneous context the one that the authors of *American Borders* explore in order to further a debate on American exclusion, which, in turn, directly relates to the existing instruments of rejection of the United States. Such instruments include but are not limited to violence, dispossession, migrant detention, separation, banning and hatred, all of which reflect how dehumanizing state policies and the regulation of physical borders can be. In connection therewith, in their 2004 work *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler already exposed the need for a reflection around the trope of violence. In their book, they described the implications of said practice, that can raise concerns regarding human rights and lead to issues such as the violation of individual liberties and the potential for abuse of power by authorities.

Barba Guerrero and Fernández Jiménez’s volume consists of three parts, the first of which delves into the influencing factors of borders in the configuration of nations and their identities. Beginning with Karen Tei Yamashita’s emotional and powerful story “Isamu: Becoming Nisei,” which reflects a fictionalized experience in a Japanese American internment camp, the volume’s focus and intention are identified. In relation to the story, Manzanas Calvo centers the first chapter on the practice of forced detention and internment in the United States. Said practice is physically represented by spaces that fall outside the conventional interpretations of exclusion and inclusion, which fail to recognize the basic rights of those incarcerated and the dangers of

demarcated areas that exclude people by use of a “violent inclusion”. Ultimately, this chapter brings us back to Butler’s observations around indefinite detention, about which they questioned the ethical implications of detaining individuals without trial or due process and argued how such practice contributed to perpetuating a violent climate of fear and insecurity. The connection between Manzanas Calvo’s chapter and the following, by Parisa Delshad, is the way in which both authors conceptualize the meaning of “hostile encounters” (Delshad 2024, 68) through a reading and a subsequent reevaluation of specific experiences of relocation and exclusion. In the third chapter of the first part of the volume, Luisa María González Rodríguez reiterates the urgency to discuss the impact of a divisive politics of space that establishes ghettos of exclusion in the host country (2024, 71). As Manzanas Calvo and Delshad, González Rodríguez explores a relevant narrative that approaches the “dichotomy of inclusion and exclusion” (2024, 72) and the application of this dichotomy to a particular experience of an outsider aiming to belong to a new community. In her case, González Rodríguez brings to light the reality of Latinos in the United States by analyzing Raquel Cepeda’s memoir *Bird of Paradise: How I Became Latina* (2013), which delves into the “(b)ordering processes” (2024, 86) and into how they relate to the permanence of racism and inequality in the country.

The next part of the edited volume begins with a highly consistent contribution on the American nineteenth-century fiction that, in turn, considers the effects of strangeness during this period, marked by a strong nationalist feeling. In the first chapter, Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan lays the groundwork for the following chapters of part 2, which follows part 1 as a way of understanding some of the historical aspects related to the “notions of conditional inclusion” (Barba Guerrero and Fernández Jiménez 2024, 11) that have shaped and anticipated the present considerations of hospitality. Similar to Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan, the next chapters also develop around the analysis of fictional narratives that address the subject of the fragmented nation. Yet, they do so by different means. While Ángel Mateos-Aparicio Martín-Albo focuses on the defiance mechanisms within the science fiction genre when it comes to the construction of borders, Patricia San José Rico, in her chapter, highlights the experiences of Black Americans in the US military and thus considers the border not only in terms of space, but also of color and race. The discussion around such borders resonates with the current denial of ethnic realities that do not fit in the narrative of white supremacism and that “marks African Americans as outsiders inside their own native nation,” as it also happens with other ethnic groups (San José Rico 2024, 144). By offering a crucial example of an American exclusive border, San José Rico addresses the nation’s institutions, which, as she points out, “keep demonstrating to [African Americans] their status on non-citizenship, of otherness” (144). In the following chapter, Amanda Ellen Gerke’s idea of “viewing the disposable Other as consumable or exploitable, as a form of violent hospitality” (157) echoes San José Rico’s scrutiny of the mistreatment and disregard of African Americans in the World Wars, during which they were not considered citizens even though they worked and lived for the American democracy (167).

The third and final part of the volume develops the notions of exclusion and inclusion further while reflecting the tone of the book, that looks into the representation of the stranger or the Other in the literary and cinematic realms. In the first chapter, author Jesús Benito explores the post-apocalyptic world of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), revealing the instability of borders, as previous chapters also do. In his case, he discloses several ways in which a dystopian society reflects real life, such as how *The Road* “brings up [...] echoes in a post 9/11 American context permeated by paranoid fears over the presence of alien threats within the national perimeters” (Benito 2024, 186). This reminder of a fear that takes over society is closely related to the understanding of the metaphorical border that continues to reject the possibility to recognize the Other in oneself. As González Rodríguez does in the first part of the volume, Esther Álvarez-López also explores exclusion in the context of the Latino immigration. By exposing the harm and instability of the established political boundaries between the different communities that comprise America, Álvarez-López addresses the invariable unrootedness that migrants experience.

Then, in order to free the migrant communities from their inclusive exclusion (Balibar 2017, 34), Álvarez-López and, more comprehensively, Maria Antònia Oliver-Rotger in the chapter that follows, envision a different America that would allow “for mutuality and kinship in contexts of conditional hospitality and exclusion” (Barba Guerrero and Fernández Jiménez 2024, 13). It is this kinship the one that Oliver-Rotger identifies in Chloé Zhao's film *Nomadland* (2020), in which new forms of attachment originate on the road (Oliver-Rotger 2024, 227). These forms of attachment might, at some point, “come close to the utopia of ‘absolute hospitality’” (227) that the author imagines in environments that are nonetheless characterized by conditional experiences of hospitality far away from the known spaces of inhabitation. In the alternative space of the nomad identified by Oliver-Rotger, we can find parallels with the non-traditional sites of habitation that Muqarram Khorakiwala considers in the next chapter. In it, the author reflects upon the “vilification of Muslim places of worship in the West [that] systematically heightened after 9/11 and more recently during the Trump administration” (2024, 231–32). That way, we return to Butler's 2004 reflection on the problematic of a social and political binarism. After 9/11, the idea of America as a binary society was further perpetuated and any position that did not comply with the two established opinions was considered to be either complicitous with terrorism or to be a “weak link” in the fight against it (Butler 2004, 2). Therefore, Khorakiwala's remarks reinforce the necessity of approaching the reality of the American borderland as a possible “space of political resistance” (Khorakiwala 2024, 248) in search for hospitality in common living areas that do not divide the population.

When considered collectively, the essays that comprise this volume demonstrate that literature is perfectly suitable to depict the conflicts and processes that emerge in response to exclusion defined not only by physical borders, but also by the metaphorical ones. By developing consistent arguments on a nation's responsibility to shift away from the conventional dichotomy of the

border, *American Borders* answers to a revived interest in exploring beyond the delimited spaces and to a wish to challenge the established political order. Overall, the volume provides a valuable resource for academics and students interested in the representation and current understanding of borders in literature and cinema that impeccably completes the existing literature on the subject.



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Indigenous Journeys, Transatlantic Perspectives: Relational Worlds in Contemporary Native American Literature

Anna M. Brígido-Corachán (ed.)

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Indigenous Journeys, Transatlantic Perspectives: Relational Worlds in Contemporary Native American Literature answers to the increasing attention that Native American literature has received in recent years, coming through consequently with fundamental concerns and methodologies to responsibly engage with these texts from transnational contexts since Native American authors, as Anna M. Brígido-Corachán, the editor, states in the introduction, “have intervened in a variety of trans-Indigenous and global debates” (ix). Following the steps of Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd in their celebrated *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, and certainly echoing the thought-provoking dispositions of Chadwick Allen’s *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*, this volume becomes a mandatory reading for anyone interested in the study of contemporary Native American literature, especially if this is being conducted from non-Native settings.

One rarely encounters a volume that is as engaging as this one edited by Brígido-Corachán. The book is subsequent to Brígido-Corachán's *Indigenizing the Classroom: Engaging Native American/First Nations Literature and Culture in Non-Native Settings*, which established a precedent in her editorial approach by considering questions such as responsibility and cultural distance when teaching in a global, non-Indigenous context. This book, however, slightly diverges from the interdisciplinary pedagogical approach of the first volume and adopts a more literary analysis, shaping a web of distinct "place-worlds" (re)constructed by the Native American authors analyzed while venturing into how their imagining of alternative possibilities and the journeys they elicit are expressed. *Indigenous Journeys: Transatlantic Perspectives* considers Indigenous traveling practices and "worlds in motion" as "forms of journeying towards the self and toward the other" and as key components of Native culture trans-temporally, regardless of whether these practices are "physical, metaphysical, historical or existential" (xi). Furthermore, the Indigenous notion of relationality is foregrounded as one of the concepts that orient the eight chapters that constitute the volume, showcasing the unlimited potential of the place-worlds approached where the boundaries between the human and the more-than-human are transcended. Brígido-Corachán appoints to the significance of interdependency in Native American philosophies and traditional practices from the outset of the book, a relational engagement that actively involved "the land and all the beings that inhabit it" (xiii). This concept that proves paramount to the thematic analyses of the texts as it "interrogates individualism, binary logic, and epistemological compartmentalization common in Western philosophical thought" (xiii), enables the authors to simultaneously link their contributions, even when these vary in scope and scale, and to craft a gradual unfolding of how relationality functions, denoting Brígido-Corachán's careful attention as an editor towards the distribution of the chapters that comprise the volume.

Not only does the volume provide a well-oriented journey through the multi-layered and inter-relational concepts that arise from Indigenous epistemologies, especially in relation to the land, but it also brings forth noteworthy contributions, ethically guided in scope and purpose throughout its pages from an array of non-Indigenous scholars whose combination of theories and perspectives with an Indigenous standpoint make evident its universality, or as expressed in the volume, its "worldly vantage" (xix) without disregarding the tribal specificities, experiences and necessities of each local Native community. This volume embodies thus an important exercise of non-Native scholarship doing Indigenous research that succeeds in threading seamlessly in dialogue the widely diverse geographies, tribal affiliations, identities, and styles of the literary authors whose work are analyzed, from Gordon Henry Jr. and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, to Louis Owens, Ofelia Zepeda, and Simón Ortiz, among others. One of the singularities of this book is that it ventures into Indigenizing the perspectives towards texts produced in non-Native American contexts as well, setting a transatlantic dialogue between Native American authors and the contexts of the Basque country through the works of Fernando Aramburu, and Ghana through those of Ayi Kwei Armah; a dialogue that also encompasses the very positionality and individual

contexts of the contributors of the volume. Thus, the resulting transnational conversations raise awareness about the significance of (contemporary) Native voices in the planetary scale, while shedding light on the need and ways to question and decolonize the Eurocentric/Western academic legacies.

Indigenous Journeys: Transatlantic Perspectives embodies a journey in itself, moving from the micro to the macro, and across different facets of relationality, which can be considered as the primary compass to guide the journey through its pages. By first delving into the notion of relationality itself, Silvia Martínez-Falquina opens the volume with the chapter “Grounded Relationality: A Reading of Contemporary Anishinaabe Literature (Gordon Henry, Leanne Simpson, Louise Erdrich),” where the potential of relationality is reconsidered by examining how terms like transmodernity, cosmopolitanism, and planetarity have recently taken the relational turn. Nevertheless, as Martínez-Falquina deftly argues “in spite of evident culture-specific articulations of this idea, Indigenous peoples have been speaking the language of relationality all along” (4). Basing her analysis on the works of Gordon Henry, Leanne Simpson, and Louise Erdrich and using Anishinaabe relational thought as her lens to read the texts, Martínez-Falquina ponders on the deeper implications that Native American literatures convey as “a definite way of being open to otherness [one that] extends to all there is, animate or inanimate, past or present” (4). Therefore, the author emphasizes Glen Coulthard’s and Leanne Simpson’s notions of “Grounded normativity” and “resurgence,” to address how storytelling grounded in place is first and foremost regarded as a marker of resistance to settler colonial structures through Anishinaabe relationality, which, at the same time, “can also make an invaluable contribution to the reflection on the world we have today, and the world we have for the future” (20).

Shifting the focus to Louis Owen’s work, the second chapter “Spider’s Embrace: Louis Owen’s Web of Identities in *Dark River*” enables David L. Moore to examine another complementary facet of relationality through the Choctaw-Cherokee scholar and novelist’s work, that is, (the aesthetics of) kinship. Relationality has always been an integral part of Native American and mixed-blood identities through the threads of kinship and community that preceded colonial nation-state configurations. This web of relationships that sprout from the land itself, however, as Moore analyses, is highly impacted by dispossession, which makes frailty and relationality simultaneous realities: “Interdependence and relationality may give life, but they also make it vulnerable” (31). Moore bases his approach on Vizenor’s notion of “narrative chance” to subvert America’s metanarrative of Manifest Destiny through Native sovereignty and trickster potentiality, self-representation, and weighty irony, that can turn consecutively the frailty and vulnerability of relationality into a source of power.

The third chapter augments the scale of relationality to thoroughly develop the concept of “cross-worlds,” addressed by Robert Lee in “Cross-Worlds: The Sight and Sound of James Welch.” An approach to James Welch’s five novels allows Lee to observe how Welch’s “sense of

worlds colliding, or at the very least overlapping” (56) is contiguous to the idea that spatiotemporal frameworks and kinship networks are also complex webs of relationality that can be accessed and perceived in their interfaces; thus “collisions of time, Native pasts negotiating their way into the present, or location, Native prairie to township or penitentiary” are coalesced with sexual worlds or “with tribal worlds within tribal worlds as in the historic past” as territories to be journeyed (56).

Joanna Ziarkowska’s “Slender Vial of DNA / For Sale: Dismantling Genomic Articulations of Indigeneity in the Poetry of Heid E. Erdrich” retrieves the conversation on disruption of kinship structures due to bio-colonial commodification of Indigenous bodies as problematized in the poetry of Erdrich. Ziarkowska’s analysis illustrates the potentiality of Indigenizing post-human studies as she interrogates, along with Erdrich, the genomic projects that articulate Indigeneity as “based on biological descent, thus giving no heed to land ethics and relationality” (77), certainly replicating the blood-quantum policies, and as argued by Kim Tallbear in Ziarkowska’s chapter: “usurp[ing] the right to intervene in Indigenous cultural and tribal sovereignty” (78). This is regarded by Erdrich as a threat to Indigenous peoples worldwide and hence establishes transnational coalitions “that draw attention to the mechanisms of settler colonialism as a global phenomenon” towards the eradication of such structures (97).

Continuing with the global coalitions against bio/colonialism, the fifth chapter of the volume “A Futurism That Sees No Future: Recognition is Ayi Kwei Armah, James Welch, and Corwin Clairmont” foregrounds the transatlantic relationality between Native American and Ghanaian anti-colonial resistance during the 1960s and 1970s and its continuance through the construction of place-worlds informed by land ethics by the authors and artists addressed by Kathryn W. Shanley, the author of the chapter. Shanley’s pages are a call for action against the extractivist logics of colonialism and environmental degradation as a global structure to be countered via hopeful imaginations everywhere, through, for instance, resignifications of waste, that evidence how “[o]ur responsibility cannot be avoided” in this landscape of devastation (118).

In a similar line, the following insightful chapter focuses on the issue of reparatory justice as a healing source of relationality structures in the Anishinaabe and Basque contexts. Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz in “Atonement and Forgiveness as Reparatory Justice in Louise Erdrich’s *LaRose* and Fernando Aramburu’s *Homeland*” succeeds in interconnecting the experiences of Anishinaabe and Basque peoples who after undergoing contexts of oppression, political coercion, and cultural genocide work for the survival, healing, and sovereignty of a community striving for justice. Ibarrola-Armendariz concludes that narratives such as these can be regarded as compelling attempts of reparative justice “may have beneficial results in environments where, more often than not, retributive justice has proved mostly ineffective” (147).

Anna Brígido-Corachán in her chapter “Relational Bodies in Motion: A Trans-Indigenous Reading of Ofelia Zepeda and Irma Pineda’s Pace-Based Poetry” develops a transborder and

trans-Indigenous analysis of the (linguistic) re-mappings that Zepeda and Pineda's trajectories elicit, which re-signify home "as an expansive and dynamic place [that] creatively interrogates the neo/colonial 'cognitive mapping of Native lands and bodies' in settler North America" (157). These crossing of borders is not only produced in and through space, but through language, evidencing the role that linguistic borderlands have played in the configuration of Indigenous identities. Brígido-Corachán delves into the potentialities of the motions of Zepeda and Pineda's bodies and their relationship to their place-worlds as embodied subversions of colonial discourses that altogether problematize the very notion of borders from a grounded relationality, land-based perspective.

The final chapter takes relationality to the level of the "galactic," where Ewelina Bańka builds upon Simon Ortiz's poetry in "A Prayer from the Galaxy of the Soul: Simon J. Ortiz's Poetry of Continuance" to take relationality "beyond," addressing the expansiveness of the term to other communities and even the universe that lies beyond his Native Pueblo. In Bańka's view, this all-encompassing strategy encountered in Ortiz's place-worlds is rooted in Indigenous systems of knowledge, "a universal prayer for the continuance of humankind" (192) where individuals in their journey towards the self, are encouraged to take a stance and engage in creative struggles as forms of partaking in the fabric of communal human responsibility that involve us all.

In conclusion, *Indigenous Journeys: Transatlantic Perspectives* is without a doubt an invaluable contribution to the contemporary study of Native American literature and a clear instance of what Indigenous research is about in non-Native avenues by European scholars. This book succeeds in crafting a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to diverse Native American place-worlds that never loses sight of Indigenous epistemologies and Indigenizes complex theoretical lenses such as post/trans-humanist thought, which renders the volume interesting to a wide spectrum of readers, from those who may encounter themselves drawn curious for the first time toward the subject, to those already knowledgeable in Indigenous research, especially from a transatlantic context. All in all, reading *Indigenous Journeys: Transatlantic Perspectives* constitutes a thorough academic experience, innovative and insightful at every level.



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Narratives of the Unspoken in Contemporary Irish Fiction: Silences that Speak

María Teresa Caneda-Cabrera and José Carregal-Romero (eds.)

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Jean-Paul Sartre once said that “the writer is situated in his time; every word he utters has reverberations. As does his silence” (132). *Narratives of the Unspoken in Contemporary Irish Fiction*, edited by María Teresa Caneda-Cabrera and José Carregal-Romero, is a volume particularly interested in those “reverberations” caused by the different forms of silence. Irish history is marked by various “conspiracies of silence” that have actively sought to conceal “inconvenient truths” and silence “discordant voices,” the repercussions of which resonate to this day. This wall of silence, as argued by the various authors of this volume, has been courageously torn down by contemporary Irish writers. Thus, it is no coincidence that this volume was cleverly subtitled *Silences that Speak*.

Narratives of the Unspoken compiles eleven essays examining diverse aspects of silence. The first essay, written by the editors, serves as an introduction, offering a comprehensive overview of

the numerous theoretical approaches encountered within the volume. As noted by both authors, many of the essays “share critical frameworks and theoretical notions” and can be placed in direct dialogue with one another (2). Caneda-Cabrera and Carregal-Romero, however, transcend this introductory role by offering a compelling reading of the current Irish context that delves into the various sociocultural transformations the country has undergone in recent decades, as well as highlights how contemporary Irish authors have contributed to making visible the different forms of oppression carried out by various Irish institutions, such as the Church and the State (9). But the main contribution of the two authors, I claim, lies in their proposition that contemporary writers have also rediscovered positive aspects of silence, seeing it as necessary for the establishment of “constructive dialogues” (4) and also as a vital stage in the healing of traumas and the process of personal reflection (10).

The remaining essays expand on these reflections through the works of authors such as Emma Donoghue, Evelyn Conlon, Colm Tóibín, among others. Although the table of contents does not follow a strictly chronological order, some thematic progression can be observed. After all, the first two essays discuss novels set during the Great Famine (1848-1850), and the last ones are dedicated to new forms of silence faced by the youth of the 21st century.

Some common themes can be identified across various essays. Many of the historical fictions studied, for example, examine silence alongside gender issues. This is the case with the ones written by Marisol Morales-Ladrón (Chapter 2) and Teresa Caneda-Cabrera (Chapter 3). The former turns its gaze to two historical novels by Emma Donoghue, *The Wonder* (2016) and *The Pull of the Stars* (2020), framing its analysis within Memory Studies (23). More specifically, Morales-Ladrón interest lies in the concept of “cultural memory,” which criticizes traditional historiography “for its linearity and static narrative of events” (23-24), suggesting instead that history and memory are “individual, social, and culturally informed” (24). This approach, she argues, allows for the identification of “gaps, omissions, and silences largely missed in mainstream historical accounts” (24). For her, these two novels by Donoghue represent fertile ground for this deconstruction of the historical past, as they denounce forms of oppression and silencing against women, systematically carried out, for example, “by male-dominated institutions of religion and medicine” (22).

Caneda-Cabrera, by her turn, explores the theme of female representation in *Not The Same Sky* (2013) by Evelyn Conlon. The novel is inspired by the true story of the Famine Orphan Scheme, which sent more than 4,000 orphan young women to Australia between 1848 and 1850. What is particularly interesting in Caneda-Cabrera’s contribution is how she incorporates theoretical tools from translation studies, especially the concept of *transmigration*, which “has been used in translation studies as a trope for the relocation of pre-existing texts within a new context to foreground how texts, discourses, and ideas are displaced and revoiced” (49). Recognising the political potential of the concept, she suggests that narratives like *Not in the Same Sky*, by

addressing ideas of displacement and silencing, can be read as “a form of hostile translation” (51), since “the novel lends itself to be read as a dramatization of what happens when a language and the human group that speaks it come under intense pressures from another language and another human group” (53).

In Chapter 7, Eibhear Walshe, drawing on his experiences writing the novel *The Diary of Mary Travers* (2014) and compiling *The Selected Writings of Speranza and William Wilde* (2020), reflects on how literary criticism can also contribute to the silencing of marginal voices. His focus falls on Speranza Wilde, mother of Oscar Wilde, known in the 19th century for her poetry and activism (132-133). Walshe examines the gradual silencing of Speranza within historical and literary tradition following Oscar’s trial, when she became the victim of a defamation campaign that unjustly blamed her for her son’s supposed inappropriate behaviours (136-137). It is this silence that Walshe sought to break with his research, also highlighting the responsibility of new generations to correct distortions and injustices of the past (137).

Other perspectives that intersect gender and silencing appear in Chapters 4 and 7. In the former, Carregal-Romero explores silence as an aesthetic component in Colm Tóibín’s fiction. Focusing on the author’s “gay writings,” Carregal-Romero observes how Irish religious conservatism imposes distinct forms of silence on Tóibín’s gay characters. This theme, Carregal-Romero argues, is felt not just thematically but also aesthetically, through “gaps and silences” (68) that hinder communication between characters. Thus, “much is transmitted through allusion, connotation, and indirection” (73). Furthermore, Carregal-Romero also points out that prejudices can become internalized by the characters themselves, resulting in self-denial, as happens with the fictional version of Henry James in *The Master* (76-77).

Finally, one can argue that gender is also central to Thomas O’Grady’s insightful essay in chapter 7. In fact, it is possible to read it as an essential complement to the previously reviewed essays. Drawing from the novels and short stories of Kevin Barry, O’Grady notes how the ideals of masculinity, still strongly influential in contemporary society, can also drastically affect male heterosexual characters. Thus, the men at the centre of Barry’s narratives are also tormented by strong feelings of “loneliness, isolation, and low self-esteem” (110). Cultural expectations, however, lead them to conceal such negative feelings within themselves, striving to maintain a facade in their social lives (112). This is an issue that permeates his entire body of work, but which, according to O’Grady, takes on distinct contours when comparing his short stories and novels (116). While the former tend to offer some form of epiphany at their conclusion (116), the latter assume darker and more melancholic tones, often enclosing the protagonists through their inability to communicate, a pattern that repeats both in *City of Bohane* (119-120) and in *Night Boat to Tangier* (124-125). The exception, according to O’Grady, falls on the fictional portrait of John Lennon in *Beatlebone*, where the musician emerges at the end of the narrative with a renewed desire to express himself (122).

Chapter 8, written by Séan Crosson, stands apart from the other essays for using a non-fiction work as its object of analysis—the documentary *Rocky Road to Dublin* (1968) by Peter Lennon. In his text, Crosson delves into James Smith’s concept of “architecture of containment,” which underscores that the formation of the Irish national identity entailed the systematic suppression of voices that contested the power of the Church. Particularly compelling in his analysis is how he combines Smith’s principle with Antonio Gramsci’s conceptions of hegemony and common sense (152). This allows him to highlight the active role of Ireland’s political elites in the oppression of dissenting voices, as well as to remind that art can be used as a tool for the naturalization of ideas. One example is the stereotype of the Irish priest, “repeatedly depicted as the moral arbiter and centre of film narratives” (156), aimed to naturalise the Church’s power among the Irish populace (163). He concludes that Lennon’s documentary represents a milestone in Irish cultural history for its pioneering role in denouncing the mechanisms of censorship employed by the Church and the State.

Smith’s “architecture of containment” also assumes structural importance in Chapter 10, written by Caneda-Cabrera. Her focus is on *The Cruelty Men* (2018) by Emer Martin, a novel that, echoing discussions from Chapter 3, also addresses the notion of “hostile translation” by narrating the story of the O Conaills, an Irish-speaking family forced to relocate to County Kerry by the Irish Government in 1935 (201). The novel denounces different forms of “institutional abuse” (196) through the stories of the O Conaill children and “appropriately functions as a text that (...) destabilizes the sanitized discourse of consensual silence” (198). However, as Caneda-Cabrera points out, Martin helps to dignify the victims of abuses perpetrated by the Church and the State by making the six children of the O Conaill family the narrators of the novel (201-202). Giving voice to underprivileged groups, she concludes, is a way to break the conspiracies of silence that persist within Irish society (209).

One of the most compelling contributions to this volume is Elke D’hoker’s analysis of silence in Irish short stories in Chapter 5. She notes that literary devices such as ellipsis, the unsaid, fragmentation, among others, were extensively explored by international Modernist authors, cautioning against understanding them merely as a reflection of the oppressive Irish society. However, this does not prevent her from acknowledging that Irish authors establish a well-articulated relationship between those aesthetic innovations and the various themes of repression that marked the history of post-independence Ireland (89-90). Finally, D’hoker adds to the debate by recognizing two distinct moments in how authors address the issue of silence: between the 1960s and 1980s, the need to “break the silence” and give voice to those previously silenced prevailed; in more recent short stories, however, silence also emerges as a sign of respect for the other, or as a form of communion with nature, or even as a necessary element to maintain privacy and independence (99-103).

These new approaches to silence, however, do not preclude its traditional repressive nature in contemporary contexts. This is the thesis addressed in the chapters 9 and 11, respectively

written by Asier Altuna-García de Salazar and José Carregal-Romero. The former analyses five novels by Donal Ryan, an author whose fiction, in Salazar's words, "represents individual and community minor/major traumas, tensions, hidden secrets, shame, crises, violence, prejudice and inconvenient truths, contained by silence" (167). Framing his analysis from the notions of silence conceived by Bourdieu (169) and Foucault (170), Salazar argues that Ryan's novels "engage with many of the silence/s in contemporary Ireland" (174) in order to push "against imposed muteness, systemic social silences and the more extreme unspoken and unsayable" (174). Finally, Salazar concludes, silencing represents a strategy of power and social control (185), which brings us back to Smith's concept previously discussed.

Carregal-Romero, meanwhile, examines two novels by Sally Rooney, *Conversations with Friends* and *Normal People*, to investigate how the intensely competitive nature of contemporary society, underscored by neoliberal values promoting pronounced individualism, imposes significant pressure on younger generations. This compels them to conceal weaknesses and vulnerabilities and mute their resentments. In Rooney's work, the characters' internal anguish is exacerbated by their silence (214). Furthermore, Rooney's narratives probe into the ramifications of social media on the daily lives of young people (220). He notes that today's interconnected existence promotes a performative society, where "an imperative to regulate oneself and be likeable requires adherence to behavioural scripts" (222). Carregal-Romero concludes that Rooney's characters only find a healing process when they engage in "honest communication, mutual caring, and acceptance of one's own and the others' vulnerabilities" (230).

To conclude, the exceptional quality of the essays compiled in *Narratives of the Unspoken* makes it an indispensable volume for all those interested in understanding the multifaceted nature of silence in contemporary Irish fiction. Moreover, it is equally evident that the vast array of theoretical lenses employed by the authors establishes this volume as essential reading even for those interested in the theme of silence beyond the Irish context. Indeed, the scope of discussion achieved throughout the volume also invites various comparative approaches. Finally, a challenge to the editors: why not also a volume dedicated to silence in poetry?



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The Emmett Till Trauma in US Fiction: Psychological Realism, Magic Realism, and the Spectral

Martín Fernández FernándezNew York: Peter Lang, 2023. 152 pp.
ISBN: 9781636672564.

In 1955, the shocking images of the open-casket funeral of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till forced US society to confront the consequences of the deep-rooted racial violence that plagued the nation. Pictures of the brutalised body of Till, who had been lynched by two white supremacists for allegedly whistling at a white woman, were published at the insistence of his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, who demanded: “Let the world see what I’ve seen” (Till-Mobley and Benson 2003, 139). Emmett Till’s gruesome murder and the subsequent terrible miscarriage of justice catalysed a wound in American society that remains unhealed to this day. Almost seven decades later, Martín Fernández Fernández presents *The Emmett Till Trauma in US Fiction: Psychological Realism, Magic Realism, and the Spectral* (2023), the first single-authored monograph on the representations of the case in American fiction. Aiming at shedding light on this everlasting traumatic wound, in this book Fernández Fernández conducts a thorough examination of the historical and mythical significance of Emmett Till’s lynching and provides an extraordinary and solid study of the literary reverberations of the case in US culture and literature.

Neatly organised into four chapters preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion, Fernández Fernández's monograph carefully traces the ways in which the figure of Emmett Till still haunts the US historical, social and cultural paradigm whilst placing the focus on the role of literature as "an avenue for potential redemption" (34) and a space for healing "in which trauma can be further and more thoroughly explored" (39). Through its detailed yet accessible narrative, the book combines a complex theoretical framework that blends black studies, Dominick LaCapra's trauma theory and Derridean spectrality to examine three novels influenced by the figure of Emmett Till: Bebe Moore Campbell's *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine* (1992), Lewis Nordan's *Wolf Whistle* (1993) and Bernice L. McFadden's *Gathering of Waters* (2012).

The introductory chapter focuses on unveiling Emmett Till's haunting presence in US culture and, more particularly, in the African American collective imaginary. As the author discusses in these early pages, the figure of Emmett Till is constantly invoked in conversations around racial discrimination, violence and systematic racism, and his legacy continues to fuel civil rights activism, like the Black Lives Matter movement, in the same way that it fuelled the Civil Rights Movement back in 1955. The vast evidence of Till's ongoing presence discussed by Fernández Fernández evinces, in his words, that the Emmett Till wound "has never been completely healed" (7) and that still requires attention. It is precisely the purpose of the monograph to shed light on the ways in which US speculative fiction has attempted to deal with these unhealed wounds.

The first chapter, entitled "The Emmett Till Case: Origins, Background, Trauma," is structured around three thematic parts that serve as a bridge between Emmett Till's bibliography, the historical context of the Jim Crow Mississippi, the theoretical and conceptual framework and the following literary analysis. The first section "Prelude and Aftereffects of the Lynching" contextualises both the life and death of Emmett Till and the political and cultural impact of the lynching. In "The Mythical Narratives of the Southern Way of Life," the second section of the first chapter, Fernández Fernández examines the race-based and gender-based ideologies that shaped southern society and explores their connection to the attack. His in-depth discussion of the myth of the "black beast rapist" (23) and the idealisation of the white southern woman is valuable in providing the reader with a comprehensive contextual understanding of the sociocultural dimensions of Emmett Till's death. Lastly, the final section of this chapter, "Trauma, Specters, and the Potentialities of Fiction," delves into two of the main theoretical perspectives that will shape the literary analysis: Dominick LaCapra's approach to the potentialities of the relationship between trauma and fiction and Jacques Derrida's theory on the figure of the ghost as a conceptual metaphor for unresolved trauma. By exploring "the interconnections between trauma theory and spectrality studies" (32), the author argues that literature has proven to be, in terms of LaCapra, an "expansive space" (LaCapra 2001, 185) through which US society has attempted to heal or *work through* the traumatic wounds that haunt it.

The following chapters concentrate on Fernández Fernández's own interpretation of the three novels previously mentioned. Due to the different natures of their approach to Emmett Till's case, the author devotes one chapter to each novel, which allows him to present a multidimensional and complex analysis of the different perspectives on trauma narrative and trauma writing; that is, through the lens of psychological realism, magic realism and the spectral.

The second chapter of the monograph, "Through Psychological Realism: Bebe Moore Campbell's *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine*," covers Campbell's literary reaction to the Emmett Till trauma through psychological realism. Fernández Fernández notes that the author of *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine* (1992) works through Till's unresolved trauma by presenting a narrative focused on exploring the psychological complexity of the case as well as on establishing "a fictionalized historical conversation between victims and perpetrators" (44). In this chapter, the author explores how the reconstruction of not only Till's tragic story but also of the perpetrator's personal stories and ghosts opens up new possibilities for understanding the several intertwined layers of oppression that may have contributed to Till's tragic outcome. The author observes Campbell's interest in voicing the perpetrators' point of view in her fiction as an attempt to unearth the unresolved traumas that already haunted the community of the Mississippi Delta in 1955. By using the aesthetics and premises of psychological realism, the author claims that Campbell's text aims to fill the gaps in Till's story, "provide readers with an avenue to work through Till's lynching" (70) and find potential redemption.

In its third chapter, "Through Magic Realism: Lewis Nordan's *Wolf Whistle*," the monograph looks into Lewis Nordan's phantasmagorical narrative, which is heavily influenced by Nordan's personal connections with the crime and the profound sense of "white guilt" (74) rooted in his initial lack of response to the case: "My father was a friend of one of the guys who killed Emmett Till. We knew their family, and yet when it happened, we withdrew into a cocoon of silence, even at the dinner table" (Nordan 1997, 84). It is mostly from this standpoint that Fernández Fernández examines Nordan's combination of magic realism and grotesque humour with the narration of traumatic events and the characters' attempts to find a way of coming to terms with them. His deconstruction of the novel ultimately evinces the therapeutic endeavour of the text itself, which despite its magic-filled narrative, proves to provide both readers and the author the possibility of working through both trauma and guilt.

The fourth chapter, "Through the Spectral: Bernice L. McFadden's *Gathering of Waters*," studies the spectral reality crafted by McFadden in relation to memory and communal healing. Building on Derrida's study of the spectral, Fernández Fernández presents a thorough review of the role of the ghost in fiction that culminates in a noteworthy analysis of McFadden's particular conjure of Emmett Till's spectre as a metaphor for the unresolved wounds of racial trauma that still haunt the US to this day. Through his close examination of McFadden's haunted narrative and the characters' struggle to escape the acting-out phase, the author vindicates the need to accept

and acknowledge our collective ghosts, so we can work through the tragedies they represent and find closure. In Fernández Fernández's words, "if the specters of trauma are ever to be exorcized, one should begin by acknowledging and listening to, the hidden messages that they incessantly try to convey through their haunting" (131).

In his conclusion to the monograph, Fernández Fernández reflects on the cultural and literary legacy of Emmett Till as an extraordinary example of the potentialities of fiction as an "expansive space" (LaCapra 2001, 185) for working through trauma and finding reconciliation, a thesis that his examination of the three novels has succeeded to validate. The author's final remarks end with an enthralling examination of the complex tapestry that constitutes US history of racial discrimination against African Americans and that challenges time linearity by inexorably weaving together narratives of racial injustice and resistance, such as the Emmett Till incident and the Black Lives Matter movement.

All in all, Martín Fernández Fernández's *The Emmett Till Trauma in US Fiction: Psychological Realism, Magic Realism, and the Spectral* (2023) offers a solid and comprehensive study of the literary reverberations of Emmett Till's lynching and of how these pieces of fiction have contributed to work through collective and individual trauma. Building upon established scholarship in trauma and spectrality, the monograph strives to present a clear and well-wrought analysis of the approximations of Bebe Moore Campbell, Lewis Nordan and Bernice L. McFadden to trauma writing as well as to engage with a vast range of historical, theoretical, and conceptual approaches in a precise and accessible way. For this reason, Fernández Fernández's book is a highly valuable resource for any reader interested not only in Emmett Till's figure and his literary afterlives but also in the exploration of the uses of literature in coming to terms or working through trauma. In brief, *The Emmett Till Trauma in US Fiction: Psychological Realism, Magic Realism, and the Spectral* (2023) is a significant scholarly accomplishment and an outstanding contribution to the study of trauma in relation to race, gender and cultural memory.



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Deirdre Madden: New Critical Perspectives

Anne Fogarty and Maïsol Morales-Ladrón (eds.)Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022.
264 pp.

ISBN: 9781526118929

Deirdre Madden, born in 1960 to a Northern Irish Catholic family, has garnered numerous awards for her work, which spans various themes such as memory, identity, complex family relationships, the Troubles, and the integrity of artistic life. Furthermore, her literary contributions have been translated into multiple languages. Even though *One by One in the Darkness* (1996) has received considerable critical attention most likely because the novel focuses on the impact of violence on private lives. Madden's debut novel, *Hidden Symptoms* (1986), unfolds in Belfast during the Troubles, painting a poignant picture of a city paralyzed by hatred and fear. In her second novel, *The Birds of the Innocent Wood* (1988), Madden employs Jacobean horror to delve into the buried traumas and repression of family life in rural Ireland. In *Remembering Light and Stone* (1992) Madden explores tensions between cosmopolitanism and rootedness. Conversely, *Nothing is Black* (1994) delves into themes of memory, the complexities of mother-daughter relationships, materialism in contemporary Ireland, and the integrity necessary for an artistic life. On its part, *Authenticity* (2014) marks a shift towards greater expansiveness and complexity, while *Molly Fox's Birthday* (2008) explores professional vocations against a backdrop of meditation on human identity. Eventually, *Time Present and Time Past* (2014) sees Madden meditating on time and memory. In addition to her novels for adults, Madden has authored three children's books: *Snake's Elbows* (2005), *Thanks for Telling Me, Emily* (2007), and *Jasper and the Green Marvel* (2011). In these works, she addresses themes such as the perils of fame, the corruption of riches, and the distortions of

the media. As highlighted in Frank McGuinness's preface to *Deirdre Madden: New Critical Perspectives*, Madden's fiction is united by her profound understanding of human failure, her recognition of the proximity or distance of happiness, and her awareness that some things can never be repaired.

Nevertheless, it is the editors of the book, Anne Fogarty and Marisol Morales-Ladrón, who, thanks to their expertise and academic rigour, provide us with the key as to why we should read this work. The reason is simple: despite Madden's eight novels engaging with problems of existence in our contemporary world and raising philosophical questions about the meaning of life during the Troubles and Peace Process in Northern Ireland, as well as in recent decades of social change and upheaval in the south, no collection of essays had yet been devoted to Madden's work,

In step with the current demand in Ireland to take stock of female creativity with renewed purpose, this collection seeks to explore in depth the ongoing and multi-faceted legacy of Deirdre Madden as a signal author whose work has always been esteemed but often considered partially or simply taken too readily for granted. (Fogarty & Morales-Ladrón, 2022, 10)

Furthermore, the editors deplore the fact that the international reputation of Madden's novels surpasses their standing in her own country, as her work seems to oscillate in and out of the critical spotlight. Fogarty and Morales-Ladrón also point out that Madden's novels dealing overtly with the Troubles have received more critical attention than the rest. However, her work often interweaves the political novel, the novel of ideas, existential fiction, as well as the *küntslerroman* or artist novel. Additionally, Madden's novels assert that gender balance in the cultural sphere of Ireland remains unrealized in a cultural climate that promotes male artists. In short, Madden's extensive career defies easy categorization, and this complexity may be the reason why *Deirdre Madden: New Critical Perspectives* has been divided into three parts.

The initial section, titled "Memory, Trauma, and the Troubles," comprises the contributions of Stefanie Lehner, Elizabeth Chase, Catriona Clutterbuck, and Brian Cliff.

Stefanie Lehner explores memory and temporality in *One by One in the Darkness*, *Hidden Symptoms* and *Time Present and Time Past*. Lehner argues that the memory images in Madden's work function as memorials, preventing the act of forgetting and aiding in reconciling the past with the present or future. Additionally, Lehner asserts that influenced by Proust, Madden acknowledges that she cannot fully restore the past through what she terms "intellect," but can only catch glimpses of it through instinct and imagination, often infused with nostalgia and mourning. In the second contribution within this initial section, Elizabeth Chase focuses on *Hidden Symptoms* and *One by One in the Darkness*. Chase contends that each of these novels aims to shed light on the importance of identity and remembrance, elucidating their impacts on the characters. Furthermore, Chase argues that Madden, in these novels, delves into situations

of tense and unsuccessful connections while also portraying the Troubles in an ethically charged manner. This serves to counteract previous misrepresentations of the North, expanding her explorations into traumatic experiences within the realms of ethics and remembrance. In her contribution, Catriona Clutterbuck focuses on *Hidden Symptoms*, which she argues inaugurated Madden's career-long exploration of how the death of a close family member can result in an injury that may also channel deeper signs of grace. According to Clutterbuck, *Hidden Symptoms* initiates a significant pattern in Madden's body of work whereby characters come to recognize that a transformative possibility is embedded within the darkness of their own state of loss. This recognition is often mediated through their evolving understanding of art's imperfect relationship to reality. Closing this first section, Brian Cliff argues that *One by One in the Darkness* reflects the tendency of Madden's work to draw attention less to the event itself and more to the ripples or consequences that flow outward from it. These consequences cast their momentum both backward and forward simultaneously, shaping a response to future events while recasting past responses to earlier events. According to Cliff, the novel's narrative investment in ripples and echoes, and its use of class to insist on the material basis of the Troubles, as well as the varied perspectives sometimes lost beneath the weight of identitarian frameworks of meaning, allows the novel to embrace uncertainty.

Part II, titled "Art and Objects," brings together the contributions of Sylvie Mikowski, Heather Ingman, Hedwig Schwall, Teresa Casal, and Julie Anne Stevens. In the opening contribution, Mikowski emphasizes Madden's utilization of objects as a means of character construction in her work, aligning with the aesthetic codes of realism and the belief in the arts' capacity to reveal and provide access to essential truths about people and life. Furthermore, Mikowski argues that the centrality of objects in Madden's work is linked to her exploration of the creative process and the role played by objects in it. Madden's works, especially those published during periods of significant social and economic upheaval, contain a critical perspective on materialism and acquisitive mindsets. Mikowski contends that Madden's conception of the artist in touch with transcendent truth or reality aligns with the religious inquiries to which she often subjects her characters. Thus, her critique of materialism not only carries political undertones but also involves an attention to spirituality. In "Ageing and Identity in Madden's Authenticity," Heather Ingman highlights the limited attention given to ageing in Irish writing, emphasizing the significance that the theme of time has consistently held in Madden's work. In her contribution, Hedwig Schwall argues that *Authenticity* diverges from Madden's earlier novels, as the four main characters reside in the Republic during the Celtic Tiger era. Schwall underscores Madden's consistent exploration, rooted in her Northern Irish background, that trauma must be articulated; otherwise, one's life is governed by fate rather than by destiny or self. In short, Schwall contends that Madden's characters, as a vital aspect, need to connect with their roots to discover their destiny. Teresa Casal's contribution centres on ethics and aesthetics in Madden's *Hidden Symptoms*, *One by One in the Darkness* and *Molly Fox's Birthday*. In her contribution, Casal argues that Madden uses fiction to counter the abstract

and tribal notions of identity underlying sectarian violence, addressing concealed personal grief. Furthermore, Casal states that Madden's use of focalization in *One by One in the Darkness* expands the novel's scope temporally and spatially, providing a multifaceted view of the Northern Irish Troubles as experienced by a Catholic family. Indeed, by emphasizing voice and perspective, the novels explored highlight how words can function as forms of manipulation or communication. In short, Casal underscores that Madden presents history, politics, and geography not as abstractions or slogans but as experienced by characters situated in time and space. In her closing contribution, Julie Anne Stevens asserts that Madden exhibits a self-conscious interest in the ever-shifting nature of language and meaning when she writes for children. According to Stevens, Madden's works for children indirectly reflect critical arguments regarding constructed notions of childhood. Moreover, Stevens claims that Madden's interest in consciousness also appears as a further point of connection between her adult and children's fiction.

Part III, titled "Home and Place," brings this remarkable volume to a close with contributions from Jerry White, Elke D'hoker, Anne Fogarty, Derek Hand and Marisol Morales-Ladrón. Jerry White opens the section with his contribution entitled "*Nothing is Black: the early Celtic Tiger and Europe.*" While White describes the novel as a veritable primer on the transformation Ireland was undergoing in the 1990s, portraying in a quasi-prophetic manner what was changing and being lost at the time, D'hoker emphasizes the centrality of the question of home in all of Madden's novels. In fact, D'hoker closely examines the spatial imaginaries of home found in Madden's works, underscoring their significance. In "The Architectural Uncanny: Family Secrets and the Gothic in *The Birds of the Innocent Wood* and *Remembering Light and Stone*", Fogarty contends that in Madden's novels, spectrality is an emanation of the feminine and serves as a signature of the unfinished story of the mother and the quest of the daughter to understand herself and navigate the world. According to Fogarty, in the novel, the desire for and fear of the mother seem to be inextricably bound up with each other. In his contribution, Derek Hand asserts that during a period when Irish culture embraced and celebrated the rapid acceleration of experience, and the notion of quickness itself was seen as an indicator of success and worth, Madden's novels instead focus on moments of individual stillness and reflection on identity. Additionally, he argues that the most productive approach to Madden's recent novels is to perceive them as a series, possibly a trilogy or triptych, revolving around similar themes and concerns. These novels echo and build upon each other, creating a reflection back and forth within the narrative structure. Finally, Marisol Morales-Ladrón provides a captivating and insightful conversation with Deirdre Madden herself. I won't divulge its contents, as I assume you all eagerly anticipate discovering the insights within on your own.

Deirdre Madden. New Critical Perspectives stands as an ambitious and enduring volume, offering valuable insights for readers and scholars keen on contemporary Irish literature. Undoubtedly, this book deserves and is poised to attract an appreciative, engaged, and, hopefully, broad readership.

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Embodied Vulnerabilities in Literature and Film

Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández and Miriam Fernández-Santiago (eds.)

New York: Routledge, 2024. 209 pp

ISBN: 978-1-03-226844-6

The volume *Embodied Vulnerabilities in Literature and Film*, edited by Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández and Miriam Fernández-Santiago, is a collection of essays that serves as an essential companion to their previous volume, *Representing Vulnerabilities in Contemporary Literature* (2023). In this new book, Judith Butler's *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004) works again as a pivotal theoretical approach for the very diverse topics and texts analysed in this collection. This time, however, the contributions focus on how vulnerability can be understood through different forms of embodiment across varied languages, genres, cultures, disciplines and subjectivities underlining a multi-faceted and interdisciplinary approach to vulnerability. All the contributions to the volume succeed in problematising traditional assumptions about the vulnerable body, showing instead the potential of literature and film and their "vantage position" (13) to engage in a critical discussion between an aesthetic production and representation of vulnerable bodies, and a reception and understanding of vulnerability that can trigger an ethical and sociopolitical involvement.

The volume is divided into twelve main chapters that are preceded by an introduction and a preface. The preface, written by David T. Mitchell, serves to relate the aforementioned Butlerian notion of precarity with vulnerable embodiments, which according to Mitchell, are "precarity's product" (xv). From this preface onwards, it is clear that all the contributions to the volume distance from the victimisation and passivity often attributed to vulnerable bodies.

The introduction, written by the editors, provides the theoretical point of departure of the collection. The authors brilliantly summarise and revise the main theories around the notion of vulnerability in varied fields of research, especially endorsing those of the last decades that problematise a reductive and exclusively negative view of vulnerability. They approach the semantic complexity of the notion and examine contexts where efforts to address vulnerability are directed to ameliorate or erase vulnerability by aiming at—often unattainable—ideals of normalcy, agency and equality. Instead, the authors propose “a qualitative ecology of vulnerAbility” (8) that “reconciles the apparently opposed binary categories traditionally associated with vulnerability, allowing individuals to be simultaneously and diachronically vulnerable and autonomous, or both weak and strong, by overlapping categories that are never mutually exclusive, but complementary” (10). In this way, the experience of embodied vulnerability is portrayed as fluid, interconnected, porous and multidirectional, “a meaningful exchange” (9).

In the first chapter, Maria Grajdan explores what she coins “*masculinity of vulnerability*” (18; italics in the original) in the all-female Japanese musical theatre Takarakuza Revue. Using a rigorous ethnographical approach, Grajdan observes a recent shift in the last five to seven years of performances where the otokoyaku, female actors who perform male roles, have served to reorient established ideals of masculinity connected to self-sufficiency towards a more vulnerable masculine model.

Marta Miquel-Baldellou continues with an engaging chapter that explores embodied vulnerability in the ageing woman actor by analysing the protagonists of Billy Wilder’s films *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) and *Fedora* (1978). The author relies on Jean-Michel Ganteau’s notion of textual performativity of vulnerability (2015) together with Judith Butler’s theory of gender performance (1990) to reflect on how the films and main characters’ performance of vulnerability both endorse and reject traditional discourses on ageing and gender.

In chapter three, Miriam Borham-Puyal analyses Ashley Smith’s autobiographical story *Unlikely Angel* (2005) and its film adaptation, *Captive* (2015), as examples of narratives of vulnerability that demonstrate the ambivalence of the notion in connection to motherhood. The author provides insightful views on the experience of motherhood as a site for precarity, but also a tool for resistance, connection and human recognition.

Chapter four continues with this approach of vulnerability as a potential catalyst for resistance by using Chloé Zhao’s portrayal of Lakota children in the film *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* (2015). Andrés Buesa illustrates how “audiences are given the chance to embrace the potential of human vulnerability through the eyes of a child” (73). Using a well-informed framework of theories on spectatorship and ethics, Buesa demonstrates how despite the partially limiting depiction of the Native American experience, the embodied vulnerability of children in the film can impact viewers’ ethical and emphatic engagement.

Susana Nicolás Román also explores how embodied vulnerabilities can demand action from audiences. She demonstrates so in the fifth chapter of the collection, by offering a persuasive analysis of gendered vulnerability in the plays *In the Pipeline* (2010) and *Iphigenia in Splott* (2015) by Gary Owen. According to Nicolás Román, these Welsh plays present characters that embody a “gendered precariat” (89), and who by embodying precarity and vulnerability, demand action, responsibility, and the need to restructure social norms of cohabitation.

In chapter six, Nicholas Hauck offers the first approach to poetry in the volume. He draws on Julia Kristeva’s theorisation of language (1974) and shared vulnerability (2010) to analyse examples of poetry that clearly expose an experience of embodied vulnerability, what he calls “*a poetics of vulnerability*” (93; italics in the original). By analysing the contemporary works of the French poets Stéphane Bouquet and Marie-Claire Bancquart, Hauck suggests how poetic language fosters a vulnerability that involves awareness about marginalisation, the fragility of the body, the closeness of death and our opening toward human and nonhuman others.

Paula Barba Guerrero’s rigorous analysis of Yaa Gyasi’s novel *Transcendent Kingdom* (2020) shapes the seventh chapter. Using affect theory, she focuses on the mother-daughter bond to explore how migrant vulnerability intertwines with notions of racism, illness, grief, marginalisation, and mental illness. At the same time, the author shows how vulnerability can work as a potential reorientation towards aesthetic and ethical encounters with alterity, fostering a more rightful political intervention.

In chapter eight, Ana Chapman explores the problematic transhumanist promise of invulnerability by analysing representations of mental conditions in the TV series *Maniac* (2018). In the quest for human perfection, this dystopian series shows how technology tries to erase human vulnerability. However, as Chapman evinces, the result hinders the possibility of human interconnection, portraying how characters are emotionally and socially alienated, and therefore, newly vulnerable. In this way, according to Chapman, *Maniac* serves to portray vulnerability as “inherent to human essence” (128).

Chapter nine turns again to poetry to analyse Madeline Bassnett’s autobiographical collection *Under the Gamma Camera* (2019). Leonor María Martínez Serrano examines Bassnett’s first-hand experiences with cancer revealing the extreme fragility, materiality, and finite existence of human bodies. Martínez Serrano effectively illustrates that despite the radical experience of pain and suffering that Bassnett’s poems show, vulnerable experiences can be of use to heighten our awareness of a shared vulnerability with others and the natural world.

In the tenth chapter, McKew Devitt uses a corpus of four works that problematise the traditional misrepresentation of the rural depopulated Spain. He uses two novels: Lara Moreno’s *Por si se va la luz* (2013) and Alberto Olmos’ *Alabanza* (2024), as well as two memoirs: Sergio del Molino’s *La España vacía* (2016) and María Sánchez’s *Tierra de mujeres* (2019). Devitt

convincingly demonstrates that these narratives call for an urgent reexamination of how this crisis is often conceived and addressed in Spain, frequently leading to marginalisation, silencing or homogenisation of these regions and their inhabitants.

Chapter eleven also explores vulnerable populations, by addressing the representation of undocumented immigrants in the US in Tom McCarthy's *The Visitor* (2007). Luisa María González Rodríguez discusses how vulnerability is portrayed in the film both as dependant on sociopolitical policies and asymmetries of power as well as an existential condition intertwined with ideas of agency, and relationality. González Rodríguez asserts that the film prompts audiences to rethink their ethical approach to people at risk of exclusion.

The last chapter explores the conceptualisation of vulnerability as resistance (Butler et al. 2016) through the first-person accounts of refugees and asylum seekers in the auto-documentaries *#Myescape* (2016), *Chauka Please Tells Us the Time* (2017), and *Midnight Traveler* (2019). Beatriz Pérez Zapata and Víctor Navarro-Remesal present a comprehensive analysis of these documentaries, asserting that, recorded by using smartphones, they capture vulnerability both in content and form, by giving voice to their protagonists' vulnerable experiences at the same time they aesthetically portray the inherent vulnerability in the process of filmmaking itself.

The volume *Embodied Vulnerabilities in Literature and Film* certainly stands out as a compelling contribution in various fields. As shown here, the collection offers a rich tapestry of approaches that test the potential of vulnerability across widely varied genres, nationalities, languages, disciplines, methodologies, media, embodiments, and subjectivities. This impressive scope of analysis within the collection may have made it difficult, at times, to follow a more coherent organisation of chapters. While there is an evident endeavour to underline connections among the diverse contributions, the inherent breadth of the volume may confuse readers who expect a more distinct division in structure, more aligned with the forms of expression implied by the title: literature and film. Given that the volume begins with a foreword, an afterword could have further rounded out the collection even more, providing a more satisfying closure that could highlight the relevance and impact of this ground-breaking book as a whole. This volume is an exceptionally well-researched study that will be of interest to both experts and general readers interested in the notion of vulnerability or any of its multiple manifestations. This engaging and thorough collection manages to reexamine the notion of vulnerability in new a light, positioning the concept at the forefront of contemporary life.



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“Song Up Out of Spain”: Poems in Tribute to Ezra Pound / “Canción desde España”: Poemas en homenaje a Ezra Pound

John Gery and Vioica Patea (eds.)

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“Song Up Out of Spain”: *Poems in Tribute to Ezra Pound* is a bilingual anthology that compiles the lyrical production of 29 poets who write in English and Spanish in the tradition of Pound. The title of the collection “Song Up out of Spain” is a quote from Canto 8, where Pound refers to Guillaume de Poitiers, duke of Aquitaine (1071–1127), the troubadour who introduced Spanish music and verse to France:

And Poitiers, you know, Guillaume Poitiers,
had brought the song up out of Spain
With the singers and viels. (1996, VIII, 32)

Pound believed that the European poetic tradition experienced various moments of inflection that changed the poetic idiom: first, in the 4th-3rd century BC when Greek poets rediscovered Sappho, who had lived four centuries earlier, and a second time with the troubadours of the

Provence in the 12th century. Both Sappho and the troubadours introduced the lyric voice of an intimate mode of being that marks the separation from the collective tone of the epos. In this context, Pound credits Spanish poetry, the “Song Up out of Spain” by Guillaume de Poitiers, as a major influence of Western poetry. The intention of *Song Up Out of Spain*, clearly stated in its title, is to pay homage to Pound and his legacy as a landmark in this poetic tradition.

The book has a double focus: it evokes Pound’s relation to Spain and presents a panoply of poets influenced by him. The collection vindicates the influence of Spanish culture in Pound’s poetry as well as Pound’s bearing on major Spanish and Spanish American writers. In this sense, the volume addresses a connection with Spain and Spanish culture that has been recurrently overlooked by critics in Poundian scholarship. Said scholarship on Pound’s work and life has certainly focused on all stages of the poet’s life in London, Paris, Rapallo, St Elizabeth’s, and Venice. Ira Nadel’s impressive *Pound in Context* (2010) explores Pound’s international background and the multifaceted aspects of his oeuvre from numerous perspectives, and, geographically speaking, proves how the Orient, America, Venice, London, Paris, Rapallo, Rome, and Pisa comprise the main symbolic places and signposts of his life and work. The Spanish experience in Pound’s life is dispatched in one to two pages in even the most thorough, prestigious biographies and works by Humphrey Carpenter (1988), A. David Moody (2007a, 2007b), Noel Stock (1982), and James Wilhelm (1985, 1990), among others.

Strangely enough, these comprehensive volumes make little mention of his trips to Spain and his connection to Spanish literature and culture, even if Pound’s Spanish *periplum* left a significant and lasting imprint on his life and development as a poet and critic. Pound not only visited Spain on several occasions, but had knowledge of the Spanish language, having studied medieval and Romance literature at college, after which he intended to become a scholar in Spanish letters, hence his trip to Spain in 1906 to complete research on his PhD thesis on Lope de Vega’s *oeuvre*. Despite his field research, Pound’s work on the Spanish author proved a failure. And over the years, his interest in Spanish culture seemed to wane, in contrast to his work in Classical, Italian, Chinese, and American cultures. Yet the Spanish impact persisted as a powerful undercurrent that would resurface over the years in multiple ways: his Spanish studies constituted central chapters in *The Spirit of Romance* (1910) and memories of his Spanish experience, enriched by his later contacts with Spanish poets and men of letters, are remembered by him throughout *The Cantos*. In 1921, Pound wrote: “the vitality of Spain runs in the Poema del Cid ... in Calisto and Melibea, in Rojas, in the invention of Lope, in Cervantes” ([1921] 1991)¹. This poetical anthology certainly brings to light this connection and its impact on Pound’s work. It originated

1 Taken from Pound’s 1921 “Some Notes on Francisco de Quevedo Villegas,” *Hermes* 69: 199-213. Reprinted in Patea, Viorica, John Gery, and Walter Baumann (eds.), 2024, *Ezra Pound and the Spanish World*, Clemson NC: Clemson University Press, 321-40.

at the 2019 Ezra Pound International Conference (EPIC) held at the University of Salamanca, and it complements its sister volume *Ezra Pound and the Spanish World* (Patea *et al.* 2024), on the poet's little explored relationship with our country and its literature.

With this in mind, the first strength of this volume is its originality, both in its conception as a tribute bilingual anthology, and in its focus on Spain. Regarding the latter, this volume opens with a necessary contextualization of Pound's connection to Spain. Thus, Patea and Gery evoke Pound's journey to Spain, his admiration for the Prado and Spanish literature: Lope de Vega, *El cantar de mío Cid*, *La Celestina*, the troubadours (2023, 3, 18).

Secondly, added value is found in its bilingual presentation, approaching two traditions to each other, in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural exercise of Poundian connotations. It is necessary to praise the brilliant work of the volume's translators, Paul Scott Derrick, Natalia Carbajosa and Viorica Patea, who have managed to capture the musicality and subtle inferences of the poets' compositions, as they translated them from Spanish to English, or viceversa. Although the presence of Anglophone poets is slightly greater (13 write in Spanish, 16 in English), this is balanced by the equal space devoted by the editors to introduce their work and connect it to Pound's, as well as by the quality and renown of the Spanish-speaking authors, from both sides of the Atlantic: the volume boasts compositions by Chilean Gonzalo Rojas, Mexican Julián Herbert and Jeannette Lozano, and Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal. Among them are also well-known 'Novísimos' such as Antonio Colinas, José María Álvarez, Luis Alberto de Cuenca, and Jaime Siles, as well as one of the greatest poets of the 27, Jorge Guillén; all acknowledging their poetical debt to Pound. Other established and awarded poets included are M^a Ángeles Pérez López, José Antonio González Iglesias, Jordi Doce, and Natalia Carbajosa, who all share Poundian echoes. In the anglophone section, a younger generation of poets represented by Rhett Forman, Justin Kishbaugh, Chengru He, and Sean Mark, pay tribute to Pound among scholars turned poets, like David Moody and Alec Marsh, who have, for many years, explored the poet's legacy both in academic papers. Acclaimed poets such as Clive Wilmer, Tony Lopez, Ron Smith, or John Gery, write alongside the poet's own granddaughter, Patrizia de Rachewiltz, as well as John Beall, David Capella, and Paul Scott Derrick, showing how they have dissected, assimilated and "made new," to use Pound's own phrase, his interests and style.

The poems themselves are rich in diverse styles, from the haiku-inspired verses by Capella and Rachewiltz (2023, 118, 120), to the epic "Cántico Cósmico" by Cardenal (2023, 56-63); all shaped with echoes of Pound's wide-ranging style(s). Poems cover Pound's relationship with other poets, such as Hilda Doolittle in Ron Smith's compositions (2023, 210, 212), or his family, with tributes also dedicated to his daughter's preservation of his legacy, in Falsaperla's and Greineisen's poems (2023, 134, 172). Some, like Beall and Marsh, evoke Pound at the Prado (2023, 112, 198), while Colinas and Álvarez experience Italy and Venice through memories of Pound's life; and especially moving is Colinas's recollection of his pilgrim-like encounter with

the poet in “Encuentro con Ezra Pound (1971)” (2023, 72), delicately translated by poet Ben Clark and Borja Aguiló. González Iglesias doubles this poetic séance in “Un poema es mejor que Google Maps,” reading Pound in dialogue with Colinas’s evocation (2023, 84). There are poems that pay direct homage to the poet, most notably Guillen’s “Ezra Pound: Motivo” (2023, 88), Herbert’s “Ezra” (2023, 90-92), Lozano’s elegiac “Las lágrimas de las cosas: Tres piedades por Ezra Pound” (2023, 68) or Doce’s tribute to the poet and translator (2023, 78, 82), while the vast majority are more subtly indebted to Pound’s metaliterary, multicultural style, his imagism and ideogrammatic method, his ability to note the fleeting moment, his social concerns and even his passion for walking. And in this richness is where the interest of this volume truly lies: its exploration of what makes Pound unique through the impact his work has had on these very different poets.

In 1965, in a previous tribute on the occasion of Pound’s eightieth birthday, poet John Berryman wrote that Pound set himself two goals, both of which he achieved: “to become a great poet, and to alter the formal direction of literature in English” (2006). This collection proves that his literary inheritance is indeed enduring, and that it reaches beyond Anglophone literature. The book reproduces Cardenal’s message, read at the Salamanca conference, which summarizes Pound’s impact:

[...] Ezra Pound [es] el poeta más grande de nuestro siglo, no sólo [*sic*] en la lengua inglesa, renovador de esta lengua como Whitman lo fue en su tiempo, y para mí su enseñanza más importante fue que puede escribirse en verso de cualquier tema igual que en prosa. Y donde más se aprecia su novedad es en su magistral CANTOS, siendo sus opiniones políticas algo irrelevante. (2023, 26)

In conclusion, this volume is a fitting tribute to the genius of Ezra Pound and his lasting legacy, as a master of literature and an inspiration for subsequent generations of poets. In words of the editors, in these compositions by Spanish and Anglophone poets there is to be found a “constellation of Pound’s own prevailing legacy into the twenty-first century” (2023, 18), which, at the same time, offers the reader “a rich literary pageantry” precisely by means of their acknowledgment of the great poet himself (2023, 18). In its evocation of Pound’s technique and interests through contemporary poetical voices, this anthology becomes, therefore, recommended reading for Poundians and lovers of poetry alike.

Finally, one last tribute is paid: the editors praise the contribution of the foremost scholar in the field of Pound studies in Spain and editor of the first annotated critical bilingual edition of Pound’s *Cantos* (I–LXXXIV), Javier Coy, who unfortunately passed away two days before the EPIC Conference in Salamanca began. This volume is deservedly dedicated to his memory.



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Unhappy Beginnings: Narratives of Precarity, Failure, and Resistance in North American Texts.

Isabel González-Díaz and Fabián Orán-Llarena, eds.

New York and London: Routledge, 2023. 206 pp.

ISBN: 9781032526591

U*nhappy Beginnings: Narratives of Precarity, Failure, and Resistance in North American Texts*, edited by Isabel González-Díaz and Fabián Orán-Llarena, is a collection that explores the notion of unhappiness and seeks to give visibility to instances of failure, vulnerability and precarity in North American stories from the mid-twentieth century onwards. This initiative is supported by Sara Ahmed's venture into the re-evaluation of our Western notion of happiness so that forms of living are not necessarily expected to fulfil certain predefined happy patterns. With this, there is a clear attempt to challenge normativity in all respects and ultimately, to avoid the generalisation of unrealistic expectations about one's life prospects.

The Promise of Happiness (2010) is a relevant contribution in the field of affect theory which delves into the assumption that we need to be happy by following certain standards—social, political, economic, religious and identity conventions. Then, what causes the crisis of happiness, or a plausible source of unhappiness, would be “our failure to follow them [those standards]”

(Ahmed 2010, 7). In this sense, forcing individuals to fit into a set of predefined norms leads to an undoubted degree of coercion and oppression: individuals are somehow induced to believe that the attainment of a certain social, economic, religious and identitarian status will offer them a prospect of happiness. On the contrary, if they deviate from the norm, they will probably be doomed to hazard and failure.

In the introduction to this collection, the Ahmadian reading of unhappiness is related to Judith Butler's work on precarity and vulnerability, following *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), and Jack Halberstam's notion of failure in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011). González-Díaz and Orán-Llarena's attempt to shed some light into alternative stories revolving around grievous experiences acknowledges the need to retrieve the unhappy stories from oblivion and a generalised lack of recognition, also in tune with Henry Giroux (2006). In addition, contributors to this book have highlighted the high degree of resistance and resilience that vulnerable individuals retain. What is more, these unprivileged scenarios can favour the promotion of care and human bonding, as shared vulnerability becomes a unifying force which builds communities (Butler 2004, 22). Therefore, despite its vulnerable status, unhappiness can be deemed a way of life, one that "imagines other goals for life" (Halberstam 2011, 88) and that deserves to be told.

Following this theoretical premises, González-Díaz and Orán-Llarena have put together a total of fourteen chapters which explore the notion of unhappiness through different lenses such as race and ethnicity, transgender and queer experiences and narratives of alienation and stigmatisation (2023, 3). These chapters have been grouped into three different categories, even though there are no distinct sections.

The first five articles are devoted to the exploration of economic precarity in relation to aging and illness and racial issues in the United States. In chapter one, "*Nomadland: A Narrative of Class and Age Vulnerability in the 21st Century*," Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz gives voice to a group of Americans whose last resort after the Great Recession of 2008 consisted in leading a nomadic life on the road, in vans and campers. However, far from a condescending tone, the author manages to achieve a balance between the portrayal of harsh conditions and the conveyance of a proud sentiment shared by this nomadic tribe. In chapter two, "'They endured': Precarity, Vulnerability, and Resistance in the Works of Jesmyn Ward," Paula Granda focuses on the positive outcomes which the Black population in the United States have attained throughout the second half of the twentieth century despite their still precarious way of life. In the event, these communities—as depicted by the contemporary Southern author Jesmyn Ward—count on a resilient character as well as on a caring network support. In chapter three, "Happy Endings and Unhappy Beginnings: Representing Precarity and Vulnerability in Recessionary Comedies," Elena Oliete-Aldea challenges neoliberal politics and suggests that, in spite of their low economic status, the precariat can resist and should in fact find an identity of their own within their shared

vulnerability. Similarly, Fabián Orán-Llarena explores the impact of the neoliberal culture on our conception of work and the workplace in chapter four, entitled “The Road to Serfdom: The (Unhappy) Neoliberal Workplace in *The Assistant*.” By analysing this film, released in 2019, Orán-Llarena observes how the workplace has become a space of alienation and abuse, also in sexual terms in the case of women. In chapter five, “Disaffected Archives: Jacqueline Woodson’s Cruel Attachments in *Red at the Bone*,” Paula Barba Guerrero looks into the role of the absent Black mother as a dissenting figure that, by confronting normativity in her mother/daughter relationship, reveals her will to seek her own identity and her own standards of happiness.

The following four chapters give prominence to life writing as a productive field where to detect alienating situations and experiences. The focus is placed on indigenous, queer, and transgender people whose endurance also implies the construction of human, caring networks. In chapter six, “The (Un)happiness of Urban Indigeneity in Tommy Orange’s *There There*,” Martiná Horáková tries to reconcile the traumatic experiences of indigenous people with contemporary urban environments. Then, she reads the novel *There There* (2018) as illustrative of how current indigeneity and contemporary indigenous groups have overcome colonial pressure and have managed to resurge and achieve belongingness. Juan Carlos Hidalgo-Ciudad delves into transness in chapter seven, entitled “Trans-forming Transness: The Failed Dissident Body as (Non) Human Political Possibility in Kai Cheng Thom’s *Fierce*”. This chapter proposes Kai Cheng Thom’s text *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl’s Confabulous Memoir* (2016) as an escape from heteronormativity as well as from transnormative accounts, rejecting the generalised degrading perception of transness and recognising its actual value and diversity. Chapter eight, called “Of Morrissey and Other Antisocial Icons: Unhappiness and Failure in Elliott DeLine’s *Refuse*” and written by Isabel González-Díaz, continues to fight transnormativity through the reading of *Refuse* (2011). In this chapter, González-Díaz acknowledges the importance of showing realistic trans subjects and their experiences whose transitions might not have resulted in the attainment of regular trans’ happiness. Then, J. Javier Torres-Fernández in chapter nine, “Stigma, Vulnerability, Unhappiness, and Abjection: How *Angels in America* Reconstructs AIDS Politics of Silence” ponders the absence of social acknowledgement with respect to AIDS through the Reagan era. The setting of Tony Kushner’s play *Angels in America* (1991) shows the discriminated, abjected gay characters who suffer from this illness and offers a background for its ongoing stigmatisation.

Finally, the last contributions in the monograph offer new perspectives with regard to how alienation and social oppression can be combated with. Julia Rojo de Castro offers a new reading of J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) through which she attempts to portray Holden Caulfield as a modern nihilist whose rejection of societal norms entails a clear resistance to neoliberalism and productivity, thus highlighting the political criticism embedded in the text. In “Reimagining Hope in the Age of Despair: The Films of Roberto Minervini,” Juan A. Tarancón approaches the figure of filmmaker Roberto Minervini (1970–) and his work behind

the screen as exemplary of how fictional stories can also become real. Affection and bonding are pivotal in the process of filmmaking to contribute to the arising of sentiments like empathy and solidarity among spectators, in such a way that they may be enabled to confront the increasing polarisation of society. In chapter twelve, entitled “Affect Theory and Life Narratives,” Silvia Caporale-Bizzini presents her analysis based on affect theory of two Arab-Canadian memoirs: *Angry Queer Somali Boy: A Complicated Memoir* (2020), by Mohamed Abdulkarim Ali, and *We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir* (2019), by Samra Habib. In this chapter, storytelling is introduced as a potentially reconciling endeavour with one’s own past and family. By reading Ali’s and Habib’s memoirs in the light of interrelationality and ethical encounters, Caporale-Bizzini suggests that these life narratives may contribute to the creation of new affective connections around their authors and to the introduction of a more multilayered picture of Muslim environments into mainstream culture. Then, in the chapter “Run, Rabbits, Run: Post-Racialism, Modern Slavery, and Slow Violence in Jordan Peele’s *Get Out*,” Victor Junco Ezquerra examines the Oscar-winning film *Get Out* (2017) as a contemporary depiction of racial discrimination in the United States. By merging the horror genre and the occurrence of everyday microaggressions against African Americans, the film is proposed as a subtler reconfiguration of slavery. Finally, Arturo Corujo explores the notion of vulnerability in Herman Melville’s *White-Jacket* (1850). In this chapter called “Cold Feelings: Apathy, Difference, and Withdrawal in Herman Melville’s *White-Jacket*,” Corujo highlights the productivity of using the white jacket as the embodiment of an intricate metaphor which refers both to the protagonist’s mood and self-perception and to his connections with the rest of characters. Wearing a white jacket amidst the crew’s blue uniforms becomes a reason for difference and thus, it relegates the protagonist to a vulnerable and alienating position. However, the ambivalent nature of vulnerability and his resulting individuality will endow him with the capacity to overcome obstacles.

In sum, *Unhappy Beginnings: Narratives of Precarity, Failure, and Resistance in North American Texts* represents a postmodern endeavour which recognises the simultaneity of multiple realities. That is, happiness and unhappiness, together with vulnerability, precarity and failure, or resistance and resilience certainly coexist. Even if we had traditionally been induced to believe in a unique type of love, in a static and definite promise of happiness, or what happiness *per se* meant, the acknowledgement of diversity is fundamental to prevent others from setting false expectations. Therefore, this monograph can certainly prove useful in an early approach to the new considerations of (un)happiness, as it will lead the reader to an incessant questioning of what the definition of happiness implies. In fact, the editors contend that optimism can also be found in unhappiness, which can even result in greater creativity and productivity (2023, 7). Most likely, had unhappiness, crises and discrimination not existed, change, transformation and progress would not have happened.



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Pathologizing Black Bodies. The Legacy of Plantation Slavery

**Constante González Groba, Ewa Barbara Luczak
and Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis**New York and London: Routledge, 2023. 197 pp.
ISBN: 978 10 32409627.

Pathologizing *Black Bodies. The Legacy of Plantation Slavery* is undoubtedly a timely and groundbreaking publication about the persistence and continuation of the legacy of slavery as inscribed on the black body and perpetuated in a myriad of racist practices such as eugenics methods, mass incarceration, food apartheid and land deprivation, among others. One of the results of the project USRACEBODY, this book comprises diverse critical perspectives and methodologies—mainly eugenics studies, trauma studies, medical humanities and food studies—, but also discourses on race and the body that certainly throw light onto the complexities of the lasting and haunting impact of plantation legacy that has fostered and continues to foster the systemic racism black individuals and communities in the US have historically been subjected to from the period of slavery onwards.

The volume is divided into three parts: “Pathologizing ‘Blood’,” “Pathologizing the Body” and “De-Pathologizing Access to Food and Land.” The first section centers on the dark legacy of eugenics, first problematizing the notion of black blood and its crucial role in the politics of racial blood purity and then investigating the dreadful history of eugenic sterilizations. The second section focuses on processes of pathologization of black bodies by dealing with the connection between the prison of slavery and the slavery of the prison system. Then this section also tackles the significant interventions of antiracist leading figures Lillian Smith and Ibram Kendi to delineate a counterdiscourse against racial pathologization by means of the telling

metaphor of metastatic cancer. Section three explores two related issues, food apartheid and black farming, as key notions to depathologize blacks' access to food and land. Food insecurity and black culinary culture are analyzed in order to emphasize the active role of Southern hip hop artists in fighting against racist unhealthy food practices. Lastly, land ownership and black farming are unveiled as two examples of the perpetuation of the racist denial of a "real" home for African Americans.

As the book demonstrates, the racist discourses that sprang from the enslaving ideology purposely devised to support African enslavement led to black pathologization and denigrating racist and sexist stereotypical designation of black identities and bodies which, in turn, denied them their humanity and deprived them of any possible agency or control. Thus, black bodies were condemned to processes of objectification, commodification, sexualization, medicalization and criminalization.¹ As white bodies became normative, black bodies were objectified and sexualized to the extreme, reducing them to mere "usable flesh" (González Groba et al. 2023, 6) to be used and abused by the racial system that marginalized them while benefiting from their unpaid labor. Besides, black sexuality was coded as deviant, aberrant and excessive to justify institutionalized rape and constant sexual aggressions.² Furthermore, these bodies were also subjected to terrible mistreatment by the medical establishment which experimented on them with absolute impunity. Lastly, these bodies were treated with utmost violence projecting the blame on the victims, accusing black enslaved people of their own victimization because of their aggressiveness, innate violence and tendency to criminal acts.³

The enduring legacy of plantation slavery is therefore the main objective of this excellent publication which definitively brings home the horrors of slavery while revealing the inner workings of racism and white prejudice that continue to plague our present-day world. The focus on black pathology is a very illuminating strategy in this publication, since it foregrounds the racist insistence on biological determinism to try to erase the inequalities generated by institutionalized racism. In the age of Black Lives Matter, the book offers very perceptive insights into the true nature of race and racism and its traumatizing corollaries. As Ibrahim Kendi summarizes, "race is the product of racism; racism is not the product of race" (cited in González Groba et al. 2023,

1 I extensively wrote about the processes to which black bodies, specifically black female bodies, have historically been subjected to in my article "Black Female Bodies on (Dis)play: Commodification, Reembodiment and Healing" (2016).

2 To understand the process of sexualization of enslaved people, both for women and men, a valuable collection is *Sexuality and Slavery* (2018), edited by Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris, especially chapters five to nine.

3 Many critics have delved into the legacy of slavery and the harmful stereotypes associated with it in depth. Some classic studies are bell hooks' *Black Looks* (1992) and Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Sexual Politics* (2005).

123). The wide scope of the text also invites to reflect upon the depredation and cannibalization of black bodies that are imbricated at many different layers in American history and culture in what can be called “racialized geographies and spaces” such as the US medical history, the US prison system, food insecurity or the systematic attack on black farming.

The first section opens with Ewa Barbara Luczak’s “‘Ther’s Pow’r in the Blood’: Blood Transfusions and Racial Serology in Wallace Thurman’s ‘Grist in the Mill’.” In this first chapter, she revisits the history of serology and blood transfusions to bear witness to how the eugenics movement influenced the field even after European rejection of eugenics theories following the Holocaust. This is one of the many examples of how the American medical establishment was unable to question dominant racial paradigms, another missed opportunity. Indeed, it took the American medical community till the 50s to actually break away from racially oriented principles and segregated blood banks. Luczak examines medical controversies about blood transfusions in Wallace Thurman’s short story “Grist in the Mist,” where she rightfully points at the fear of miscegenation or “fear of mongrelization” as the main cause. Thurman’s early medical training helps him to design a mock-gothic narrative to denounce the prevalent blood politics and the theme of racial ordering at the time. Blood is analyzed as a multifaceted trope following Dorothy Nelkin’s categories: “an essentialist substance, a symbol of danger, an emblem of the community and a mark of purity” (2023, 39). Set in the South of the 1920s, the narrative opposes Zachariah, a black man who decides to donate blood out of humanitarian grounds but is accused of a random murder and hanged for it, to the Colonel, who receives the donated blood but is utterly incapable of digesting this fact and ends up insane. As the critic compellingly affirms, “to desegregate blood, minds had to be desegregated first” (46).

In chapter two, “Eugenic Sterilization in Toni Morrison’s *Home*,” Luczak takes up as a starting point the 2011 outrage about the sterilizations performed on African American women without their consent in North Carolina till 1974 to pose the ethical challenge of engaged witnessing. Luczak consistently asserts that for eugenics doctors “sterilization was taken as an act of mercy for women incapable of controlling themselves or of fending for their children” (51). She also recalls the literary precedent of Morrison’s novel: Thurman’s coauthored filmscript *Tomorrow’s Children* (1934), where the author protests against the eugenic-sterilization practice of his day. In the case of *Home*, Morrison’s distanced perspective allows for a more nuanced narration of the gynecological abuses that African American women have been a target of since slavery times. The novel chronicles Cee’s systematic abuse at the hands of a convinced eugenics doctor to analyze the perpetrator’s profile and his lack of any remorse for his cruel and painful experiments and his unethical acts. What is also compelling about this novel, Luczak lucidly argues, is the study of the bystanders who also play a crucial role in the narrative as engaged witnesses who may facilitate victims’s path to overcome traumas. She reminds readers of the emblematic case of Nurse Rivers, a black nurse who helped conduct the infamous Tuskegee experiments for decades. In this novel the focus is on Cee’s healing and the loving community of women who

welcome Cee, effectively nurturing her back to self-esteem, respect and freedom. The restorative power of love and hope is the guiding light of this difficult but also rewarding narrative.

Commencing part two on pathologizing the body, Constante González Groba's "From the Prison of Slavery to the Slavery of Prison: Incarcerated Black Bodies in Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* and Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*" provides an illuminating contribution to interpret the alarming issue of mass incarceration. Drawing from Eduardo Mendieta's consideration of the history of power as the history of space and of Ronald Sundstrom's notion of the spatialized expression, experience and production of racialized spaces, González Groba remarks that "few disagree that the legacy of slavery is central to understanding the mass incarceration and excessive punishment of a disproportionate majority of blacks and other minorities" (78). He traces the history of the conversion of plantations into carceral institutions with examples such as the Angola Prison, the Louisiana State Penitentiary built on one Confederate plantation, where prisoners described their horrifying situation as "de facto continuation of slavery" (80) or "neoslavery," citing Dennis Childs. On the grounds of black criminality, many black men were unjustly incarcerated in a convict lease system that lasted until 1916 using them as unpaid labor, which is still a legal practice. In Ward's novel González Groba explores transgenerational trauma through a recreation of Parchman Farm, the Mississippi state penitentiary, and the lingering effects on her traumatized characters, inmates involved in many atrocious events there. For the critic, it is vital to revisit the awful past, to speak "the unspeakable things unspoken," using Toni Morrison's inspiring coinage, in order to let the ghosts enter in dialogue with those who remained alive and the new generations. Only by means of intergenerational communication can the process of healing start giving some agency back to the dead. In the case of Whitehead's neoslavery novel, there is a direct denunciation of the US carceral system and its slavery practices. In this Gothic fiction the motif of the double or foil is used to confront the dehumanizing imprisonment so that the novel turns into a narrative of redemption to come to terms with the traumatic past.

In "Pathologizing Race, Pathologizing Metastatic Cancer: From Lillian Smith to Ibram Kendy," González Groba convincingly peruses the impact of slavery legacy of pollution and pathology through the Southern myths of the "lost cause" and the "vanishing negro." His endeavor in this chapter is to underline the significant work of two key antiracist figures, Lillian Smith and Ibram Kendi. A Southern white, Smith is indeed a pioneering and brave figure who denounced Southern society as a pathological society and the culture of segregation as an actual cancer to the social body and the body politic. Especially in her groundbreaking *Killers of the Dream* (1949), Smith effectively manages to equate the segregation system and cancer in this "racial conversion narrative" (Hobson). As González Groba explains, "cancer is an expansionist disease, like racism and colonialism, which Lillian Smith saw as parallels here, describing them as two cancers that metastasized throughout the world" (120). She urged for radical antiracist intervention against the dangerous "strategy of denial." Contemporary black historian and intellectual Kendi also denounces that strategy of denial by tellingly making use of the cancer metaphor too. In his

influential book *How to Be an Antiracist*, published in 2016, which according to González Groba can be defined as “a black racial conversion narrative” (124), Kendi advocates for antiracist politics as the only possible option in a racist society, and warns against internalized racism confessing his past adherence to it. To effectively fight against metastatic racism, he also calls for urgent action, as González Groba skillfully observes: “The most effective antidote for racism is to perform surgery that removes racist policies and to systematically flood the body politic with antiracist policies” (127).

Shifting the focus to de-pathologizing access to food and land, section three opens with “‘Healthy is the New Gansta’: Food Apartheid and Black Culinary Culture in Southern Hip-Hop” by Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis, which examines the unhealthy food practices that harm African American individuals and communities thanks to the legacy of plantation slavery that “remains inscribed on the tables where African American families share meals” (135). After offering an overview of the origins and counter-dominant messages of the cultural phenomenon of hip hop, especially Southern hip hop manifestations, Niewiadomska-Flis highlights the complex history of black malnourishment and nutritional trauma that has affected blacks from slavery times to nowadays. Most interestingly, she explains how food insecurity is endemic to the bad conditions of ghettos or racialized urban spaces, which literally become “food deserts” or “food swamps” due to supermarket redlining and the “dearth of affordable, healthy food options” (145). She also articulates the history of soul food as a strategy for resistance and survival on plantations (Grosvenor), but also the way in which soul food can lead to health liabilities. This has resonated with many hip hop artists who refer to slave diet as “a form of racial genocide” (Dick Gregory). Opposing this vision, many of them have objected to an unhealthy diet on both religious and nutritional grounds, even adopting veganism as a way of life because they promote respect to animal rights and environmental justice in their songs. “Defying the death industry” as Tassili Ma’at terms it (152), Niewiadomska-Flis brilliantly concludes that “many rappers adopt anti-oppressive practices, such as plant-based diets and animal-rights activism, and promote respect for the planet, food justice, urban organic gardening, holistic health and fitness” (152) in an act of rebellion to decolonize “their communities’ diets” (153), and their bodies and minds too.

Bringing the volume to a close, Niewiadomska-Flis’s “Black Land Matters: Geographies of Race and Politics of Land in Natalie Baszile’s *Queen Sugar*” unveils the importance of black land ownership and black farming by articulating the long history of African American dispossession, disenfranchisement and land theft since the abolition of slavery. Due to the so-called “geographies of bondage” (165) imposed on enslaved people, blacks have had a conflictive love-hatred relationship to the land and the rural South. After the Emancipation, involuntary servitude and sharecropping complicated that relationship even further as “de facto peonage” which is identified as the “afterlife of the plantation” by McInnis (167), together with the racist tactics of land redistribution and allocation that favored white ownership enacted by the USDA, the federal department founded by president Lincoln in 1862 supposedly to help all Americans with

agricultural issues, renamed as “the last plantation” (Hoffman, Grim). All these discriminatory practices resulted in massive land loss reflected in the fact that today black people only control 2 percent of US farmland (Penniman). In Niewiadomska-Flis’s view, Natalie Baszile’s *Queen Sugar* (2014) accurately portrays a sugarcane farm as a heterotopic space (Foucault), a contested counter-site to meditate upon those racist practices and to deconstruct the idyllic depiction of the Southern pastoral. As she states: “this pastoral idyll never acknowledged pain, dehumanization, coercion and exploitation, clashing directly with the harsh reality of black geographies” (176). By making use of Sarah Ahmed’s “affective economies,” the novel denounces the legal and illegal mechanisms used by racial capitalism to hinder blacks’ property rights, in this case the protagonist Charley’s, but also claims the importance of communal and familial solidarity and cooperation to develop “the geographies of self-reliance,” a notion coined by Ashanté Reese which implies “memory, nostalgia, personal and communal priorities, hope, engagements with history, and racialized responsibility” (179). By the end of the narrative Charley is able to nurture a sense of belonging and connection to the community which proves crucial for the continuation of her farm, her dream come true, and for shaping a hopeful future as a means to stability, prosperity and autonomy. In short, what bell hooks lovingly defines as “a community of care,” citing Kroker (2009, 228).

In conclusion, *Pathologizing Black Bodies* is a welcome addition to the field of African American and black diaspora studies, which caters for new insights into the concepts of black pathologization, the legacy of slavery and the persistent effects of systemic and institutionalized racism and sexism that permeates African American bodies and communities. This study compiles a wide array of multi-layered, innovative and productive analyses, with high-powered contributions to academic inquiry. This volume will be of great interest for scholars working on literary, musical and critical representations of the enduring legacy of slavery and the discourse of race and the body. Besides, the book is highly commendable for those researchers intent on learning more about the history of racism in the US and its multiple hideous practices that extend well into our present such as mass incarceration, eugenics theories and food and land apartheid.



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Love, Activism and the Respectable Life of Alice Dunbar-Nelson

Tara T. Green

London: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc, 2022. 266 pp.
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Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson, born to parents of mixed racial backgrounds in New Orleans, Louisiana, is recognized in academic circles for her multifaceted professional career as a poet, essayist, diarist, and activist. Her literary contributions are renowned for delving into complex subjects, notably gender, race, and ethnicity, drawing from her African American and Creole heritage as influential sources that informed her work. Furthermore, in the early 20th century, Alice Moore Dunbar Nelson emerged as a notable figure among the scarce female African American diarists. Through her writings, she adeptly captures the intricate realities faced by African American women and intellectuals of her time. Her works delve into nuanced discussions encompassing themes of racism, oppression, familial dynamics, labour, and sexuality, offering insights into the multifaceted experiences of these marginalized groups within society. However, additional facets of Alice Dunbar-Nelson's life and legacy remain to be explored and are presented in the recently published *Love, Activism, and the Respectable Life of Alice Dunbar-Nelson*, which emerges as a compelling biographical analysis, offering a fresh perspective on the life and contributions of this literary activist. With poignant dedication to “survivors of domestic assault and the ones who tried,” Tara T. Green's work extends a homage while presenting a new lens through which to view Dunbar-Nelson's life and work. Green's insightful analysis does not only revisit Dunbar-Nelson's narrative but also sheds light on lesser-known aspects of her life and experiences, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of her legacy.

In a multifaceted portrayal, Alice Dunbar-Nelson emerges as a figure marked by internal contradictions. Her depiction often reveals a tension between her profound affinity for her ancestral lineage and her reluctance to be exclusively categorized within the black community. This divergence stemmed not only from her racial identity but also from the complexities surrounding her sexual orientation. *Love, Activism, and the Respectable Life of Alice Dunbar-Nelson* provides an enduring examination of the private conduct of an individual, perpetually shaped by the pervasive influence of Victorian moral standards within a burgeoning educated black middle-class milieu, emphasizing the adherence to ideals of respectability.

Having become a leader in the Black Clubwomen's Movement at the early age of 20, Dunbar-Nelson does, undoubtedly, stand as an early figure within the realm of black feminism, deftly navigating intricate inquiries surrounding racism, women's rights, and individual agency over one's sexuality in both her public activism and private affairs. Amidst these complexities, she adeptly resisted the constraints imposed upon her identity as a creative black woman, carving paths that transcended societal limitations.

In Green's exploration, Alice's multifaceted role as a writer, activist, and an individual with her own sexual identity is thoroughly examined. Green's portrayal of Alice's connection to Dunbar provides insights into why Tara T. Green chooses to dedicate, as aforementioned, Dunbar-Nelson's biography to "survivors of domestic assault and the ones who tried". This dedication seems to stem from a deeper understanding of Alice's experiences, shedding light on her resilience in navigating personal challenges, including instances of domestic assault, and the resilience of those who attempted to support or help survivors in similar situations.

Green's depiction portrays Alice as a woman who, having experienced abandonment by her father, held a belief in the transformative power of love and romance. She anticipated that marriage would offer her an identity that her father's absence had left unfulfilled. However, Dunbar's disregard for her agency in refusing him and his actions of marking her body as his own, led Alice to distance herself from their union shortly after they commenced cohabitation. This decision was prompted by a profound sense of shame and emotional isolation exacerbated by a societal context where Dunbar's reputation for alcohol consumption and public mistreatment of his wife had become widely known.

Despite the complexities within her marriage to Dunbar, Alice found inspiration within this relationship to explore new literary forms and genres. Although she did not achieve mastery in novel writing, she flourished as a highly skilled short-story writer. Her narratives prominently highlighted the experiences and aspirations of women, delving into their quests for identity, purpose, and a sense of belonging within society. Furthermore, examining the significance of coupling or marriage through the lens of female experience stands as a central theme in her body of work. Additionally, she delved into the intricate dynamics among masculinity, race, and power. Throughout her lifetime, she dedicated herself to confronting the myriad transgressions against

women, a pursuit that extended beyond the confines of her personal life into her public advocacy and private contemplations. An example highlighting her advocacy against transgressions targeting women is her assumption of a co-parenting role for her sister's children, who were abandoned by her spouse.

In her endeavour to uphold the significant middle-class status she valued; she crafted a narrative of an ideal union with Dunbar to strategically present herself. In 1916, she wed Robert John Nelson, a significantly younger man—a controversial action within the societal norms of the period. Concurrently, she embraced the adoption of Ernest Jones, a Black soldier, an act that also challenged prevailing social conventions. Simultaneously, her affection for Nelson did not preclude her from exploring intimate connections outside their marriage with both women and other men. Described by the author as “the woman who loved to love,” Alice staunchly asserted her autonomy, preserving the agency to engage her body as she deemed fit.

During the interval from 1920 to 1927, she grappled with recurring episodes of depression, a phase that compelled her to undergo a transformative process both in her identity as a woman and in her artistic endeavours. During the initial decades of the 20th century, she became intrigued by technology as a means to translate theatrical drama from the stage onto the cinematic screen. Simultaneously, she redefined the public sphere of newspapers, strategically reshaping it to engage politically conscious African American readers, thereby capturing and chronicling the evolving societal shifts of the era.

In short, this piece comes highly recommended as it not only provides an engaging read but also delves into the life of a trailblazer who could be regarded as one of the earliest proponents of feminism, offering a profound exploration of her life and contributions.



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Passionate Professing: The Context and Practice of English Literature

Sara Martín Alegre

Jaén: Universidad de Jaén, 2023. 373 pp.

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Sara Martín Alegre is the author of the fourth volume for the recent collection “Estudios literarios anglo-germánicos,” coordinated by Jesús López-Peláez and Luciano García at the University of Jaén since 2020. A senior lecturer in English Literature and Cultural Studies at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Martín Alegre’s research focuses on Gender Studies with a particular interest in popular fiction in English, mainly science fiction. It is from this Cultural Studies background that, as stated in the preface of this book, she approaches “the ideological and material circumstances under which English Literature is taught, researched, and studied in Spain” (12).

Presented as a “hybrid text” (11), this volume reflects upon the material conditions of the teaching practice of English Literature in Spanish universities. The first part, a revised version of Martín Alegre’s report for the state examination for tenure originally written and published in Spanish, is a well-informed and engaging academic record that discusses the lights and shadows of English Literature as a discipline, particularly as it is taught and researched in Spain. The second part is a hands-on application to Martín Alegre’s teaching practice with a selection of almost 100 posts from her consolidated blog *The Joys of Teaching Literature* at the UAB, started in September 2010 and materialized in thirteen yearly e-books and more than 600 posts.

Martín Alegre's book is a landmark in the necessary reflection on the teaching of English Literature in Spanish universities both in the recent *Grado en Estudios Ingleses* and its predecessor, *Licenciatura en Filología Inglesa*. Her contribution to the field adds to and updates previous seminal works, such as her own *Enseñar literatura Inglesa* (digital repository, UAB, 2002) and the collected volume *Teaching American Literature in Spanish Universities* (Universitat de València, 2002, edited by Carme Manuel Cuenca), a collection of essays by 15 Spanish teachers and scholars, limited to the teaching of American Literature. Martín Alegre admits that reading Elaine Showalter's *Teaching Literature* (2003) was “a breath of fresh air” (156)—she even discovered that Showalter's epilogue was titled “The Joy of Teaching Literature”, a very similar title to Martín's own blog.

In “Part I: English Literature: Definitions, Institutions, Theory” the origin and diachronic revision of the discipline are studied in relation to the slippery notion of canon, the arbitrary division of literary periods and the overlap of different theoretical schools. The result is a thought-provoking discussion in which Martín Alegre engages diligently prior to her focus on the specific second-language teaching context of English Literature in Spain.

She starts problematizing concepts, such as the term English Literature (in contrast with Spanish Literature and other labels such as Literature in English, Anglophone Literature or Commonwealth Literature) or the labels English Philology and English Studies and the anachronistic preservation of Philology in the name of most Spanish departments for English Studies after the creation of the Degree in English Studies in 2009. Additionally, she explains the recent movement towards “an international literary space” (23) and accordingly discusses labels such as postcolonialism and the transnational turn.

Martín Alegre then offers a diachronic review of the process of institutionalization of English Literature as a discipline and pedagogy in the United Kingdom and the United States, with an emphasis in its frequently invisibilized Scottish origins (with names such as Adam Smith, Hugh Blair or John Witherspoon) and the philological German background of the 19th century. This diachronic model dialogues with the pedagogical labels used in the periodization for the study of English Literature which, as she convincingly argues, does not follow a homogenous pattern, but rather mixes “linguistic, cultural and political criteria with merely chronological ones” (34). For practical reasons, she discusses the chronological sequence in the teaching of English Literature in core compulsory subjects for the BA degree in English Studies in Spanish universities, and argues about the pros and cons of a reverse chronological order, as is the case of her own university.

Another central topic for discussion is the literary canon and the need to teach students that “this field of knowledge has been constituted by a series of ideological manipulations and confrontations, which are by no means over” (39). Following another diachronic approach, she mentions central names that contributed to this formation of the canon, such as Matthew Arnold

or T. S. Eliot, to engage in this intense debate that has been going for forty years and is “a basic tool for undergraduate teaching” (43). Harold Bloom’s idea of the Western canon, which has been undermined by writers and critics like Chinua Achebe, leads Martín Alegre to discuss the need to open it in class, but also to rethink it carefully.

After all these necessary considerations, the author lands in our Spanish context, where English Philology (back then, the more general Modern Philology) entered in 1952. Besides offering a historical record of how these studies emerged and were consolidated in our country, this chapter provides some of the most useful and honest considerations for Spanish university teachers of English Literature. These reflections help us understand our own anxiety in trying to fit in a liminal teaching and research model that is not exactly the same as that in English-speaking countries (especially because our context is that of a second-language teaching), but does not fit well either the model implemented by Spanish academia. As Martín Alegre concludes, the study of English Literature in Spain is “at a crossroads” (74).

The first part finishes with a section on critical and theoretical models in the study of English Literature, where the author shows again the no-man’s land’s position of Spanish scholars teaching English Literature, as this space in our degrees is typically taken over by Spanish specialists in Literary Theory, “an area of knowledge usually attached to the Departments of Spanish” (79). Besides offering a comprehensive classification of schools of thought, Martín Alegre concludes that, unlike in experimental sciences where “successive paradigms override the previous one” (83), in the Humanities we are eclectic in the choice of theoretical paradigms, which is a good mechanism to avoid “dogmatism” (83). Therefore, there is no magic recipe, but we have to elaborate our own. This is exactly how she finishes this first part: sharing her own teaching proposal.

Part II compiles a selection of entries from the blog *The Joys of Teaching Literature*, organized in chronological order since 2010. These reflections, apart from offering an apt space for debate, act as therapy for all of us, university lecturers and researchers, who often feel passionate about our job, but also lonely, “talk-starved” creatures (232) with no positive feedback except for “a handful” of students’ “generous” messages, “hardly ever from colleagues or the institution” (120). In an informative language and style, but also honest and confessional (sometimes with lists of useful tips), Martín Alegre’s situated knowledge navigates through those teaching, research and bureaucratic scenarios that we face daily, but rarely discuss with our colleagues.

To start with, there is a reflection on the status and conditions of university lecturers: “How do we quantify th[e] mixture of leisure and working time?” when there is “plenty that falls outside the 37.5 hour contract” (103). Topics range from class etiquette showing respect for the teacher at work to the discussion of the role of the teacher in motivating students, passing through teachers’ invisible workload in July, the classroom’s teaching conditions, or teachers’ mentorship/genuine friendship with students outside the classroom setting.

Martín Alegre shows a very proactive role in (re)thinking teaching methodologies (such as *close reading* in the classroom) and evaluation tools. The use of and adaptation to new technologies and online resources (Google, the Moodle platform for online teaching, etc.) becomes a central concern in her reflections with a specific emphasis on plagiarism, which she tackles with revealing and illuminating anecdotes. Motivating students with the publication of their own research in online books edited by the teacher or organizing seminars with other colleagues on teaching methodologies are some of the results that the author has experienced herself.

Of course, she goes through frustrating situations: books that are not bought in advance, which leads to class degeneration and chaos, students' failure in reading the assigned texts, teachers' constant suspicion with students' plagiarism (blaming it in part on the shallowness of secondary education), students' reactions when it is too late ("wasted resources," 119), or marking careless papers, which feels as "a complete waste of my teaching time" (115).

All in all, after Martín Alegre's insightful overview of the discipline of English Literature, the reader ratifies the impression of its arbitrariness, but also the fascination for its eclecticism, which the author manages to systematize for us. If not solving riddles and uncertainties that we all share, at least this book opens a fruitful space for debate for the field of English Studies in Spain, coinciding with the 75th anniversary (in 2022, when the book was prepared) of the introduction of Modern Philology and, with it, of English Literature in Spain. We Spanish scholars normally work as isolated islands more concerned with "a hyper-productive model of research" (76), which is generally invisibilized to the general public, than with sharing academic and personal experiences of our teaching and research. This book makes us reconsider our teaching strategies and material situation in the context of Spanish universities at a post-pandemic milieu. Martín Alegre concludes with the reference to the "many preoccupations" in her "passionate professing of English Literature," but also its "many, many joys" (358).



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Detoxing Masculinity in Anglophone Literature and Culture: In Search of Good Men

Sara Martín and M. Isabel Santaulària (eds.)

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Further from being a mapped-out collection, *Detoxing Masculinity in Anglophone Literature and Culture: In Search of Good Men* (2023) was conceived as a multidisciplinary approach to “the concepts ‘detoxing masculinity’ and ‘good man’” (8), based upon the belief that an open-scope approach would result in an exploration of “how masculinity can be detoxed” (8). The collection is conveniently divided into five parts. Part I deals primarily with literary fictions, Part II is concerned with transnational fictions, Part III centres in fantasy, and Part IV in science fiction. The closing section, Part V, covers ageing and real-life men in a miscellaneous, multidimensional manner. While the editors acknowledge the impossibility of covering all the aspects of Anglophone culture in one single volume, their assertion that left-out aspects “can be the object of further research” (9) acts as a promising statement, and a collection academics in the field can look forward to, provided the result is as compelling as the present edition.

There are, of course, other works which have attempted to grapple with the issue of toxic masculinity. John Mercer and Mark McGlashan (eds.) *Toxic Masculinity Men, Meaning, and Digital Media* (2023) or Chris Haywood, Thomas Johansson, Nils Hammarén, Marcus Herz and Andreas Ottemo’s *The Conundrum of Masculinity Hegemony, Homosociality, Homophobia and Heteronormativity* (2018) are but two examples of approaches to the field of masculinity

studies. However, the present volume is unique in its literary focus and panoptical perceptions. Editors Sara Martín and M. Isabel Santaulària have succeeded in compiling a collection which is both pristine in its academic literary endeavours while retaining a complexity and variety of approaches. It is this balanced equilibrium between academic rigour and multi-perspectivity which makes this collection stand out from the rest of works available in the market.

David Owen's "The Visible-Invisible 'Good Man' in Jane Austen's *The Watsons*" opens Part I "Literature." Owen contends that Austen's novella draws a distinction between bad and good men, often portrayed in pro- and anti-Jacobin characters, respectively. Owen, however, concludes that Austen provides an alternative to such toxic masculinity pattern in the shadowy figure of Mr Watson, "in whose positive masculinity the novella places its hopes of remedy from the toxicity of Messrs Musgrave, Osborne, and Watson" (30). As Rodrigo Andrés clarifies in "Ishmael's Detoxing Process: Escaping Domestic Homogeneity in *Moby-Dick*", Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) constitutes a critical response to new nineteenth-century ideas of community living, asserting that the protagonist's new domestic environments "teach him, in fact, to unlearn his prejudices and free himself from his fears of human beings who are different from himself" (40). This exposure to a heterogeneous living space drives the protagonist away from toxic masculinity, resulting in an individual "willing to establish healthier relationships with themselves, with other men, and with other women" (52). Chapter 4 puts forward Dídac Llorens-Cubedo's contention that T.S. Eliot's Sweeney represents a dichotomous, dual masculinity, "brutal physicality vs. sensitivity and spirituality" (57). Llorens-Cubedo's "From Brutal to Spiritual Men in T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Drama: Sweeney and Beyond" asserts that Eliot's Sweeney unveils a progressive detoxing of masculinity, embarking "on transformative journeys exemplifying Christian values alternative to the spiritual lethargy of modern life" (71). In "Hybrid Masculinities in D.H. Lawrence's 'The Blind Man' and Raymond Carver's 'Cathedral,'" Gerardo Rodríguez-Salas conducts a comparative analysis of hybrid masculinities to show that "pro-feminist men aware of their privilege and socially legitimized oppressive behaviors" (79) can transform dominant gender relations, resulting in an "alternative, hybrid masculinity" (88) already present 40 years ago.

Chapter 6, "Of Tender Hearts and Good Men: Reading Australian Masculinity in Tim Winton's Fiction," opens Part II "Transnational Fictions." In it, Sarah Zapata notes how at the core of Tim Winton's work lies a questioning of the standards of normative masculinity, promoting, instead, "sensitivity, tenderness, and vulnerability" (96). By comparing, *The Riders* (1994) and *The Turning* (2004), two of his early works, to *Breath* (2008) and *Eyrie* (2013), two of his most recent novels, Zapata concludes that Winton "re-imagines male ways of being and his works open up diverse possibilities of representing masculine subjectivity" (107). Bill Phillips' "'A Good Man is Hard to Find': The Making of Michael 'Digger' Digson" peruses Jacob Ross' award-winning fiction *The Bone Readers* (2016) and its sequel, *Black Rain Falling* (2020). Phillips analyses the dichotomous relation between the protagonist's "struggle to navigate the unarticulated moral code he lives by and his determination to do good" (114) and his antagonist's embodiment of

toxic masculinity against a historical background of colonial oppression and slavery. In Chapter 8, “Black Masculinities in the Age of #BLM: Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty*,” Pilar Cuder-Domínguez examines Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty* (2005) in terms of its representation of black masculinities under the contention that the main character embodies a “non-toxic or progressive masculinity [...] that cultivates a broad ethics of social responsibility and that is therefore deeply imbricated with the struggle against all forms of oppression” (130). As her insightful analysis concludes, these characters may “offer a model of subordinate masculinity that may survive and even thrive outside the system” (139).

Part III “Fantasy” is commenced by Auba Llompart’s Chapter 9 “‘Some Wizards Just Like to Boast that Theirs Are Bigger and Better’: Harry Potter and the Rejection of Patriarchal Power.” Llompart understands Harry Potter as a positive masculine model in his embodiment of “an unyielding rejection of patriarchal behaviour, understood as the desire to be in a powerful, privileged position over others” (148). Llompart sees in Harry’s characterisation as a flawed individual the impersonation of good men, who “are good precisely because they do not seek power” (159). Noemí Novell explores, in Chapter 10 “A Lover Boy with Battle Scars: Romance, War Fiction, and the Construction of Peeta Mellark as a Good Man in *The Hunger Games* Trilogy,” Suzanne Collins’ eponymous trilogy *The Hunger Games* (2008-10). By conducting an analysis on the characterisation of Peeta Mellark against romance and war fiction conventions, Novell is driven to assert that Mellark is presented “as a gendered character representative of an alternative to hegemonic masculinity” (164). Chapter 11, Isabel Clúa’s “Masculinity and Heroism in Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld*: The Case of Good Captain Carrot,” delves into the complicated issue of male goodness. By exploring Terry Pratchett’s parody of masculinity in the Ankh-Morpork Guard novels, Clúa concludes that Pratchett’s Carrot subverts traditional archetypes of the heroic figure, offering instead a reconfiguration of the key elements of masculinity and developing “a proposal that revalues characteristics such as kindness, empathy, and care for others” (192).

Brian Baker’s “Skywalker: Bad Fathers and Good Sons” opens Part IV “Science Fiction.” Chapter 12 contends that the figure of Luke Skywalker personifies a good, detoxed masculinity “based on his ability to see the goodness in others, especially (and even) in his father, Darth Vader” (211) as proven by Baker’s analysis of the original trilogy. Chapter 13 discusses Paul Mitchell’s perusal of Philip K. Dick’s *Electric Dreams* (2017). As Mitchell sustains in “Changing the Script of ‘Human Is’: Re-visioning the Good (Hu)Man in Philip K. Dick’s *Electric Dreams*,” the episode “Human Is” “establishes a bifocality between narrative (the story) and narration (how the story is told/shown) that opens a critical space for the emergence of his counterhegemonic masculinity” (227). Chapter 14, Miguel Sebastián-Martín’s “Between Therapy and Revolution: Mr. Robot’s Ambivalence towards Hacker Masculinity,” compellingly argues that the series can be understood as a critical dystopia focused on hacker-led anti-capitalist struggle. It thus concludes that hacking can be seen as “potentially a refuge for patriarchal drives, but potentially also a subversive and transformative practice” (243).

Part V “Close to Life” brings the collection to a close by examining the contentious topic of male ageing. Chapter 15 is Maricel Oró-Piqueras and Katsura Sako’s examination of how *Last Tango in Halifax* TV series (2012–2020) questions ideal ageing masculinity. “A Few Good Old Men: Revising Ageing Masculinities in *Last Tango in Halifax*” cross-examines what the authors define as “one of the major crises affecting masculinity” (252). By focusing on the male protagonist, the researchers demonstrate that this embodies “an ageing masculinity which embraces the experience of vulnerability, including illness, and utilises it to nurture others and help them lead better lives” (264). Sara Martín’s “Let the Little Children Come to Me: Fred Rogers, the Good Man as TV Educator” is Chapter 16’s perusal of American TV personality Fred Rogers (1928–2003). By examining *Maxwell King: The Good Neighbor: The Life and Work of Fred Rogers* (2018), the documentary by Morgan Neville *Won’t You Be My Neighbor?* (2018), and the fiction film by Marielle Heller, *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* (2019), Martín concludes that Rogers established the ground for an alternative masculinity based on “Christian beliefs, personal qualities, and love of children” (280). Finally, Chapter 17, “The Part of the Iceberg That Doesn’t Show: Romance, Good Husbands, and Mr. Julia Child,” is M. Isabel Santaulària’s investigation of the ideal male partner as conveyed by popular romance. However, Santaulària approaches her examination from a new angle, by considering the figure of the husband of popular TV cook Julia Child, Paul Child, as fictionally depicted in Norah Ephron’s film *Julie & Julia* (2009) and in biographical works *Julie & Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously* (2009) and *My Life in France* (2006). Santaulària thus convenes that Paul Child’s masculinity could set an example, as it proves “there is nothing unmanly, emasculating, or embarrassing in deciding to devote his life to the ambitions of the woman he loved” (295).

Read as a whole, *Detoxing Masculinity in Anglophone Literature and Culture: In Search of Good Men* (2023) succeeds at delivering its opening promise that masculinity can be detoxed. The editors have managed to gather a collection of essays which excels not only in its rigorous academic approach to the topic but also in conveying reading practices which pave the way for new understandings of the concept of masculinity. Experts and neophytes to this academic field will indulge in and profit from the multi-myriad but complementary approaches taken. In short, an open promise of yet more to come.



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Revisiones posmodernas del gótico en la literatura y las artes visuales

José-María Mesa-Villar, Ana González-Rivas-Fernández y Antonio-José Miralles-Pérez (eds.)

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Este volumen, elaborado siguiendo la propuesta ideada por el Grupo de Investigación en Literatura, Cultura y Lenguas Modernas del Departamento de Idiomas de la UCAM-Universidad Católica de Murcia, da buena muestra del interés y vitalidad de la que gozan los estudios góticos en nuestro país. Desde sus orígenes, surgido a raíz de la desafección con respecto a los preceptos neoclásicos, el género gótico ha reflejado los diferentes temores que han acuciado a cada época, erigiéndose como medio de transmisión de traumas y ansiedades que han afligido a la sociedad a lo largo de los últimos siglos. Como exponen sus editores José-María Mesa-Villar, Ana González-Rivas-Fernández y Antonio-José Miralles-Pérez, este volumen compendia doce estudios de caso, los cuales “analizan las transformaciones del género gótico en obras posmodernas pertenecientes a los ámbitos de la literatura y las artes visuales” (9). Ahondando en la recepción y reformulación de rasgos y tropos góticos, así como en la pervivencia y la transformación de clásicos del género, este estudio tiene como objetivo “establecer puentes para una mejor comprensión del pasado y del presente” (10) y “evaluar los vínculos y los contrastes diacrónicos entre obras” con el propósito de “apreciar patrones de apropiación, reutilización y resignificación” (11). Los capítulos que conforman este volumen tienen por objeto de estudio el análisis de lazos intertextuales entre

manifestaciones artísticas contemporáneas y obras de la tradición gótica, por lo que abrazan una amplia variedad cronológica, desde los albores del gótico hasta sus exponentes posmodernos. A lo largo de los diferentes capítulos, se revisan estudios canónicos promulgados por teóricos del género gótico como son Fred Botting, Noël Carroll, Clive Bloom, Rosemary Jackson, Julia Kristeva, Ellen Moers, David Punter, Tzvetan Todorov y Anne Williams, hasta llegar a estudiosos del gótico posmoderno como Catherine Spooner, Marie Beville, Tony Magistrale y Murray Leeder. Asimismo, este volumen destaca por la multiplicidad de géneros de ficción que son objeto de su atención, como son las series en plataformas, las novelas gráficas, el cine de animación, los cuentos, las novelas y los largometrajes, así como por la interdisciplinariedad de sus aproximaciones teóricas, las cuales abrazan la mitocrítica, los estudios de recepción, la teoría filmica, el análisis narratológico y las teorías filosóficas en el contexto de la posmodernidad.

En algunos de los capítulos del volumen, se explora la pervivencia de ciertos mitos y arquetipos clásicos del gótico decimonónico. En su ensayo, Ana González-Rivas-Fernández describe el mito de Frankenstein como “uno de los mitos modernos más consolidados en el imaginario colectivo” (50) y demuestra que los temores descritos en la novela original de Mary Shelley persisten en la actualidad, pues así lo atestiguan series como *Black Mirror* (2011) al explorar la identidad del ser humano, *Humans* (2015) y *Westworld* (2016) al plantearse dilemas éticos acerca de dotar de conciencia a la vida artificial, y *American Horror Story* (2011) al profundizar sobre cuestiones como la procreación prescindiendo de la figura materna, la monstruosidad y la búsqueda de la inmortalidad. Por su parte, en contraposición a la creencia que en el relato detectivesco prevalece la razón en detrimento del misterio—por lo que a menudo se le ha considerado como antagonico al relato gótico—, Laura Rodríguez-Arnáiz defiende que “Robert Louis Stevenson was one of the authors that challenged this apparent opposition between the Gothic and detective tales” (208). Por medio de la identificación de rasgos intertextuales entre la novela corta de Stevenson, *Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde* (1886), y la décima temporada de la serie *Crime Scene Investigation* (2009-10), la autora desgana una serie de rasgos góticos que comparten, tales como la exploración de la mente irracional, la dudosa identidad entre criminal y víctima, y el desdoblamiento de la personalidad como fruto de la represión psicológica. La vigencia de mitos y arquetipos góticos también se extiende al imaginario colectivo y mitología de genuina impronta norteamericana.

En su capítulo, José-Manuel Correoso-Rodenas centra su análisis en la serie de novelas gráficas *Manifest Destiny* (2014-18)—creadas por Chris Dingess, Matthew Roberts y Owen Gieni—y en la aterradora representación que estas ofrecen del encuentro histórico por parte de los primeros exploradores con la frontera norteamericana a principios del siglo XIX. Partiendo de los trabajos de Julia Round (2014), que inciden en la relación intrínseca entre lo gótico y lo visual, el autor defiende que “the different recurrent motifs that are usually found in gothic novels are perfectly suitable for the construction of comics and graphic novels (127). La noción de la frontera con lo desconocido—plagada de seres híbridos y monstruos mitológicos—se ha asociado al género

gótico desde sus orígenes, si bien estas novelas gráficas ofrecen una mirada revisionista y crítica, a la par que terrorífica, de la conquista del oeste. Asimismo, también íntimamente ligada a la identidad norteamericana, se encuentra el retrato visceral y decadente del viejo sur y de la América profunda que se ofrece en los largometrajes del director Rob Zombie como exponentes cinematográficos del gótico americano instaurado por autores como William Faulkner y Flannery O'Connor. En base a la premisa de Teresa Goddu, que reza que “the gothic can strengthen as well as critique an idealized national identity” (2000, 270), Laura Blázquez-Cruz analiza el modo en que películas como *La casa de los 1000 cadáveres* (2003) y *Los renegados del diablo* (2005) describen la ruralidad del sur y sus valores tradicionales, a la par que los cuestionan mediante la deconstrucción de la imagen idílica de la familia, el retrato de personajes psicóticos como reflejo de degeneración moral, la descripción de espacios limítrofes y aislados como metáfora de exclusión social, el desmembramiento de la fisicidad como símbolo de la anulación de la identidad individual y la deformidad como crítica a los cuerpos normativos.

Si los anteriores trabajos evidencian la perdurabilidad, en obras contemporáneas, de las convenciones clásicas del gótico, en su capítulo, María-Isabel Jiménez-González y Beatriz González-Moreno defienden que algunos de los cuentos de Edgar Allan Poe son susceptibles de ser considerados como predecesores del género y de la estética *steampunk*. En base al concepto acuñado por Kevin W. Jeter, este género, surgido a finales del siglo XX, compendia narraciones de ciencia ficción contextualizadas en el periodo victoriano y de estética retrofuturista. Según las autoras, si bien las obras de escritores como H.G Wells y Julio Verne a menudo se han citado como fundacionales de este género, raramente se ha nombrado a Poe como antecesor, pese a que, en muchos de sus cuentos góticos, la tecnología adquiere un papel preponderante. Tras analizar la presencia manifiesta de objetos propios del *steampunk* en los cuentos de Poe—como vehículos de desplazamiento, autómatas e inventos revolucionarios—las autoras concluyen que puede considerarse la obra de Poe como impulsora de este género de marcados tintes góticos.

Otros capítulos recogidos en este volumen también demuestran que la estela de Poe, como exponente del gótico, puede percibirse en la filmografía de cineastas contemporáneos como Tim Burton y Guillermo del Toro. El capítulo de Miriam López-Santos se centra en la filmografía de animación de Burton, en la que se aprecia, ya desde sus inicios, el legado de Poe y de las adaptaciones cinematográficas de sus cuentos dirigidas por Roger Corman y protagonizadas por Vincent Price. A lo largo del análisis, se advierte el espíritu nostálgico del director mediante la utilización de la técnica del stop-motion, como antigua forma de efectos especiales, y de la estética propia del expresionismo alemán, caracterizada por la primacía de la subjetividad y la denuncia de la hipocresía social. No obstante, el cine de animación de Burton también entronca con lo fantástico posmoderno debido a su particular sentido de lo macabro, el horror paródico, la reivindicación de la diferencia y la monstruosidad, así como la subversión entre dos mundos paralelos en los que lo real deviene absurdo mientras que lo sobrenatural cobra especial atractivo. Por ende, las autoras concluyen que la mirada de Burton

se corresponde con “una visión estética revisionista y desmitificadora, empeñada en renovar y reactualizar, en subvertir y parodiar toda una tradición clásica” (69) de lo gótico. También ahondando en ese propósito de homenajear y renovar el legado gótico, la aportación de José-María Mesa-Villar y Francisco-Javier Sánchez-Verdejo-Pérez se centra en el análisis del legado de la tradición gótica en el largometraje *La cumbre escarlata* (2015) de Guillermo del Toro. Los autores describen esta narración cinematográfica como un viaje iniciático de la inocencia a la madurez, propio del gótico femenino y entronca con el cuento de fantasmas de corte clásico, en la que los espectros adquieren la función convencional de reflejo de temores reprimidos y de advertencia de peligros venideros, si bien también manifiestan una estética plenamente innovadora. Asimismo, el largometraje presenta rasgos propios de la metaficción, pues dirige la mirada hacia sus intencionadas influencias literarias y cinematográficas, aunque los autores concluyen que la película responde a un “ágil ejercicio de apropiación y resignificación que la alejan de una mera repetición” (94), como muestra el empoderamiento de la protagonista como heroína gótica que escribe su propia historia.

Otros ensayos profundizan en la influencia del cuento de hadas en obras del gótico contemporáneo. En su capítulo, Gema Navarro-Roig analiza el largometraje *El laberinto del fauno* (2006) de Del Toro en base a la utilización y renovación de la fórmula clásica del cuento infantil. Mediante la visión subjetiva del personaje de una niña, la película describe la travesía hacia la madurez de Ofelia, la cual conlleva la superación de pruebas y la mediación entre dos realidades—la histórica y la fantástica—que se erige como metáfora de resistencia en un contexto bélico. La narración presenta la estructura propia del cuento de hadas tradicional—que supone un rito de pasaje, una muerte y una purificación final—, al mismo tiempo que incluye la presencia de seres fantásticos como faunos y hadas, junto con referencias intertextuales a clásicos de los hermanos Grimm, Perrault, Carroll y Frank Baum, por lo que la autora concluye que la obra de Del Toro “enlaza directamente con los códigos de terror gótico y con el lenguaje de los cuentos de hadas para adultos” (120). También en relación con los cuentos infantiles y su intertextualidad con lo gótico, Mónica Fuentes-del-Río analiza el primer cuento infantil de Carmen Martín Gaité, *El castillo de las tres murallas* (1981), el cual, si bien aún características propias del cuento de hadas a la par puede describirse como un cuento moderno, puesto que manifiesta un carácter subversivo, supone una parábola de la libertad femenina y evidencia singularidades propias del universo literario de Martín Gaité. Asimismo, este cuento comulga con los rasgos propios del gótico formulados por César Fuentes Rodríguez (2007), como son la temporalización remota, la localización en castillos medievales, la atmósfera de misterio, los personajes exóticos, los hechos sobrenaturales, los objetos mágicos y los animales fantásticos. Por consiguiente, la autora defiende que, además de consistir en un cuento de hadas, la narración de Martín Gaité “puede considerarse una obra perteneciente al género gótico” (169). Este diálogo entre tradición y subversión de las convenciones es especialmente propio del género gótico de la posmodernidad a la cual se refieren tres de los capítulos del volumen.

Partiendo de la premisa que la novela neogótica adopta y parodia elementos estructurales propios del gótico clásico, el capítulo de Elena Kornilova analiza tres novelas neogóticas posmodernas de Iris Murdoch—*The Black Prince* (1973), *A Word Child* (1975) y *The Sea, The Sea* (1978)—en las que se identifican rasgos góticos de los que Murdoch se sirve para explorar la psicología de sus personajes. Este ensayo se centra, por una parte, en el análisis de la organización espacio-temporal en las novelas, en la que el tiempo es subjetivado y ralentizado, mientras que se establece un contraste de espacios, y, por otra parte, en la exploración del personaje del villano gótico, descrito como ser demoníaco y ambivalente. Según concluye la autora, en las novelas neogóticas de Murdoch, los motivos góticos son tomados prestados y transformados hasta adquirir “un renovado contenido psicológico, ético y filosófico” (200). Por su parte, Julio-Ángel Olivares-Merino analiza largometrajes del gótico posmoderno centrados en el arquetipo gótico del fantasma, el cual ha pervivido desde los albores del cine—como sugiere la caracterización derrideana de la proyección filmica como fantasmal—hasta llegar a la resemantización de este arquetipo en largometrajes contemporáneos como *I Am a Ghost* (2012) de H.P. Mendoza, *I Am the Pretty Thing That Lives in the House* (2016) de Oz Perkins y *A Ghost Story* (2017) de David Lowery. En base a la caracterización del fantasma posmoderno, estas tres películas presentan parámetros comunes tales como la humanización del espectro, el alejamiento del fantasma de la otredad y la adopción de su punto de vista por parte del espectador, y la aproximación al ser fantasmagórico como fuente de reflexión existencialista. A su vez, cada uno de estos largometrajes presenta una propuesta específica, puesto que Mendoza incide en la no distinción entre espectros y fantasmas, Perkins propone una reflexión que interpela al espectador y Lowery presenta una elegía silente y contemplativa que explora el sinsentido de la existencia, la negación de la transcendencia y los enigmas fundamentales de la vida. Fruto de su análisis, el autor demuestra que, en estos tres largometrajes, el fantasma posmoderno se erige como existencia paralela que urge a la introspección psicológica y antropológica del sujeto posmoderno hasta el punto que “el fantasma toma la palabra y el punto de vista en una búsqueda trascendental” (47). Asimismo, en su capítulo, Sergio Albadalejo-Ortega interpreta la película *A Ghost Story* (2017) de David Lowery como una “propuesta hipermoderna basada en la construcción de un drama psicológico travestido con los ropajes del cine de fantasmas” (143), centrando su análisis en los componentes narrativos, los códigos formales y la representación filmica. En el largometraje se observan los componentes narrativos propios del relato de fantasmas promulgados por Melissa Hall (2007), aunque su función responde, primordialmente, a la de un drama con aspiraciones metafísicas. En relación con los códigos formales establecidos por Francesco Casetti y Federico Di Chio (2013), si bien la película se sirve de códigos tecnológicos que inciden en una sensación de extrañamiento, domina la alternancia de distintos códigos visuales, gráficos, sonoros y sintácticos, que convierten al largometraje en una propuesta nada convencional desde un punto de vista formal. En lo que atañe a la representación filmica, la película se caracteriza por la hibridación de géneros, la parodización y la autoreflexividad. Por consiguiente, el autor concluye que, en la película de Lowery, “lo sobrenatural sirve para tratar aspectos trascendentes” (153), por lo que el arquetipo del fantasma, en la posmodernidad, deviene objeto de reflexión ontológica.

Dado su cometido académico, aunque también divulgativo, este volumen cumple eficientemente su doble propósito de labor investigadora y didáctica, estableciendo conexiones entre las obras objeto de estudio y la tradición gótica, a la par que profundizando en el conocimiento del género gótico no únicamente para beneficio de la comunidad investigadora, sino para acercar este género al alumnado y al público en general. Asimismo, en su conjunto, este estudio ofrece un testimonio representativo de las líneas de investigación en los estudios góticos actuales, especialmente en nuestro país, como atestiguan sus diferentes grupos de investigación interesados en las diferentes aproximaciones teóricas que ofrece un género tan prolífico e interdisciplinar. Este volumen evidencia la maleabilidad del género gótico para adaptarse a los nuevos tiempos y seguir reflejando los temores y ansiedades, siempre en constante proceso de evolución, que son reflejo de nuestra sociedad.



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Shakespeare's First Folio Revisited: Quadricentennial Essays

Remedios Perni (ed.)

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In his recently awarded collection of poems, *Self-Portrait as Othello*, the Jamaican poet Jason Allen Poissant (2023, 34) pointed out that “nothing makes sense until it makes sense in the body, until the body is present at the making-sense.” Certainly, in Shakespearean studies, nothing could make sense until the body of work was fixed in writing as a whole in 1623 with the publication of the First Folio. As Emma Smith (2016, 1) has already stated, it is not for nothing that the First Folio constitutes “Shakespeare’s bibliographic embodiment.”

It is precisely there where readers, first, scholars, later, began the path of enjoyment and study of the works of William Shakespeare. As it happened in 2016, where the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the playwright’s death gave rise to several events (Doran 2016) and publications (McMullan & Wilcox 2016, Gollancz & McMullan 2016, Crawford & Scott-Baumann 2016, Hahn & Valencia 2016), the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the appearance of the First Folio in 2023 was the perfect excuse for the emergence of works that focused on its material and conceptual importance. Perhaps it was Emma Smith’s (2023), a new edition of her already classic study, the one that had the greatest repercussion; so it is most logical that Emma Smith herself writes the prefatory words of the present volume, edited by Remedios Perni, because if

the former by the prologue writer has become the reference monograph on the First Folio, the latter she prologues is destined to become the reference volume of essays on this topic, such is the quality of the authors and their work.

After a note explaining the aims of the *Thalis Research Book Series* collection, which this volume aptly inaugurates, the list of contributors and the usual acknowledgements, the volume opens with a foreword and an editorial introduction. After a delightful foreword – “Foreword: Ghost Folios” (19-22), where Emma Smith succinctly points out the importance and relevance of the volume, connecting it with bibliophilia and phantasmagoria, Remedios Perni, from her position as editor of the work, describes in “Shakespeare’s First Folio Revisited: An Introduction” (23-38) the whys and wherefores of the volume in an introduction that, starting from the assumed positions of literary critical theory, reviews section by section, and author by author, its contents and, above all, its original contributions to the discipline. There is no better review than reading this exemplary introduction, an example of what must always be done when editing works of collective authorship. The volume is built around the three fundamental axes in the life of every book: its condition as a physical-textual object susceptible of being edited; its distribution and diffusion, once published; and its subsequent transcendence, especially when it reaches iconic status. The three parts develop such main axes accordingly.

Part one, “The First Folio: Textual and Editorial Approaches,” begins with “The Singularity of Shakespeare’s First Folio as a Drama Collection in a European Context” (39-54), where Jesús Tronch accurately and rigorously describes the features that make the First Folio unique among the various types of publications of the time (collected works, drama compilations and Folio collections). In the next chapter, “The Case for the Folio” (55-84), Jonathan Bate argues his reasons for choosing the text of the First Folio as the starting text for editing Shakespeare’s plays as opposed to other texts (the Quartos), especially when editing with an eye to performative and authorial issues. With concrete examples from his experience as an editor for the RSC, the chapter defends, from clear editorial criteria, the relevance of the First Folio as a base text. The following chapter, “A Portrait of Shakespeare’s Folio: Sarah Siddon’s Editorial Legacy in Current Editorial Theory and Practice” (85-100), also deals with editorial issues; in it, Sonia Massai confronts the editorial practices of recent publishers with the figure of Sarah Siddon and her little-known (and conveniently vindicated in this chapter) high-level critical facet. Part one closes with Miguel Ramallete’s take on Quarto/Folio comparisons, as far as genre is concerned, in “From Folio Tragedy to Quarto History Again: Generic Overdetermination in *Troilus and Cressida*” (101-12).

As stated earlier, part two, “Disseminating the First Folio,” focuses on the volume’s circulation worldwide. Its three chapters analyze in depth several paradigmatic cases related to certain copies of the First Folio. The first two chapters focus on the so-called Indian copy of the Folio, in Roorkee. First, Eric Rasmussen revises, in “Passage to India: A Shakespeare Folio’s Long Strange Trip” (113-22), how the copy got there, giving a complete account of its textual and physical description;

then, Rosa García-Periago, in “Unveiling the Mystery: The “Copy” of Shakespeare’s First Folio in Roorkee” (123-32), deals with its relevance for the thematic expansion of Shakespeare’s plays in other contexts. The section closes with Angel Luis Pujante’s witty piece on “The Gondomar First Folio: Lost, Stolen or Invented?” (133-50). Reading these three chapters, especially the latter, one feels a bit like Lucas Corso hunting highly deemed and dangerous volumes from *geardagum*.

Part three, “The First Folio: More than a Book,” deals with issues that transcend the First Folio as a book to consider it a cultural artifact of the outmost significance. The section opens with “Randall T. Davidson’s Aldermanbury Shakespeare Sermon (1923): A Religious and Theatrical Commemoration of the First Folio” (151-68) in which Marta Cerezo brilliantly unfolds the connections between the First Folio and literature, religion and commemoration, taking as an example one specific event: “Archbishop of Canterbury’s Randall Thomas Davidson’s delivery of a Shakespeare’s sermon at the request of the London Shakespeare Commemoration League during a Thanksgiving service in celebration of the Tercentenary of Shakespeare’s First Folio on 21 April 1923 at the church of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury” (152). The second piece, “The First Folio’s Wonder: Shakespeare’s Compulsive Patterns of Invention” (169-82), by Craig Dionne, uses the Folio as inspiration and addresses the relationship between “Renaissance humanism, cognitive conditioning and the writing abilities of the era” (33). The section, and the volume itself, comes to a close, with one of the most inspirational and thought-provoking pieces of the volume: Evelyn Gajowski’s piece on “Romancing the Stone: The First Folio, Fragmentation and Wholeness” (183-202). From the contemplation of the Belvedere Torso and the Venus de Milo, the author embarks on a brilliant consideration of several issues dealing with powerful female characters and their representation; focusing mainly on Hermione, Evelyn Gajowski aptly concludes that our idea of female representation, and its evolution from fragmented references to whole characterization would have been impossible to portray “were it not for the First Folio’s inclusion” of many plays that would have been lost forever.

Books bear witness to things past and plant the seeds of future analysis and (re)consideration. As Jason Allen Poisant (2023, 41) said on his aforementioned poetry collection, “without any witness (writing, inscriptions, books, legends) tying that time to the present, all the stories have to be invented–reinvented.” Shakespeare’s First Folio falls undoubtedly on such category of iconic books that allow us to reassess and enjoy literature and keep it far away from oblivion. Far from being a comprehensive survey, and precisely for not being so and for offering masterful chapters on specific issues on the First Folio, this wonderful and most necessary volume will surely be a landmark on our field. As a proud owner of *The Norton Facsimile* (Hinman 1996), the only First Folio a humble lecturer can own, I cannot but recommend (and celebrate) Remedios Perni’s superbly edited collection as a compass to navigate, understand and be inspired by the contents of Shakespeare’s First Folio. There is no better way to continue with the labor of love Heminges and Condell started when urging us, readers of all sorts, to “reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe.”



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British Periodicals and Spanish Literature. Mapping the Spanish Canon

María Eugenia Perojo Arronte and Cristina Flores Moreno (eds.)Series Anglo-Iberian Studies, vol. 3. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2022, 246 pp.
ISBN: 978-3-631-88549-9.

No resulta frecuente encontrar obras sobre el grado de recepción de la literatura española en el género periodístico británico, pero he aquí una de calado. Veamos por qué. Los que nos dedicamos a estudiar el hispanismo del siglo XIX nos hemos centrado con excesiva frecuencia quizás en la imagen de España que aportaron en sus escritos un número de hispanistas de dudosa hispanofilia como lo fueron el marchante de arte de fino guante, desmantelador de casas hispano-árabes y empedernido trotamundos por la piel de toro Richard Ford, autor del monumental, muy meritorio y caprichoso *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain, and Readers at Home* (1845) y de *Gatherings from Spain* (1846), auténticos éxitos de ventas ambos en las que sin embargo el autor demostraba que su conocimiento y apreciación de la literatura española no era su fuerte; o el políglota y gitanófilo George Borrow, vendedor de biblias protestantes por tierras fundamentalísimamente católicas, pero que mentía más que veía; o el poeta laureado Robert Southey, subjetivo historiador de la Guerra de la Independencia (*History of the Peninsular War, 1825-32*) y consumado traductor/adaptador del medieval español a los gustos británicos; o el gregario tertuliano y astuto político Lord Holland, que ha pasado a la posteridad por sus pinitos literarios con Lope y Guillén de Castro, por la amistad y liderazgo que ejerció entre los liberales españoles (Alcalá Galiano, Quintana, Jovellanos, Blanco) y británicos

(MacKintosh, Brougham, Dr Allen, Lord Grey, Lord Grenville, Bowring, Vaughan, Lord Russell, Bertham o Honer) y por sus encuentros intelectuales con los mismos en Holland House; o el enviado plenipotenciario en Madrid John Hookham Frere, inepto embajador, amable amigo del Duque de Rivas en Malta, capaz helenista y entregado traductor al inglés de fragmentos del *Cantar de Mio Cid* y de Berceo. Sin embargo, la obra sobre la que versa esta reseña permite zambullirnos de lleno en la construcción del hispanismo británico durante el periodo romántico desde la novedosa perspectiva del análisis de artículos periodísticos que se publicaron en su día sobre España, sus ansias liberales y su producción literaria en la prensa de Gran Bretaña de la primera mitad del siglo XIX.

Retrocedamos unos pasos. En la primera década del turbulento siglo XIX España hacía una entrada relativamente triunfal en el imaginario europeo, sobre todo en el británico, por mor de la Guerra de la Independencia (1807-14). La contienda del patriótico pueblo hispano contra el invasor francés ponía de nuevo en el mapa del viejo continente al hasta entonces percibido como el más decadente de los países, denostado y ridiculizado sistemáticamente durante el anterior Siglo de las Luces. Para la Europa pujante, ilustrada e iluminada, España era todo lentitud, ignorancia y oscuridad. La intelectualidad europea se había venido explayando sin concesión alguna al desaliento en la recreación morbosa de la sempiterna leyenda negra contra España como forma de retroactivo sentimiento de envidia y antipatía contenida en los siglos anteriores.

A principios del siglo XIX, la Europa anti-napoleónica, entiéndase la Europa central, la norteña y la británica, comienza empero a percibir España como a una nación cuyo pueblo lucha espontánea y bravamente contra la tiranía imperial francesa. El español, en su vertiente de bandolero, guerrillero, exiliado o patriota se convierte de la noche a la mañana en un paladín de la libertad (Alberich 2001). Y la literatura inglesa da buena prueba de ello. España y Gran Bretaña se han aliado militarmente contra el enemigo común, la Francia despótica, imperial e invasora y la poesía inglesa (y en menor grado el teatro) deja bien claro que apoyar a los españoles es defender la causa justa. Ni Wordsworth, Coleridge, los Shelley, Byron, Hemans u otros muchos literatos anglófonos se muestran ya indiferentes hacia lo hispano, cantan en propagandísticas alabanzas a los aires de libertad que soplan en el sur de Europa (Beatty and Laspra Rodríguez 2019; Coletes Blanco y Laspra Rodríguez 2020) y no dudan en sumergirse con gusto en las obras de la época gloriosa de la literatura española, el Siglo de Oro, entre las que no faltan las de Calderón, Lope, Cervantes, Quevedo o Sta. Teresa de Jesús, en busca de inspiración.

Gracias a la “Guerra Peninsular,” Gran Bretaña descubre una nueva España, hasta poco antes mal conocida y despreciada. Los ilustrados militares llegados a la Península para combatir al francés se asombran de la calidad de los valores humanos y nacionales del pueblo hispano, se introducen en su literatura vernácula, en su cultura de firme arraigo medieval y católico y se apropian—por desgracia—de obras artísticas sin prurito alguno por la decencia (Medina Casado y Ruiz Mas 2004). Mas no por ello han desaparecido para los británicos del XIX aquellos

antiguos prejuicios. El marcado anti-catolicismo y el legendario recelo al antiguo poderío político y militar español, ya en clara decadencia tras la conversión de las añejas posesiones americanas en repúblicas independizadas de la metrópolis, mantienen a Gran Bretaña anclada en la desconfianza hacia el antiguo rival histórico. Por ello, penduleando entre su fascinación por las peculiaridades de la recién descubierta España y la sempiterno y casi inamovible prevención hacia la vieja potencia militar y colonial, se conforman, entre caricias y golpes, las relaciones anglo-hispánicas del primer tercio del siglo XIX (Saglia 2000; Almeida 2010).

La prensa británica, a la que tanto aportó el liberalismo español, sin duda ayudó a hacer crecer y madurar al hispanismo inglés. Al estudio de la creación de un canon literario español para disfrute del lector romántico inglés y de la consiguiente asimilación en el panorama cultural de la Gran Bretaña decimonónica contribuyeron las mil familias de cultos exiliados de la España fernandina, tristes deambulantes por las calles del lluvioso Londres en busca de la supervivencia como profesores, artesanos, impresores, traductores o como fuera (Llorens Castillo 2006). Destacó por aquellos días la labor docente de Antonio Alcalá Galiano, primer catedrático español de lengua y literatura en la recién creada universidad de Londres, mas sus clases no terminarían de calar intensamente en las almas de los literatos y pensadores londinenses, pues solo las impartió durante un par de años (1828-30). Sí impactaron de lleno los escritos de los exiliados en los periódicos británicos sobre lo más sabían: de literatura y de liberalismo y de lucha contra el despotismo. Anglófilos e intelectuales del calibre de José María Blanco White, José Joaquín de Mora, Ángel Anaya, el mismo Antonio Alcalá Galiano, etc., pregonaron las excelencias de las letras españolas en lo más granado de la prensa de calidad del panorama romántico británico como fueron el *Edinburgh Review*, *Quarterly Review*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, el *Examiner*, *New Monthly Magazine*, *Westminster Review*, *London Review*, el *Literary Gazette*, el *Foreign Review and Continental Miscellany* o el *Foreign Quarterly Review*, etc. A la difusión de todo lo hispano-liberal en las Islas Británicas y en el pensamiento político inglés se sumaron con gusto los nuevos hispanistas románticos de la categoría de un Southey, un Depping o un Holland en calidad de críticos, traductores, antólogos o divulgadores del verbo español. Las obras más valoradas (romances medievales, el Cid, novelas picarescas, Don Quijote, el teatro de Calderón y Lope), se vendían en Inglaterra, se adquirían en subastas, se coleccionaban, se traducían, se recreaban, se leían en clubes españoles en Londres, se transportaban ávidamente a tierras británicas en los equipajes de los viajeros, militares, diplomáticos y comerciantes que visitaban nuestros lares.

Las profesoras Perojo Arronte y Flores Moreno (U. de Valladolid y La Rioja respectivamente) han recogido un ramo de trabajadas aportaciones de un privilegiado elenco de especialistas en relaciones literarias anglo-hispánicas del siglo XIX. Estas dibujan un clarificador mosaico del papel ejercido por los más relevantes literatos españoles de la época y anteriores y del impacto de sus obras en las letras románticas en lengua inglesa. Este libro es fruto de la labor investigadora de dos experimentadas especialistas en relaciones literarias y culturales entre las naciones española

y británica realizada en el marco del Research Project LHIBRO, “La literatura hispánica en la prensa periódica británica del Romanticismo (1802-1832): apropiación y reescritura del canon,” patrocinado por la red “Anglo-Hispanic Horizons” y el Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación e Universidades y en funcionamiento desde 2019 en el seno de la U. de Valladolid.

Tras la “Introduction” de Perojo Arronte y Flores Moreno, los capítulos que siguen se dividen temáticamente en cuatro grupos: “Cultural Mediators” (formado por tres capítulos), “Constructing the Canon” (dos), “Appropriating Classical Authors” (cuatro) y “Appropriating Contemporary Authors” (tres). El primer grupo, “Cultural Mediators”, se caracteriza por sus estudios sobre aspectos relacionados con la labor de mediadores culturales que ejercieron los críticos literarios de ambas naciones en la prensa británica de la primera mitad del siglo XIX. María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia se centra en el caso concreto de Ángel Anaya; el segundo capítulo, de Sara Medina Calzada, busca examinar la construcción de un canon literario formado por los artículos sobre literatura española que publicaron en la prensa británica los exiliados residentes en Inglaterra hasta el año de la muerte del tirano. La siguiente aportación es de Begoña Lasas-Álvarez, que se centra en la labor divulgativa y mediadora de los publicistas en la prensa británica para la construcción de la imagen romántica de España.

El segundo bloque, “Constructing the Canon,” describe la evolución del proceso de canonización de la literatura española en Gran Bretaña, para lo cual aparece como distinguido protagonista el escocés J. G. Lockhart, difusor de los romances medievales de la Península, tal y como establece el capítulo de María Eugenia Perojo Arronte. Lockhart fue asimismo autor de una serie de preclaros ensayos (“Horae Hispanicae”) que vieron la luz en *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, tal y como analiza Diego Saglia en su correspondiente aportación, incidiendo especialmente en el análisis de una determinada ideología conservadora que tales escritos transmitieron.

En el tercer bloque, “Appropriating Classical Authors,” Cristina Flores Moreno analiza la visión de Lope que se difunde en la prensa romántica británica, en la que primó su condición de autor clave para la construcción del carácter nacional español. Davinia Rodríguez-Ortega analiza la transmisión que hiciera Mary Margaret Busk sobre Calderón en *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*. Alfredo Moro Martín explica la influencia del Quijote en *The Antiquary* de Scott y Fernando y Beatriz González Moreno estudian la recepción en la Inglaterra romántica de las ilustraciones del Quijote.

La última parte de la obra, “Appropriating Contemporary Authors,” incluye un capítulo de Leticia Villamedina González sobre la presencia de las fábulas de Iriarte en la prensa británica y otro de Fernando Durán López sobre varias reseñas negativas que recibieron en su día las obras del dramaturgo, poeta (y presidente del gobierno) Francisco Martínez de la Rosa. Cerrando el libro, Daniel Muñoz Sampere escribe sobre la influencia de la obra de Fernán Caballero en la Gran Bretaña post-romántica y victoriana.

Los diferentes capítulos de la obra de Perojo Arronte y Flores Moreno constituyen un retrato fiel de la visión de una nueva España y de las “cosas de España,” la de los exiliados liberales españoles, que, junto a los ilustrados británicos, fueron conformando mediante un considerable número de sesudos escritos para los periódicos y las revistas británicas del periodo romántico un nuevo hispanismo. Las aspiraciones al conocimiento de los entresijos del alma española según la vieron y diseccionaron los literatos y lectores británicos que se describen en las contribuciones de *British Periodicals and Spanish Literature* ayudan a comprender los senderos que fue tomando el hispanismo británico durante la época y en subsiguientes periodos históricos. Por ello y por mucho más, la obra de Perojo Arronte y Flores Moreno no puede ni debe faltar en las estanterías del investigador de literatura comparada que se precie. Dicho queda.



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LETICIA DEL TORO GARCÍA

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El Biopic Feminista Afroamericano: una Herramienta Empoderadora

María Platas-Alonso

Palma: Universitat de les Illes Balears, Colección English Studies/Estudis Anglesos, 14, 2022. 242 pp. ISBN: 978-84-8384-480-9

Esta obra realiza un análisis del género cinematográfico denominado biopic (abreviatura de la expresión inglesa *biographic picture*), definido este como “una película que representa la vida de una persona real, pasada o presente” (11). No obstante, su autora, María Platas-Alonso, se centra en mujeres afroamericanas con el propósito de demostrarnos que la incursión de estas en el cine ha tenido significativas implicaciones artísticas y sociales. Como profesionales del género, y desde distintas áreas (productoras, directoras o guionistas), están reclamando un papel que históricamente se les ha negado tanto por cuestión de género como por su origen racial.

Asimismo, la presentación que muchas de ellas llevan a cabo en el cine de diversas figuras afroamericanas, especialmente de mujeres, viene a romper con muchos de los estereotipos existentes hasta el momento, devolviendo a sus protagonistas y a su comunidad la dignidad de la que habían sido desprovistas, convirtiendo así al cine en uno de sus mejores medios de expresión personal y grupal.

El origen del biopic está ligado al del propio cine. No obstante, ha habido periodos en los que ha atraído más la atención del público que otros. Platas-Alonso considera que empezó a adquirir relevancia en los cincuenta, pero que se pondría verdaderamente de moda en los noventa, algo

que se nota también a nivel de crítica cinematográfica dado que los primeros estudios son de ese momento. De hecho, la crítica ha abordado el biopic desde muy diversas perspectivas. Una de las obras más conocidas es *Bio/pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* (1992) realizada por George Custen, que hace un análisis bastante exhaustivo del género y sus características. Otros autores, por su parte, se han fijado en la presencia o ausencia de la figura femenina en el cine y sus representaciones. Encontramos así obras como *Whose Lives Are They Anyway? The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre* (2010) de Dennis Bingham, *Biopics of Women* (2020) de Karen Hollinger o *The Postfeminist Biopic: Narrating the Lives of Plath, Kahlo, Woolf and Austen* (2013) de Bronwyn Polaschek.

Todos ellos abordan el estudio de la mujer en el cine a través del análisis de diversos biopics. Muchos de estos autores coinciden en afirmar que la figura femenina permaneció largo tiempo en un segundo plano, y que será a partir del desarrollo del biopic cuando la mujer empieza a adquirir relevancia en el cine y su papel cambie. Los personajes femeninos adquirirán valor, seguridad y capacidad para controlar su existencia, e incluso la de otros, como sucede con algunos de los personajes que analiza Hollinger, que pertenecen a ámbitos tan diversos como la monarquía, la cultura, la televisión, etc. Habrá también autores que aboguen por una identidad nacional y su representación en el cine, como la obra *Invented Lives, Imagined Communities: The Biopic and American National Identity* (2016) donde diversos autores centran la atención en cómo las vidas de determinados personajes reflejan lo que para ellos significa ser estadounidense. Sin embargo, se observa en general como la crítica cinematográfica ha prestado escaso interés a las cineastas afroamericanas, razón por la cual el libro de María Platas-Alonso se convierte en una valiosa aportación crítica. Como indica la propia autora, la ausencia de información sobre el cine afroamericano femenino y el hecho de que la mujer haya sido infravalorada profesionalmente ha contribuido a que se de escasa difusión a este tipo de estudios.

Este libro también sorprende al lector por su facilidad de lectura. Es en una obra amena, que prescinde de un lenguaje excesivamente técnico para convertirse en un texto cercano a cualquier tipo de lector, ya sea este un especialista en la materia o un mero curioso que se inicia en el mundo de la crítica cinematográfica. El lector quedará igualmente impresionado por el retrato que Platas-Alonso hace de la sociedad afroamericana y, de modo particular, del impacto que el feminismo ha tenido dentro de la misma. Habitualmente tendemos a percibir el feminismo como un movimiento homogéneo que ha ido adquiriendo repercusión en la mayor parte del mundo. Sin embargo, este libro nos descubre que esa percepción es completamente errónea porque las mujeres afroamericanas han sufrido doble discriminación, de género y racial, que a veces ha venido desde las mismas mujeres que las consideraban inferiores por el color de su piel. El cine se convierte así en una herramienta fundamental para dar visibilidad a todas esas realidades y para dotar de voz a quienes hasta el momento habían permanecido en el silencio. De ahí que la considero una obra igualmente valiosa tanto para los amantes del cine como para aquellas personas involucradas en estudios de índole feminista porque, además de los comentarios sobre

multitud de películas y directoras, descubrirán aspectos sociales, culturales y raciales sobre la comunidad afroamericana que despertarán su interés e incluso podrían ser el germen de futuras investigaciones.

Esta obra se compone de dos partes, cada una de ellas constituida por dos capítulos. La primera parte, que lleva por título “Luces y sombras. Aproximación historiográfica al cine feminista afroamericano,” realiza un recorrido histórico por la evolución del cine femenino afroamericano desde sus orígenes hasta el momento actual. La segunda parte, titulada “El biopic y el cine feminista afroamericano,” está centrada en este género y va a permitir que el lector conozca a las representantes más importantes, así como los trabajos que han realizado y sus características.

La primera parte se centra en los dos grandes momentos del cine afroamericano femenino: sus primeros pasos y su transformación en elemento de reivindicación social y política. Platas-Alonso evidencia que las mujeres afroamericanas han estado presentes desde los propios orígenes del cine produciendo y dirigiendo películas. No obstante, conocer hoy en días sus trabajos resulta en muchas ocasiones casi imposible porque difícilmente se conservan y solo hay constancia de ellos por referencias en periódicos o revistas de la época. Este es el caso de directoras como Tressie Souders o Maria P. Williams, pioneras en el ámbito cinematográfico de las que solo se las conoce por referencias en la prensa de la época.

Asimismo, el hecho de que sus realidades estuviesen marcadas por la segregación racial dificultaba bastante su visibilidad fuera de sus propias comunidades.

La opresión racial, consentida de forma generalizada a pesar de la relativamente reciente abolición de la esclavitud y sustentada por la vigencia de las conocidas como “Leyes de Jim Crow,” generaba prácticas de discriminación hacia la población negra, incluso en aquellos estados donde la segregación no estaba legalmente admitida. (30)

Era imposible que personas de raza blanca y raza negra compartiesen los mismos espacios, lo cual contribuyó a un desarrollo cultural paralelo en la comunidad afroamericana que se traduciría en la creación de espacios propios, como los denominados “black theaters,” consideradas “las primeras salas de espectáculos para la población negra” (31); o el nacimiento de piezas artísticas únicas como los “vodeviles negros,” “piezas teatrales de carácter variado” (33) que fueron especialmente difundidas por la empresa Whitman Sisters Company.

Desde estos primeros momentos habrá un elemento común que se intensificará con el tiempo: la necesidad de reivindicar la cultura afroamericana y, especialmente, romper con los tópicos impuestos. La mujer negra en el cine había quedado relegada a cuatro estereotipos: las mammies o las aunt Jemimas (mujeres negras dedicadas al servicio doméstico que protegían los intereses de los blancos), las jezebels (mujeres negras que mantenían relaciones sexuales con blancos durante el periodo de la esclavitud) y las mulatas trágicas (que renuncian a su identidad para irse a vivir en un entorno de blancos). Estas cineastas van a luchar por romper esas imágenes al tiempo que

se esforzaran por ofrecer una visión de su comunidad que refleje realmente sus tradiciones y su cultura. Esta circunstancia, como nos indica Platas-Alonso, será especialmente importante en los años sesenta, momento de las grandes luchas por los derechos civiles. Surgirán muchos movimientos reivindicativos entre los que cabe destacar, a modo de ejemplo, The National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), una de las primeras organizaciones no gubernamentales que van a luchar por los derechos del colectivo LGBTIQ+ afroamericano, con nombres como Faith Ringgold o Michelle Wallace.

Otro grupo que no pasa inadvertido por su interés en aunar arte y reivindicación social es L.A. Rebellio, constituido por varias generaciones de estudiantes de la Universidad de California. Sus obras destacan porque, aunque en todas se mantiene el interés por dar a conocer la realidad de las mujeres, van a incidir en la propia técnica cinematográfica, experimentando con sus películas y llamando la atención sobre estas como objetos artísticos, destacando aquí algunos nombres como Julia Dash, Carroll Parrott Blue, o Alile Sharon Larkin. Y como estas cineastas, hay muchas más, que podemos descubrir en este libro, que se convirtieron en la voz de todas aquellas personas que reivindicaban no ser considerados inferiores ni ser excluidos socialmente por el color de su piel.

La segunda parte de esta obra está más enfocada al análisis del biopic. Platas-Alonso nos va descubriendo cómo este género se convierte en la herramienta fundamental para dar a conocer a diferentes individuos que, pese a ser en muchos casos anónimas, son relevantes para su comunidad. Se trata, además, de un género heterogéneo en sus manifestaciones. Principalmente encontramos dos presentaciones: el corto y el largometraje, y en cuanto a contenido, habrá quienes opten por la forma documental mientras que otras se inclinarán por el género de la ficción. Esto es, aquellos en formato documental van a contener entrevistas, material de archivo e incluso lo que se ha denominado “performance sequence,”

que consiste en editar, dentro de la pieza cinematográfica en cuestión una o varias secuencias en las que la figura central interpreta un fragmento de su obra – un poema, un baile, un discurso político- bien rescatado de materiales de archivo, bien recreado a propósito para el biopic. (150)

Cualquiera que sea el modo elegido, el biopic se constituye como el instrumento de expresión más valioso que poseen estas mujeres porque les permite cambiar por completo la visión de su comunidad. Además, como indica Platas-Alonso, el biopic evoluciona tan rápidamente como el propio cine. Así, de las primeras películas realizadas con pocos medios y escaso dinero pasamos a producciones mucho más elaboradas, en las que ya es posible cuidar los aspectos técnicos e incluso innovar. Se pone también de manifiesto la libertad de expresión en cuanto a los temas que se exponen, dando pie a que se toquen cuestiones consideradas controvertidas en épocas pasadas como la homosexualidad, las relaciones sexuales, las relaciones interraciales, el racismo o la aportación de la cultura afroamericana al desarrollo de Estados Unidos, entre otros.

Otra característica de este libro que no puede pasarse por alto es el hecho de que Platas-Alonso proporciona multitud de ejemplos de directoras y obras en cada una de las etapas que analiza. Igualmente, este contiene también una completa bibliografía para aquel lector curioso que desee ampliar conocimientos o complementar su lectura con algún material extra.

Concluimos así esta breve presentación de un libro cuya lectura consideramos altamente recomendable. Esta obra marca un hito importante dentro de la crítica cinematográfica en español donde hasta el momento no se había abordado de manera tan exhaustiva el cine femenino afroamericano. Encontramos también acertada la perspectiva cronológica empleada para la presentación del material porque ayuda al lector a centrarse en la evolución del género sin verse abrumado por multitud de datos.

Por tanto, lo recomendamos tanto a los amantes del séptimo arte como a cualquier lector que quiera conocer cómo se ha desarrollado históricamente el feminismo entre las mujeres afroamericanas. Habitados como estamos a percibir las basándonos en la presentación que Hollywood ha hecho, este libro viene a romper muchos estereotipos y a llevarnos a reconocer que hay toda una riqueza cultural y artística que todavía desconocemos.



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Black Women Centre Stage. Diasporic Solidarity in Contemporary Black British Theatre

Paola Prieto López

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Described as a feeling of affection that stems through a piece of art, *creative diasporic solidarity* represents a form of relatedness that makes the audience stand in the shoes of the *Other*, thus impacting the degree of *response-ability* among those who witness the theatrical event. Paola Prieto López critically adds to the theoretical framework of diasporic and solidarity studies with this innovative approach in her recently published book *Black Women Centre Stage. Diasporic Solidarity in Contemporary Black British Theatre*. Centring her study on a current generation of Black women playwrights whose work has received limited scholarly attention, the critic contributes to the promotion of less discussed works and reflects how the selected plays build political and creative alliances that seek to respond to the marginalisation that Black women undergo across the globe. The investigation of specific cases of gendered-based violence in the work of Mojisola Adebayo, Theresa Ikoko, Diana Nneka Atuona, Gloria Williams, Charlene James, Cora Bissett and Yusra Warsama brings to the fore the role of theatre as a facilitator of ethical encounters with the *Other* and a fertile location for individual and collective self-reflection.

Following an introduction where Prieto López explores the self-definition debates that have impregnated Black British theatre throughout history, the invisibility to which Black British playwrights were subjected, the pivotal role Black women played in the arts (namely Bernardine Evaristo, Patricia St. Hilaire and Paulette Randall with the foundation of the Theatre of Black Women), the critic establishes *solidarity* as the unifying framework for the study of the selected plays. The concept of *solidarity* is further examined in chapter two, where Prieto López affirms that diaspora continues to be a useful model for researching Black theatre productions. Unlike past generations who shared a connection to the homeland of their predecessors, Black Britons now live in a diasporic space underpinned by movement and fragmentation. This new conceptualisation of the diaspora that moves away from the notion of the homeland and implies living together in difference coincides with fostering intersectional relations and solidarity among contemporary diasporas. Critically speaking, this stands for *diasporic solidarity*, which Prieto López describes as “a form of unity against violence and oppression without recurring to [...] essentialist and homogenising discourses” (28). After revisiting the notions of *coalition building*, as well as *affective*, *reflective*, *conventional*, and *affectional solidarity*, the critic puts forward an interpretation of the arts and, more precisely, theatre and performance as valuable sites to boost intercultural dialogues and enable the emergence of transformative solidarities.

Reinscribing the part of Black British plays in facilitating ethical encounters with the *Other*, Prieto López specifies that *creative diasporic solidarity* emerges at two levels: the thematic and the formal. As the critic explores in chapter two, titled “Choral amplification and theatrical activism in *The Interrogation of Sandra Bland*,” thematic solidarity in Adebayo’s play is appreciated in the playwright’s decision to illustrate the often-neglected confluence of race and gender in cases of police and State violence against Black women. The retelling of Sandra Bland’s story, who was an American Black Lives Matter (BLM) activist who died in police custody, represents “a source of resistance” (57) and Adebayo’s attempt to probe injustices and the truth. On a thematic level, Prieto López claims that the British playwright flourishes in facilitating new forms of relationality across the diaspora, for she purposefully chooses the verbatim genre to document Bland’s case, as well as fostering transnational connections through choral amplification and the spatial politics of the venue. The dash cam video of Bland’s traffic stop is staged by a heterogeneous Black female chorus who is located among the audience. Sharing the same space as those present at the theatrical event is key in the activation of *response-ability* because, as witnesses of the biased affair, they are invited “to solidarise and take part in the Black Lives Matter movement” (52). In an uneasy situation, the audience is prompted to reflect on their privileged circumstances and to immerse into a transnational exercise of ethical and political solidarity.

Prieto López, who in chapter two pinpoints an interest among Black playwrights to display state violence against the Black community, spotlights in chapter three, titled “Interpellation and immersive theatre. The limitations of solidarity in Theresa Ikoko’s *Girls* and Diana Nneka Autona’s *Liberian Girl*,” a growing concern with the politics of solidarity with Africa as another

trend in the past decades. Moving away from the often-prevailing narratives of pity that tend to be employed when discussing sociopolitical issues involving the African continent, *Girls* (2016) and *Liberian Girl* (2015) disrupt the notion of armed conflicts as a male terrain and centre on a variety of themes that include Black girlhood and horizontal female bonding in cases of misfortune. On a thematic level, both authors foreground the element of *affect* to activate the audience's *response-ability* and purposefully introduce the female characters as active and empowered individuals who negotiate and adjust to their living circumstances. Thematically speaking, Ikoko compels the audience to interrogate their implication in *parasitical solidarity* as coined by Sally J. Scholz in *Political Solidarity* (2008) and consider the real-life purpose of *slacktivism campaigns* (78). This query happens when the audience is directly interpellated to reflect on the roots of imperialist and biased manifestations of solidarity, as happened with the #BringBackOurGirls crusade. Unlike Ikoko, Autona places the spectators in an immersive venture that requires them to move around the stage, thus putting themselves in the shoes of child soldiers. This strategy activates what Lilie Chouliaraki refers to as "proximity as vulnerability," further defined by Prieto López as the "proximity and distance that allows for a self-reflection which may result [...] in true political solidarity" (94). The author of *Women Centre Stage*, then, examines the power of female horizontal bonds in *Girls* and *Liberian Girl* and celebrates how the playwrights confront the audience about the passivity and inaction the West deploys towards atrocities perpetrated in non-Western locations.

Constituting the last analytical section, chapter four centres on Williams, James, Bissett, Warsama and Adebayo's theatrical representation of sexual and reproductive rights. Titled "'Let us start by listening.' Oppositional dialogues in Gloria Williams's *Bullet Hole*, Charlene James's *Cuttin' it*, Cora Bissett and Yusra Warsama's *Rites* and Mojisola Adebayo's *Stars*," this chapter departs from the idea that the plays, firstly, symbolise transcultural encounters which offer divergent views on female genital cutting (FGC); secondly, they engage with solidarity with FGC survivors; and thirdly, they encourage the audience to immerse in "a more in-depth examination of the cultural system that supports the practice and the exclusionary context that may work towards its reinforcement," to borrow from Prieto López (107). *Bullet Hole* (2018), *Cuttin' It* (2016), *Rites* (2015) and *Stars* (2023) shift away from the narratives of pity and transcend the dichotomy of the victim-torturer (110). This implies that while FGC is a shared denominator in all plays, the playwrights activate *creative diasporic solidarity* as they deploy a combination of matters that include generational clashes in the diaspora, the notions of in-betweenness and hybridity among the Black diaspora in the UK, Western institutions' failure to account for culturally specific needs, or female bonding (among others). To continue her in-depth analysis of the plays, Prieto López revisits metropolitan Western literature and identifies that human rights and feminist discourses, rather than committing to nurturing intercultural dialogues, have devoted their efforts to agitating biased discourses that have ultimately backed dichotomies of power. To put an end to these demagogic sermons, the playwrights foster ethical and political solidarity

on a formal level through the employment of oppositional narratives. All based in the UK, the divergent ideas presented in the plays disrupt the audience's ease as they get (in)directly asked to examine their degree of accountability and are compelled to think outside the universalist gender or patriarchal oppression model that prevails in the West. Confronting a reality that is likely to happen to fellow British citizens in British territory, spectators are encouraged to listen to the *Other*, situate circumstances in context and actively immerse in the mobilisation of solidarity and *response-ability* for the *Other*.

In conversation with Prieto López, Adebayo speaks of Black British theatre and refers to her work as one whose final purpose is societal change as she aims for the audience to engage in intercultural dialogues and relations (135). These are features which the critic spotlights, too, in a generation of Black female authors whose works were written and staged in the second decade of the 2010s. I contend that *Black Women Centre Stage* constitutes an outstanding and valuable contribution that accounts for *creative diasporic solidarity* as a unifying framework and establishes Black female plays, blended with the transformative value of the theatre, as having the potential to facilitate intersectional political connections and ethical relations across the diaspora.



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La expansión y revisión de un mito. El Oeste norteamericano en la literatura española

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The publication of Neil Campbell's *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational, Global, Media Age* in 2008 consolidated the academic trend that no longer understood the US West to be a region bound by national limits but a global, multicultural one, and was soon followed by other works that applied the transnational turn to the field of Western studies. Some of the most recent works to adopt the transnational lens for the study of the US West include Janne Lahti's *The American West and the World: Transnational and Comparative Perspectives* (2019), Hervé Mayer and David Roche's edited volume *Transnationalism and Imperialism: Endurance of the Global Western Film* (2022), or *The Western in the Global Literary Imagination* (2022), edited by Christopher Conway, Marek Paryż and David Río. David Río, Chair of American Literature at the UPV/EHU, is also the editor of the volume *La expansión y revisión de un mito. El Oeste norteamericano en la literatura española* (2023). Supported by "REWEST," the Research Project that Río chairs at the same University, the publication of this volume contributes to this field of study by offering a thorough study of the impact of the US West on Spanish literature. As Río notes in his introduction, to this

day there has not been a comprehensive account of the representations of the West in Spanish literature. *La expansión y revisión de un mito* counters this critical neglect by offering an overview of the Spanish reception of the West as cultural myth, with a particular focus on twentieth and twenty-first century Spanish literary production. With a decidedly transnational and multicultural approach to the US West, the volume is an unavoidable text for anyone interested in the reception of the US West in modern and contemporary Spanish literature across a wide variety of genres.

The chronological approach of the book's first section attests to the sustained interest the western has exerted throughout Spanish literature and culture from colonial times up until the twenty-first century. The opening chapter, penned by M. Carmen Gómez Calisteo, is devoted to the acknowledgment of the incompleteness of traditional accounts of the first "western" stories through an exploration of Alvar Núñez de Vaca's settler writings, which predate the Anglo testimonies by decades. The author vindicates the *Naufragios* as a "pioneer" text that expands the horizons of the US West beyond narrow Anglo-white contexts. Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz authors the second chapter, in which he explores the transatlantic vision of the frontier as "discursive space" (Ibarrola-Armendariz 2023, 51),¹ as it appears on Esteban Hernández y Fernández's 1876 novel *Los hijos del desierto*. Despite the novel's interest on Native peoples at the expense of dominant identities, Ibarrola-Armendariz notes how the author cannot help but fall into certain stereotyped visions of the Indigenous populations that ultimately end up reinforcing settler colonialist dynamics. Christopher Conway's insightful chapter "Cómo leer un western popular: *Fitz Roy el pequeño cow-boy* y el cuaderno de aventuras español de la Edad de Plata (1898-1936)" proposes a methodological approach to the popular novel of adventures—one that takes into consideration three crucial elements: the editorial context of publication; the relative, or diminished importance of authorship, and the ideological and historical reading of the text. Defined by a penchant for "exotism and pastiche" (Conway 2023, 80), the Spanish popular western of the time emerges as a complex rewriting of a multitude of sources, influences and varied national traditions resulting from the "transatlantic dialogues" (Conway 2023, 92) that the volume revolves around. In Chapter 4, Fernando Eguidazu offers a thorough study of mid-century Spanish western and sheds light on two important—and opposite—figures: José Mallorquí and Marcial Lafuente Estefanía. Both were immensely popular, but while the former is representative of an arguably rigorous western, concerned with the vindication of the Hispanic heritage of the West, the latter produced novels of dubious literary quality that painted a stereotyped West full of clichés. Despite their differences, the success of both authors attests to the incorruptible interest that the western had in the reading audiences of the Spanish 1940s and 1950s. Mary S. Vásquez, in chapter 5, analyses three works that revolve around the legend of Billy the Kid. Vásquez devotes most of her discussion to Ramón J. Sender's 1965 novel *El bandido adolescente* and

1 All quotations from *La expansión y revisión de un mito* have been translated from Spanish into English by the author of this review.

the author's experience with Mexico and the US Southwest during his exile years. Vásquez then pivots to a commentary on two possible counter-mythic texts on Billy the Kid: 2019 film *In Their Own Words. Billy the Kid and the Lincoln Country War*, written and directed by Michael Anthony Giudicissi, and Rudolfo Anaya's late 1990s dramatic piece *Billy the Kid*. By offering three possible portrayals of the mythic character, the chapter highlights the conception of the West as a necessarily incomplete cultural object. Chapter 7 explores Camilo José Cela's parodic use of the epic genre in his X novel *Cristo versus Arizona*. Gonzalo Navajas unpacks the novel's deconstruction of Wyatt Earp's mythic status, resulting in a complex "counter-epic" (2023, 164) achieved through two main strategies: the proliferation of banal characters with no psychological death and the absence of a unified plot (2023, 144-45). Juan Ignacio Guijarro González devotes chapter 8 to a close reading of poems by Pedro Salinas, Gabriel Celaya and Juan Luis Panero—all of them related to different and meaningful poetic twentieth-century movements, or moments—and emphasizes the particular influence of filmic westerns and their transnational reception by Spanish poetry.

The second section is dedicated to contemporary rewritings of the West, and it begins with Manuel Pérez Jiménez's study on twentieth century Spanish drama from the "Transición" period, which uses allegorical drama to stage the political conflicts of the time. Within this context, the West is used as a means to reach a larger goal, its elements containing a symbolic quality that interpellates the Spanish audience by providing critical commentary on the sociopolitical reality. Pérez Jiménez goes on to explore other iterations of drama that use different aesthetic strategies related to the West for varied purposes, ranging from Fernando Arrabal's surrealism to the more contemporary Teatro Verbo of authors like Zo Brinviyer. In the next chapter, Ángel Chaparro Sainz uses the prism of Neil Campbell's "rhizomatic west" to explore Agustín Fernández Mallo's 2007 novel *Nocilla Dream*. The spaces of the Nevadan desert and the city of Las Vegas, with their respective symbolic associations, take up most of the chapter's discussion. Despite the novel's apparent lack of a critical agenda, it manages to deconstruct the mythic West by offering a plethora of cultural references that undo the archetypal image of the region and produce a distinctly postmodern take on the transnational West. In chapter 10, Andoni Cossío and Martin Simonson study Pedro Andreu's post-apocalyptic novel *El secadero de iguanas* (2010), an example of a Spanish *weird western*. After a brief outline of the genre's rich—albeit rather traditional, in its approach towards the West—history within the Spanish context, the authors argue that elements such as the centrality of a young woman's narrative point of view, the positive appraisal of the archetypal Other and the presence of features from the fantastic and science-fiction genres make this novel an apposite example of the malleability of the West as a source of aesthetic and thematic experimentation. In chapter 11, Raúl Montero Gilete moves to the realm of children fiction to analyse *Cabeza Nublada y Pies Ligeros*, written in 2018 by Miguel Ángel Villar Pinto. After a review of Western literature for children and young readers during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the author concludes that Villar Pinto's work is an example of realist children fiction

set in the Far West that incorporates traditional features of the genre, such as the rites of passage and a didactic aim, but which nonetheless incorporates a reified conception of Native American peoples. In his chapter, Iker González-Allende focuses on the specific region of the US Midwest and its representation in Ana Merino's novel *El mapa de los afectos* (2020). Like Nevada in Chaparro Sainz's discussion on *Nocilla Dream*, the Midwest has been construed stereotypically as a region that conflates clichés mostly related to its rural character. González Allende argues that Merino's novel, set in rural Iowa, stages the struggle between the archetypal affability that the region is said to display—typically used in marketing campaigns—and the violence that in fact permeates its society. Amaia Ibarra-Bigalondo follows this vein in her exploration of a contemporary novel's representation of the West. She analyzes how Silvia Coma's 2020 *Pioneras* combines some of the most formulaic attributes of the "Old West" with others more akin to a New Western sensitivity. The novel thus emerges as a contemporary rewriting of a classic western that simultaneously debunks some of its premises while evincing the difficulty to let go of the landmarks of the western genre. David Río's final chapter on this section focuses on Jon Bilbao's 2020 novel *Basilisco*. Río reflects upon the novel's complex imbrication of past and present, Old West and contemporary Spain, and praises its metafictional quality. According to Río, Bilbao's novel is particularly masterful in its exposure of "the artificiality of the myth of the frontier" (Río 2023, 319), which makes it impossible to tell western myth from western reality, in typical post-western fashion.

The volume's last, shorter section includes three contributions by artists who offer their vision of what "writing the West" may mean today. Combining three different textual genres, Ana Merino reflects upon the acute sense of place that imbues her poetry and fiction, especially the one she derives from being a foreigner in Iowa; Pedro Andreu reflects on his aforementioned novel in an interview conducted by Cossío and Simonson, and Luci Romero's poetry offers a different way of writing the West and its themes: civilization, settlement, and myth.

The publication of *La expansión y revisión de un mito. El Oeste norteamericano en la literatura española* throws a new slant on the general field of Western studies and emerges as an invaluable source for those studying transnational representations of the West. The volume's inclusion of a wealth of genres (drama, fiction, film) and subgenres (allegory, weird western, neo-western, children's fiction) and traditions stands as proof of the "consolidation of the transnational projection" of the western genre (Río 2023, 310), while it also confirms the theses of theorists of the West like Nathaniel Lewis, who argue that there is no "authentic" West; all we have is an unending series of simulacra, rewritings and re-configurations of a cultural myth. Despite the volume's focus on a dominant, hegemonic idea of the West—an idea imposed by the volume's chosen corpus—, the book manages to advocate for a multivocal, heterogeneous West and it attests to the enduring influence that this mythic world has held over cultures and traditions across the world.



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Vivir sola es morir. El modernismo comunitario de Katherine Mansfield

Gerardo Rodríguez SalasGranada: Comares Literatura, 2023. 104 pp.
ISBN: 9788411369604

Although we are used to publishing internationally in English, it is important not to neglect academic publication in Spanish, either through (self)translation or through original texts. In *Vivir sola es morir. El modernismo comunitario de Katherine Mansfield* (Comares 2023), Gerardo Rodríguez Salas, of the University of Granada, offers a brief but very substantial study of this key Modernist author aimed, precisely, at Spanish-language readers. His volume is in part an homage to Mansfield on occasion of the centennial anniversary of her death in 1923, at the early age of 34, due to tuberculosis diagnosed six years earlier. It is also a significant contribution to the new Modernist studies of the 21st century, which attempt to renew the standard readings of key Modernist authors such as Mansfield beyond what might be called spent academic cliché.

Rodríguez Salas is, no doubt, the main Spanish specialist in the work of Katherine Mansfield, an author to whom he has devoted so far other three volumes (also in Spanish) and countless academic articles. In the acknowledgements he jokes that his passion for Mansfield became inevitable the moment he was placed in the Mansfield College of Oxford University, where he first read her work, after being awarded a scholarship jointly funded by La Caixa and The British Council to pursue an MA in Women's Studies. This is not a trivial biographical observation, but an achievement that needs to be praised, since very few male academics choose to train in

women's writing, and few specialize, besides, in the authors (of any gender) from Australia and New Zealand, where Mansfield was born. After a stay in this country in 2002 in the course of researching for his doctoral dissertation, Rodríguez Salas embarked on a first fruitful period as a specialist in this geographical area on his own. This was concluded in 2010 when he joined the first of the four consecutive research projects focused on the topic of community in which he has participated, and of which the volume under review is a much relevant product.

As Rodríguez Salas notes in his introduction, he is frontally opposing Lukács's "The Ideology of Modernism" (1962)—the influential text in which, Salas notes, this key Marxist thinker presented Modernist literature as "una anomalía que refleja a un sujeto asocial y solitario" (xi)—to join instead the scholars who "rastrean un impulso comunitario en una tradición literaria tachada sistemáticamente de solipsista y ensimismada" (xi). Contesting this stubborn, long-lasting Lukácsian characterization, Rodríguez Salas argues that in Mansfield's narrative "siempre afloran las cuestiones sociales, aunque sea de forma oblicua y sutil" (xiv). He has given himself the task, thus, of searching for those oblique and subtle moments in Mansfield's beautiful, post-Chekhovian short stories, in which characters struggle to communicate and to find community but hardly ever manage to succeed.

Vivir sola es morir is a title that alludes to a letter by Mansfield in which she wrote that "What is important is to try to live—really live, and in relation to everything—not isolated (this isolation is death to me)" (quoted in Rodríguez Salas, xi). In fact, the volume describes Mansfield's ambiguous attitude towards community as a social construction she needed to join but with which she struggled, either because she was not welcome, or because she refused to belong. Rodríguez Salas is reluctant to discuss Mansfield's biography in much detail, but he presents Mansfield (née Beuchamp) as an outsider who, despite being the daughter of a prominent New Zealand family, always occupied a marginal position as a colonial writer (her accent was often mocked) with an extrovert personality that did not always suit the tastes of the Bloomsbury clique. The task of Mansfield's husband John Middleton Murry as editor of her diary and literary executor is criticized, too, for his excision of many passages that presented her as far less creative than she actually was.

Rodríguez Salas has structured his volume into four chapters, of which the first one, "Hacia un modernismo comunitario" is more theoretical, whereas the rest—"Amantes," "Círculos literarios y artísticos" and "Intimidación fraternal"—offer plenty of literary analysis, not only of Mansfield's short fiction but also of her letters and journal. Rodríguez Salas applies to these three models of affection not only the new 21st century scholarship focused on Modernism, with its emphasis on gender (following Bonnie Kime Scott's 1990 volume *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*) but also the theorization of community among others by Jean-Luc Nancy, Maurice Blanchot, or Giorgio Agamben. Instead of the traditional view of the literary school or movement, Rodríguez Salas borrows from Nancy the concept of *clinamen*, which he defines as

“el encuentro entre singularidades que respetan sus bordes identitarios, pero se encuentran en esa exterioridad abismal, la mutua interpelación de singularidades” (129). In this way, he can explore simultaneously the tensions between, to borrow another term from Nancy, the inoperative and the operative community, with the former being a form of looser association more adequate to define Mansfield’s bonds with her peers and also those between her characters.

In the section “Amantes,” Rodríguez Salas explores Mansfield’s basic communities of two persons, observing that “[p]lagada de gestos y acertijos metaficcionales y metalingüísticos, su ficción no logra transformar el lenguaje en un instrumento adecuado para el mutuo reconocimiento erótico de los amantes” (16). He analyses here the adolescents of “Something Childish but Very Natural” (1914), and the older adults of “Psychology” (1920), both in their thirties, as examples of an obvious clinamen, namely, “la apertura a la alteridad a través del amor” (25). Rodríguez Salas insists that Mansfield plays with the idea that both sets of lovers have “el potencial de romper con la comunidad social en la que se sienten encorsetados” (26), but the fact is that they fail to do so. Similarly, the adulterous wife in “The Black Cap” (1917) finds no satisfaction in her marriage, a state that, Rodríguez Salas claims was never an ideal state for Mansfield, but cannot fully communicate with her lover, either. The segment on Mansfield’s letters and journal in this section comments on how her failed hopes of motherhood may have negatively impacted her less than satisfactory marriage, and on how the author found solace in her mothering feelings for her brother Leslie, six years younger than her.

In “Círculos literarios y artísticos” Rodríguez Salas discusses in more detail Mansfield’s contradictory wish to join and reject the Bloomsbury and the Garsington groups (the latter run by Lady Ottoline Morrell) and her problems to form attachments with fellow women authors, including Virginia Woolf. As a woman author, Mansfield appears to have been afraid to be seen as a member of a homogenous group rather than as a singular individual, which is why felt that she was first a writer and only secondly a woman, as Rodríguez Salas points out. With Woolf she felt an intense affinity coloured by professional rivalry, typical of the patriarchal strategy to make women mistrust each other and compete. In stories such as “Bliss” (1920) and “Carnation” (1917), therefore, Mansfield explores different possibilities in women’s friendship (another community of two). Whereas in the former, Bertha, a young mother and wife, deludes herself thinking that cool Pearl feels close to her before discovering she is possibly her husband’s lover, in the latter two girl classmates manage to form a budding lesbian bond by rebelling against their obnoxious French teacher.

In “Intimidación fraternal” Rodríguez Salas examines “The Garden Party” (1922) and “The Wind Blows” (1915) as examples of Mansfield’s ability to tackle the impact of death with no frills. As noted, her brother Leslie died in 1915 in a training accident in Belgium, having left New Zealand to fight in the Western Front as soon as World War I started. It is possibly the case that Leslie’s death made him dearer to Mansfield than he had ever been in life, but the fact is that she dealt

with her own impending death, after being diagnosed in 1918, as a process to finally rejoin him. Rodriguez Salas stresses that Mansfield worried about lacking enough time to publish lasting work as an author, but she managed the feat and actually died at an age when Virginia Woolf had barely published anything of interest. “Este es el logro de Mansfield,” Rodriguez Salas concludes, “haberse colado en el canon literario a pesar de su prematura muerte” (72).

Famously, Marlow claims in Joseph Conrad’s proto-Modernist *Heart of Darkness* (1899) that “We live as we dream—alone,” thus denying any true connection between human beings. In *Vivir sola es morir* Rodriguez Salas shows, in contrast, that human connection is indispensable though always difficult to manage. Katherine Mansfield did not easily connect with other persons, perhaps with the exception of her brother, and possibly because of that difficulty she turned her fiction into an exploration of her characters’ struggles to open themselves up to communication and community. Rodriguez Salas’s exploration of Mansfield’s works and life offers, to conclude, a new way to consider her position as a supposedly marginal Modernist author and to place her at the center if not of the Modernist community at least of her own efforts to connect with it in the short time she had to live. That she accomplished plenty is evident and reason enough to pay her heartfelt homage one hundred years after her tragic early death.

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Intersections of the Global and the Local in Slovak Immigrant Communities in Britain

Július Rozenfeld

Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars

Publishing, 2023. 119 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-5275-0182-9

The Department of English and American Studies at the University Pavol Jozef Safarik, in Košice, Slovakia, has a consolidated group of scholars working on British Cultural Studies. Proof of the strength of this group is the number of master and PhD dissertations, as well as articles and books published by its students and staff on a varied range of topics: the analysis of social, political, educational and economic issues in both the United Kingdom and Slovakia and from the perspective of the media (printed and audiovisual) in both countries, but also food or environmental studies, among others. Dr. Július Rozenfeld is one prominent member in this group of scholars with several publications on some of the topics mentioned and a special focus on immigration from the Eastern European countries and the systems of education. This book is a combination of many of these interests and, actually, the result of a research project supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic within the VEGA scheme titled *The Global and the Local in Post-Millennial Anglophone Literatures, Cultures, and Media* 1/0447/20.

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) in May 2004 made it possible for the population of what became to be known as the A8 countries (“A” stands for “accession”), that is, Czech

Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, to move freely about the other member states of the EU. The United Kingdom became the preferred destination for many A8 immigrants because it was one of the few member states that accepted new EU citizens without almost any restrictions, apart from “a long history of anglophile leanings in Eastern Europe, with many Eastern Europeans harbouring romantic images and positive attitudes towards Britain” (1). The aim of this study, according to the author, is “to clarify the immigration, integration, and assimilation processes that influence the success or failure of Slovak immigrants to integrate and find a place in the United Kingdom” (2). In order to do so, Dr. Rozenfeld addresses three main topics: class, ethnicity, and religion.

Since the onset of this new migrant wave started in 2004, numerous articles and reports from British or European institutions have analysed different aspects of this phenomenon. Some papers have aimed at explaining some of the reasons and trends as well as the lessons to be learned by policy makers from A8 migration to the United Kingdom (Gillingham 2010, McCollum 2011, Vargas-Silva 2011), whereas others have addressed some of the legal regulations issued (Ryan 2008). Other important areas of study are the economic impact for the target state and the labour market. In this sense the fiscal cost and benefits of A8 migration and the impact on the welfare state have been analysed by some authors (Dustmann et al. 2010, Giua 2020). Another area of interest has been the demographic distribution of the new migrants in the United Kingdom and how this may affect the old, long-established communities regarding the house market or the emergence of prejudices (Cook et al. 2012, Jivraj et al. 2012, Kailemia 2016, Pemberton 2009). The labour market has also been addressed from several perspectives: the kind of jobs covered by the A8 immigrants and the likely overqualification they have regarding those jobs (Coombes et al. 2007, Frattini 2017, Sirkeci et al. 2014, Sirkeci et al. 2018). What is relevant in Dr. Rozenfeld’s work, though, is the fact that in a book-length essay he brings together many of these issues and gives shape to a well-structured, wide-in-scope piece of research. It is also worth mentioning that some of the conclusions reached regarding Slovak immigration can be applied not only to people from other A8 countries but to other communities beyond Europe.

The book is divided into seven chapters, preceded by a brief introduction. Chapter One, *The Branded Land*, tackles some of the changes undergone by Slovakia in the last three decades. Part of the former communist country of Czechoslovakia, it became independent, from the Czech Republic, in 1993, four years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Eleven years later, Slovakia was already part of the European Union. In a country in which domestic immigration had been the rule, new opportunities were opened and the idealised image many Slovaks had about the United Kingdom drew them to that country. Despite this attraction and the new circumstances, the Slovak population in the United Kingdom has been estimated to be no higher than 60,000, a relatively low number in comparison to Polish or Romanian migrants who have gone there in hundreds of thousands. Chapter Two, “*You Rang M’Lord?*,” delves into the notion of social class. Taking into account the communist past of Slovakia and its reputation as a classless society,

social class is understood in a completely different way from what social classes have represented in the history of the United Kingdom. The author makes a wide-ranging analysis of the evolution of the concept of social class from different perspectives and relates this to the educational opportunities in the United Kingdom and how Slovak immigrants may be affected. Chapter Three, “People of a *“Certain Kind,”*” is devoted to issues of race and ethnicity. Concepts such as diaspora, expatriate, refugee, migrant, integration and assimilation are addressed. Education as an instrument to move up the social ladder is at the core of Chapter Four, “Work (Learn) your Way up.” The Slovak and British education systems are compared in terms of how successful they are at integrating children from different backgrounds and with different abilities. With a long tradition of receiving people from a great variety of countries, the “British education system has developed into a highly sophisticated, balanced and interconnected structure which has evolved and adapted throughout the decades to help all members of society, including immigrant children, to achieve success, to integrate and fulfil their potential” (64). Chapter Five, “Believe it or not,” focuses on religion. The evolution of the religious traditions in the United Kingdom (Protestant) and Slovakia (Catholic and Orthodox) are briefly compared, as well as the extent to which religion may be present in the education system and the impact it might have on the children. In turn, Chapter Six, “Put it down on Paper,” brings together and analyses legislation which in the last five decades has affected the development of the British education system mainly in reference to class, religion and ethnicity. The last part of the book, Chapter Seven, “What the Data Shows and What the People Say,” is the most original one in the sense that it presents the results of a small-scale research project conducted between 2011 and 2013. There were 95 participants, all of them Slovak immigrants aged between 19 and 65 who had been living in the United Kingdom more or less on permanent basis for an average period of eight years and a half. The study was carried out in two phases combining both the use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, such as questionnaires and structured interviews. The project was aimed at analysing the level of integration of these immigrants in the United Kingdom as well as their opinions regarding class, religion and ethnicity in relation to education.

The author successfully achieves the aim he had set himself in the introduction of the book. However, interesting and relevant as the results obtained in the research are (chapter seven), the study would have gained in clarity and detail if some graphs and tables with the figures and percentages obtained had been provided. Although it is probably beyond the scope of the research presented here, it would have been interesting to tackle how Brexit may have affected the perception of these Slovak immigrants. Yet, the book presents a very welcome piece of research, whose considerations and results are useful not only for those interested in the phenomenon of Slovak immigration but also for those studying other minority groups living in the UK.



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Última Parada: La estética del terror radiofónico o cómo pasar del microrrelato a la lectura dramatizada

Francisco Javier Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez

Aranjuez: Ediciones Atlantis, 2021. 247 pp.

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El estudio del terror en todos sus formatos (literatura, cine, antropología, arte...) es el eje principal de la producción académica de Francisco Javier Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez. Asimismo, es especialista en literatura gótica y defendió su tesis doctoral con el título *Terror y placer: hacia una (re)construcción cultural del mito del vampiro y su proyección sobre lo femenino en la literatura escrita en lengua inglesa*. En otras palabras, toda su trayectoria y el campo del conocimiento que abarca hacen que su visión hacia la estética del terror radiofónico sea una referencia para los lectores.

En la obra que estamos reseñando, Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez hace una introducción al papel de las dramatizaciones sonoras radiofónicas como forma de entretenimiento a lo largo de la historia y realiza un exhaustivo análisis de la sección llamada “Última Parada,” encuadrada dentro de *Misteriosa Radio Secreta*. Este fue un programa radiofónico de dos temporadas emitido en el espacio de tiempo comprendido entre noviembre del 2017 a enero del 2019. Concretamente,

“Última Parada” era la última sección del programa y consistía en una dramatización sonora dirigida y guionizada por David Hidalgo.

La primera parte del libro nos muestra una visión de los orígenes de la relación entre la radio y el terror. Los efectos sonoros evocadores, junto con otros elementos formales y narrativos, son mencionados con referencia a cómo éstos contribuyen a atrapar a los oyentes convirtiéndolos, de alguna forma, en partícipes de la historia dramatizada. Además, aporta datos que nos permiten tener una perspectiva más clara a la hora de entender cómo se fueron introduciendo textos clásicos en la radio a modo teatral: “En Londres, en 1923, la BBC comienza a emitir los primeros programas radiofónicos dramáticos basados en la obra de William Shakespeare” (15).

El siguiente apartado está dedicado a retratar de manera clara y amena el panorama del terror radiofónico en España desde sus orígenes, mencionando para ello a tres figuras indispensables en la introducción del terror como forma de entretenimiento en los hogares españoles tanto en la radio como en formato televisivo: Juan José Plans, Chicho Ibáñez Serrador y Fernando Jiménez del Oso. Destaca entre ellos, por la estrecha relación con la sección radiofónica “Última Parada,” J. J. Plans con el programa que escribía y dirigía en Radio 1 de Radio Nacional de España. Las historias dramatizadas ofrecían temáticas de terror, aventuras, suspense y ciencia ficción.

Una vez contextualizado el programa que emitía *Mistérica Radio Secreta*, el autor da paso al análisis de los recursos que generan suspense y emoción en las dramatizaciones de “Última Parada.” Por ejemplo, “destacan al crear historias de terror cotidiano ubicadas (...) en una ciudad donde bien podría vivir cualquiera de los oyentes. Este recurso, tomado de la literatura gótica, ubica a los oyentes dentro de un espacio de confort para inmediatamente desorientarlos y generarles confusión a través de los acontecimientos que se suceden” (31). Las estrategias narrativas que expone a base de una equilibrada combinación entre teoría y ejemplos extraídos de las historias que va mencionando de “Última Parada” pueden servir no sólo para descifrar cómo se crea tensión y las situaciones terroríficas en las historias, sino también para aquellos que puedan tener cierto interés en crear sus propias narraciones. Es decir, estas estrategias podrían ser utilizadas de forma consciente para producir elementos narrativos que generen desasosiego, realizar saltos en el tiempo, darle giros inesperados a la acción, así como poder profundizar en la psicología y apariencia de los personajes.

A medida que avanza la obra, el lector se va familiarizando con el tono de las dramatizaciones pues, de forma paulatina, se van relacionando unas con otras por su eje temático u otras características. De hecho, el autor destaca paralelismos entre algunas de las historias y las agrupa por temas. Dicha clasificación la podemos ver en una tabla al final del libro (muerte, magia/brujería, pactos con el diablo, monstruos, fantasmas/espíritus, extraterrestres, arqueología, experimentos peligrosos, *doppelgänger*, bucles temporales, etc.).

Aparte de tejer hilos conectores entre unas historias y otras, el autor realiza una ficha descriptiva de cada una de las narraciones que contribuyen a profundizar en el conocimiento

de las características que rodean a cada historia. En cada una de estas fichas se incluyen los siguientes datos: temporada (1ª o 2ª), fecha de emisión, título de la dramatización, duración, los actores de voz, los nombres de los personajes protagonista y otros personajes secundarios; también indica si hay un único narrador o si se trata de un diálogo entre varios personajes, localización espacial, efectos sonoros o música relevantes en la historia y la sinopsis. Incluye además un dato muy interesante en cada ficha pues el autor relaciona la frase final de cada una de las historias con una frase dentro del guion de una película la cual menciona e incluye también la cita exacta con la que compara la última frase del relato radiofónico. Algunas de estas fichas finalizan con un apartado especial (pues no siempre procede) con aportaciones extras que enriquecen la comprensión de la historia e incluso pueda aportar datos reales como, por ejemplo, un extracto de la declaración de “Manuel Blanco Romasanta ante los Juzgados de Allariz, en la conocida como ‘Causa contra el hombre lobo’” (112).

No obstante, este libro pretende invitar a los lectores a que también se atrevan a bucear dentro de las historias de “Última Parada” de una forma práctica y directa. Dicho de otro modo, Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez facilita un listado con todos los enlaces a las historias radiofónicas en forma de podcast. En definitiva, la intención del autor es que su obra trascienda más allá del papel y de sus palabras; su verdadera finalidad es que los lectores lean el libro y sientan la necesidad de escuchar las historias escondidas detrás de títulos como “El desvío,” “Un menú de muerte,” “La última jaula,” “El que acecha en el reflejo,” etc.

Sin duda, un libro muy recomendable que nos llevará de la mano al pasado, a los ecos de la radio escuchada en familia o a los inicios de la televisión en blanco y negro viendo, sobrecogidos, “Historias para no dormir” de Chicho o algún caso de parapsicología descrito por Jiménez del Oso. Realizaremos un viaje en el tiempo hasta llegar al siglo XXI en el que afortunadamente no hemos olvidado el proceso de la evolución de las diversas formas de entretenimiento. Estas nos ofrecen la oportunidad de escuchar nuevas historias de miedo dramatizadas como las de “Última Parada,” y a su vez también nos permite poder abrir el baúl de los recuerdos y acercarnos a las “Historias” de J.J. Plans, quedando maravillados y receptivos a que nuevas formas de terror sigan haciendo palpitar nuestros corazones.

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Determining Wuthering Heights: Ideology, Intertexts, Tradition

María Valero RedondoNew York: Peter Lang, 2021. 365 pp.
ISBN: 978-14331-7747-7 (hardback)

D*etermining Wuthering Heights: Ideology, Intertexts, Tradition* (2021) inwardly explores the categorisation of the novel by Emily Brontë in English literature written during the nineteenth century. Maria Valero Redondo has extensively published on Brontës' work and Victorian and Romantic literature. Valero is a Lecturer at the University of Córdoba. In this volume, the author provides an innovative ideological attitude to determine the nature of *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë. This publication instructs the academic community concerning Victorian literature in general and Brontë's efforts in particular. Indeed, the research question proposed poses a delimitation in the history of the British narrative entailing a literary technique to inquire into what is beyond texts. Thus, a critical revision is carried out to determine Bronte's novel in addressing intertextuality. In the mission of qualifying Brontë's novel, the professor declares a wide array of possible investigation pathways that students shall follow in intertextual studies. This book enables readers to become familiar with a nuanced challenging speculation about contemporary methods to research on Romantic fiction and its controversy in modern critique.

This monograph is divided into four main parts that tackle Brontë's novel critical reception: an introductory literary discussion, an intertextual analysis of the novel, conclusions and an afterword by Julián Jiménez Heffernan, Professor of English literature at the University of Córdoba. In the Introduction, Valero explains how Brontë's text has been received by formalist, structuralist, Marxist, historical, psychoanalytical, feminist and postcolonial critics. Therefore,

those ideas and their roots in English literature are delineated in a rich allusive examination. Essentially, the author presents the complexity of facing Brontë's novel classification regarding ideological issues in English literary tradition. In this chapter, it is pursued to fill the gap in postmodern scholarship by prioritising the literary context of the novel over other features such as biography, history or cultural studies contained in *Wuthering Heights*. In this manner, the classification of Brontë's novel is examined along nineteenth British fiction canonical themes. These topics are developed regarding the Gothic, the epic, the social and the Bildungsroman genre as components of *Wuthering Heights*. For this purpose, an ideological exploration must be taken to fulfil the task of defining the novel's category. The professor exposes an insightful thought of the novel as a combination of unintended but relevant literary references to precedent and posterior literature. Accordingly, *Determining Wuthering Heights* includes those elements as intertexts from literary classics such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (2004), Heinrich Von Kleist's *Michel Kohlhas, le Marchand de Chevaux et Autres Contes* (1830), Mathew Lewis's *The Monk* (2008), Lord Byron's poems (2005) or Charles Dickens's *Sketches by Boz* (1995). By tracing their ideological interrelations, Brontë's novel character is traced when focusing on those influences that interact with *Wuthering Heights* throughout a diverse atemporal trajectory comprehending eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature. As such, the novel is stated as not *sui generis*.

In the Introduction, titled "An Overview of *Wuthering Heights*' Critical Reception: Problems and Omissions," the writer exposes the dismissal when it comes to the singularity of *Wuthering Heights* by obviating the intrinsic ideological patterns in the twenty-first century scholarship. In this section, three main groups of scholars are gathered. Firstly, a group of critics assume Brontë's text as a work of social engagement in an inherent interpretation. This first group explicates the historical meaning conveyed in Brontë's because of a conversation with antecedent texts dealing with English history representation (Valero 2021, 36). Regarding the second group of critics, the novel is analysed from a spiritual viewpoint expressing the relevance of this matter in the ideology of British fiction. In addition, the writer entails eroticism due to the fragile interpretation of the Romantic and transcendental love relationships of the protagonists in the Romantic novel. The insurgent Brontë's love story resembles this conception of romance which situates the novel within the thematic of social oppression (Valero 2021, 44). In the last group of experts, the novel is presented under a deconstructionist inspection to board its significance. In this critical perspective, the readership shall be able to give a meaning to Brontë's text in its close reading. However, the novel remains indeterminate in the hermeneutics of the reader's perusal since *Wuthering Heights* might seem ambiguous due to the complexity of its reading (Valero 2021, 45). All in all, the scholarly debate compiles important advances in the field and a review of theories that guides the reader into the evolution of the English novel. To close this chapter, the writer positions herself in the view of Brontë's text as an enriching novel when carrying out a dialogical reading with various intertexts to demonstrate its heterogeneity. In the end, "[t]he personal and the social, the psychological and

the cultural, with all its *ideological conflicts and divisions*, merge into each other in the narrative” (Allen 2000, 203, italics added). The discovery of these attributes in the context of other texts of British literature are identified in the following chapters.

In the second chapter, titled “*Wuthering Heights: ‘The Housekeeper’s Tale’*,” *Wuthering Heights* is analysed to reveal its resemblance to Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (2004). Valero expounds the domestic novel to define the housekeeper as an authoritative narrator under the light of Richardson’s narrative. The third person narrator is contrasted in Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* and Richardson’s *Pamela* as the evidence of the ideological morality from the Victorian fiction appearing in both Brontë’s and Richardson’s works. The author concludes a polyphonic intertextual analysis in which the ghosts of the past continue to haunt contemporary ethics.

In the third part, “*Wuthering Heights and Kleist’s Novellen: Rousseauian Nature, Implosive Communities and the Performative Subversion of the Law*,” Brontë’s subversive tone in her narrative interacts with Kleist’s work. Both stories coincide in dealing with the motif of romantic nature and the imagery of the lovers. This motif depicts a subversive love as characteristic of Rousseauian nature which challenges the Victorian social system in Brontë’s writing. Dealing with social justice is recursive in literary convention, i.e., the power of literature in law-making referring to social issues is questioned when contrasting the two texts to show that these topics are revisited on purpose. Consequently, in providing Kleist’s work as an intertext which proves that *Wuthering Heights* is a social novel.

In the fourth section, titled “*Wuthering Heights: A Gothic Novel*,” *Wuthering Heights* is disclosed to assess formalism proper of a Gothic fiction incorporating Matthew Gregory Lewis’ *The Monk* as another intertext. Particular gothic aspects are spotlighted in Brontë’s novel, for instance, the portrayal of domestic violence, the need of revenge, female power, insanity or the supernatural. Some of these traits build the gothic male characterisation of Brontë’s Heathcliff. On the whole, the male protagonist displays his distinctive otherness as a tortured character in a similar way to Lewis’ Amrbosio.

In the fifth chapter, titled “*Wuthering Heights: An Epic Poem*,” masculinity is analysed again, albeit in different reference. Those aspects in common with the Byronic hero are opposed to the male protagonist to prove the resemblance of Brontë’s characterisation. The epic drama formality which distinguishes Byronic poetry and heroes reinforces *Wuthering Heights*’s classification within the Romantic and Gothic genre focusing on the storytelling structure. In the sixth part, titled “*Wuthering Heights: A Social Novel*,” the social commitment in the history of literature and in *Wuthering Heights* is connected to the domestic ideology. In this part, Valero addresses the heteroglossia and the double-voiced narrator of the English novels. Brontë’s tale contains those hints that confirm its social criticism tone to be valued as a masterpiece. *Wuthering Heights* is proven to be committed with religion, industrialism, colonialism, war and womanhood in an interconnected duty with other fictions in the nineteenth century.

Lastly, in the seventh chapter, titled “*Wuthering Heights: A Bildungsroman*,” *Wuthering Heights* is put into dialogue with Dickens’s work as the final intertext to classify the novel as bildungsroman of Heathcliff. In a symptomatic reading, those elements dote Heathcliff’s characterisation in a bildungsroman type by embodying the desire of social mobility which is usually represented in the Victorian novel. Manliness is examined in the depiction of the personalisation of Heathcliff in the “character’s worldview typical mode of speech, ideological and social positioning, all of which are expressed through the character’s words” (Allen 2000, 34). Certainly, the review of Brontë’s configuration of the hero propitiates a groundbreaking interpretation of the English novel for masculinity studies.

All things considered, *Determining Wuthering Heights: Ideology, Intertexts, Tradition* (2021) digs into “a kind of X-ray of the molecular structure of the novel in order to bring to the fore the ideological fabric that lies behind the surface, making up its intertextual core” (Valero 2021, 314). These intertexts establish a conversation linking *Wuthering Heights* with either previously published or published after Brontë’s novel to show the confluence of morality, characterisation and formality of Victorian fiction. The interactive reading exposes the ideological meaning in Brontë’s narrative as a relevant aspect in its assortment. In an intersectional approach to the novel, its encoded meaning “open[s] up unlimited possibilities and interpretations, and that *Wuthering Heights* contains hints that allow us to read it as a social novel” (Valero 2021, 245). Those pieces of writing are shown to be part of an inter-referential convergent web. Ideology becomes the central basis allowing the confluence of each text which is not inadvertent, not fundamental but incidental. The converging interaction nurtures social identity in a transcendental evolutive reflection of Brontë’s fiction. As a result, “Emily Brontë does not resort to many literary references or allusions in her novel, but that does not mean that these literary references are not there, lurking and sneaking around the text” (Valero 2021, 313). Finally, Brontë’s text is forced to confess the secret of its prevalence in contemporary review by commemorating the social denunciation in the nineteenth-century English novel heritage.

Hence, Brontë’s oeuvre is displayed for students to benefit from its rigorous definition. The classification of *Wuthering Heights* relies on three main aspects: morality, characterisation and readability. The author examines the Romantic narration style and Victorian morality as motif, the Gothic characterisation and supernatural elements, the Epic male hero and the bildungsroman storyline as clues of the intertexts hidden in Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. Consequently, Valero manages to illustrate those various aspects that can be prompted in further investigation in an avant-garde proposal to undertake investigation. Scholars can follow her notion of text referencing which demists future research possibilities on English romance. The interaction between fictional pieces of writing encourages researchers to settle on a starting point for contemporary research by providing theoretical background and a new scope of literary hermeneutics. In fact, the duality between determinate meaning and indeterminacy underlies intertexts as keys to literary signification. Definitely, intertexts are exposed as a transversal determining tool to examine those

aspects shaping the nature of *Wuthering Heights* in a multilayered analysis. Those components in the matter of the ideology behind the motives when representing the characteristics of British morality propose intertexts as an ideological hermeneutics of literature for future researchers to deepen in their investigations. This conception expands research on the evolution of Brontë's work. Finally, Valero's study should be taken into consideration by academic readers due to its original application of the Marxist symptomatic reading to deepen into other narratives regarding hermeneutics in feminist or gender studies or masculinities in fiction.

To conclude, Victorian literature is enhanced by an investigation which stands out as a fresh must-read for academics interested in Brontë's novel. The reader is provided with a general, accurate and contrasting overview of the relationship among texts. The author covers a wide range of literary production regarding Victorian and Romantic fiction to provide the academic readership with a big picture of literary efforts in the social and ideological mission of literature. Her thought-provoking thesis motivates to diversify inquiries about cultural studies in contemporary research regarding Victorianism and Romanticism. Moreover, Brontë's novel features those Gothic motives, the epic narration or the bildungsroman as literary expansion owing to its ideological interlocution with other English texts. This conclusion proclaims intertextuality as a tool in a fresh revision for initiating other research lines in literary criticism. Altogether, the professor conducts an exhaustive dialogic journey of the intrinsic nature of Brontë's novel and the Victorian fiction conventions. Certainly, *Determining Wuthering Heights: Ideology, Intertexts, Tradition* triumphs in the proposal of a new reading of the novel by looking at its precedents and succeeding texts. Valero achieves her goal by overcoming the critical paralysis in the determination of the novel. Thence, *Wuthering Heights* is no longer in an indeterminate place within the English literary heritage.



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Predicting Pitch Prominence in Tri-Constituent Compound Nouns: A Speech Perception and Production Analysis

Supervisors: Rosalía Rodríguez Vázquez and María Esperanza Rama Martínez

This study aims at explaining the variance in prominence assignment in tri-constituent compound nouns. The investigation will be a follow-up with Kosling and colleague's (2013) research paper in expanding on the investigation of the credibility of the *Embedded Prominence Hypothesis* and the *IC-Prominence Hypothesis* (henceforth, ICPH). More importantly, this study will test for the first time the perception and production of prominence patterns in tri-constituent compounds at the IC-level in native speakers of American English (AmEng). I will be testing the credibility and reliability of the ICPH in predicting prominence at the IC-level, which remains uncharted in the literature. Incidentally, I will investigate the role of semantics, in the form of informativeness (Bell & Plag, 2012), and analogy in predicting prominence assignment at the IC-level. I will in like manner attempt to bridge the gap found in the literature by examining how native English speakers perceive and produce prominence in noun compounds. I predict that more informative nouns, when placed at the IC-level, will show a higher tendency in acquiring prominence in tri-constituent compounds, thus N3 will be the most prominent in left-branching compounds. On the other hand, analogy

has been shown to correlate strongly with prominence patterns in bi-constituent compounds in that ‘avenue’ attracts prominence while ‘street’. I thus expect tri-constituent compounds with the constituent ‘street’ in the N3 position to reject prominence while compounds with ‘avenue’ in the N3 position to have prominence. I will elicit data using two empirical experiments: 1) a speech production experiment where subjects have to read aloud into a microphone sentences containing NNN compounds embedded within carrier phrases; 2) a speech perception experiment with utterances containing NNN compounds retrieved from two corpora to be presented with a visual, the text, asking the participants to find the primary and secondary stress out of the 3 noun complex compound; and 3) an online questionnaire eliciting where the main stress of such compounds is by choosing from 4 multiple-choice options in addition to a short answer questions asking what the compound’s significance is in the subjects own words. All in all, comprehending how prominence assignment functions will help reduce the degree/rate of mismatch in connotation, thus leading to a more comprehensible speech, by both native speakers and learners of English as a second language, by using logical deduction based on the hypotheses presented.



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Individual Differences in English Pronunciation Acquisition: A Focus on CLIL, EFL and Gender in Primary Education

Supervisors: Francisco Gallardo-del-Puerto and Esther Gómez-Lacabex

The implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in primary education provides students with increased exposure to English and more opportunities to use the language themselves. Greater exposure to English may enhance the linguistic and non-linguistic advantages already conferred by initiating language acquisition at an early age. This means that, apart from linguistic outcomes, CLIL is expected to affect Individual Differences (ID) such as motivation, anxiety, attitudes towards the language or learning strategies (Coyle et al. 2010, 52–106). Furthermore, CLIL instruction has been shown to narrow the gender gap in learning a foreign language and in motivation, which means that the differences between boys and girls tend to be smaller in CLIL settings compared to traditional English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approaches (Gallardo-del-Puerto & Blanco-Suarez 2021, 60). However, all this may not affect pronunciation, as it is one of the linguistic skills that is not expected to improve by additional CLIL exposure (Dalton-Puffer 2008, 143).

As scarce studies have focused on pronunciation in CLIL settings and they tend to focus on linguistic outcomes rather than the aforementioned IDs and potential gender differences, this thesis aims to investigate motivation, anxiety, accent attitudes, and learning strategies in CLIL and EFL contexts. This PhD dissertation has two main objectives: (1) To gather empirical evidence on the impact of the type of instruction (CLIL or EFL) on ID in English pronunciation acquisition in primary education. (2) To examine the mediating effect of the gender variable on the relation between the type of instruction (CLIL or EFL) and ID in English pronunciation acquisition in primary education. For this thesis project, I collected data from pupils aged 7 to 10 in five public primary schools from Northern Spain. Three of these schools had already implemented a bilingual program (CLIL), while the other two followed a conventional English teaching approach (EFL).

First, the participants of this study were asked to complete a background questionnaire to gather information such as age, gender, or non-formal and informal exposure to English. Then, the different individual differences questionnaires were administered during school time across different days to avoid task tiredness. These questionnaires employed a 5-point Likert scale to assess pupils' agreement with the statements they were presented with. Once the data were collected, they had to be digitised, processed, and statistically analysed.

CLIL instruction entails a higher amount of exposure to the target language compared to the EFL group, but this exposure comes from Spanish-accented speakers (Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. 2009, 65). However, in the case of the CLIL sample, when compared to EFL, we can anticipate differences in motivation levels, higher foreign language pronunciation anxiety, more positive attitudes towards accent variations, and a wider range of learning strategy use. Regarding gender, we expect alignment with previous studies and observe narrower gender differences in CLIL settings than in EFL. These expected results will be addressed in the body of the thesis.



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ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LINGUISTICS

TIMOTHY WILLIAM LAWRENCE
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A Meaning-Based Analysis Derived from Método de los Relojes Employing Structural- Functional Linguistics through CEFR Level Descriptors to Indicate Development of Syntactic Complexity in L2 Written Texts

Supervisors: Manual Saiz Pérez and Juan Rafael Zamorano Mansilla

Syntactic complexity is understood as the range and sophistication of grammatical resources exhibited in language production. A reason for measuring complexity in second language acquisition is to benchmark developmental levels. A number of studies have researched which measures are a reliable index to gauge L2 writers' overall proficiency. Results revealed the relationship between syntactic complexity to L2 writing quality

may vary among different measures and syntactic complexity may also vary among learners and CEFR proficiency levels.

Systemic-functional linguistics has been viewed as a multidimensional perspective for analyzing syntax complexity. The developmental sequence of syntactic interlanguage complexification hypothesis proposes that language development at lower levels proceeds from parataxis while intermediate learners use hypotaxis to express ideas through grammatically intricate texts. Use of grammatical metaphor appears in advanced learners which contributes to lower levels of subordination. This study proposes a meaning-based approach derived from the Spanish descriptive grammar framework *Método de los Relojes* and grounded in the structural-functional linguistics to introduce new meaning-based complexity measures to a line of research which has received little attention yet has raised significant questions.

Corpus data was taken from the second version of the *EF-Cambridge Open Language Database, Corpus de Aprendices de Español* and the *Corpus Escrito de Español L2* comprising a representative sample of over 1.4 million words spanning CEFR proficiency levels A1-C2. The quantitative analysis applies taxis, expansion and logico-semantic relations to gauge frequency and use in L2 English and Spanish written texts. Parataxis and hypotaxis are expected to manifest at different frequencies and proficiency levels in L2 Spanish and English texts with key coordinators and subordinators largely influencing frequency peaks. Preliminary findings suggest hypotaxis in L2 texts increases through advanced levels while parataxis remains at an elevated, yet stable frequency throughout levels A1-C2. Developmental and task-based formulaic sequencing are perceived to have an influence over frequency at punctual points in certain proficiency levels. Analysis is expected to negate the validity of the developmental sequence of syntactic interlanguage complexification hypothesis and divulge how different types of parataxis and hypotaxis used by learners.

ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LINGUISTICS

ANA EUGENIA SANCHO ORTIZ
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Expert Identity and Science Dissemination on Social Media: The Study of Individual Identity Construction through Multisemiotic Resources on X and Instagram

Supervisor: Rosa Lorés Sanz

The consolidation of digital technologies as a vehicle for global communication has prompted an increasing interest in exploring the functionality of digital modes and media within specialised domains. Within these domains, there stands out the field of science, wherein online communication platforms have been conceived as convenient means to both expand the range of influence of scientific research and share specialised knowledge with multiple audiences. Consequently, an ever-expanding ecology of—hybridised—digital genres has emerged, prominently featuring a great diversity in terms of knowledge recontextualization and remediation practices.

Due to their reachability and disseminating potential, social media platforms have been recognised as effective channels for establishing academic networks, particularly acclaimed for their functionality to enhance research visibility. In this line, considerable expert attention

has been directed to the identification of the most effective way to build a coherent in-group persona within professional communities, whereby a wholistic expert identity can be digitally constructed.

In this context, my doctoral dissertation aims to explore expert identity construction on social media. Specifically, it addresses identity construction on X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram, with an emphasis on the articulation of expert identity views through media and caption content on both platforms. Given the extensive array of disseminating content available on social media, my research concentrates on two domains within the sphere of physical health: 1) Physical movement and physical therapy, and 2) Nutrition and dietetics. Based on this, my project starts with the compilation of the *SoMePHY* database, a selection of posts extracted from X and Instagram accounts from individual users dealing with physical-health-related issues.

The *SoMePHY* database aims to reflect the conceptualization of expert identity construction online as a social process dynamically enacted through the strategic exploitation of the affordances of the media. Thus, it will be analytically approached from a working framework which combines various scholarly perspectives directly relevant to the study of online identity construction, namely, (digital) genre studies, metadiscourse, pragmatics, multimodality, and digital discourse analysis, all to be completed with ethnographic research methodologies.

Some preliminary results point to the need to conceptualise expert identity on social media as a multifaceted construct shaped by the manifestation and interplay of the professional and personal characters inherent to individual users. Such an inference is drawn from the experts' reliance on verbal and non-verbal resources to alternatively address personal and non-personal topics in their posts, convey their stance towards such topics, and engage their varied audience multiple in their scientific discourse.

ABSTRACTS |
 IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LITERATURE/CULTURE

MARÍA ABIZANDA CARDONA
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Reading the Posthuman in Crime Fiction

Supervisor: Sonia Baelo-Allué

At the onset of the 21st century, the double jeopardy of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Anthropocene has evidenced the unprecedented imbrication of the human with technological, animal and natural others, prompting a redefinition of humanity looking toward a potential posthuman state. This paradigm shift is translated onto contemporary literature, which is one of the key stakeholders shaping our sociotechnical imaginary. If in the literary realm technoscience had historically been circumscribed to science fiction, in present times the feelings of estrangement and dislocation that were the keynote of the speculative genre have become so all-pervading that technological motifs infiltrate other literary modes. A notable instance of this hybridization is the emerging body of narrative works that address the scenarios and icons of technoscience through the stock plots and conventions of crime fiction, a trend that has been steadily on the rise for the last five years in American literary markets but remains underexplored by scholarship.

My doctoral dissertation aims to study the representation of posthumanity in this corpus of works, focusing on the effects of the hallmark phenomena of the 4IR—human enhancement technologies, biocapitalism, surveillance—over definitions of personhood, social relations and ethics. Besides, I intend to chart the aesthetic models, motifs and techniques resulting from the generic crossbreeding of SF and crime fiction. To this end, I focus on three recent American novels (Mur Lafferty’s *Six Wakes*, Lincoln Michel’s *The Body Scout* and Rob Hart’s *The Warehouse*) and the hypertextual narrative *Neurocracy*.

My approach to the corpus texts is grounded on the notion, drawn from genre studies, that both speculative and crime fiction are indices of contemporary aspirations and anxieties, and powerful tools for intervention and dialectical exchange with material technoscientific development.

My reading will combine formal analysis drawn from the tenets of postclassical narratology with a thematic or ideological perspective indebted to the theories of critical posthumanism, transhumanism, new materialism and biopolitics.

Preliminary analysis of the corpus shows that the works selected harness the formal and ideological conventions of different crime fiction subgenres to denounce the indexation of technoscientific progress to the transhumanist, neoliberal values of biocapitalism, especially in relation with the idiosyncratic concerns of crime fiction: the mismatch between law and justice, changing definitions of personhood, and state-sponsored violence against marginalized communities. Besides denouncing the shortcomings of the current development of technoscience, the novels spell alternative pathways for constructing an ethical posthumanity, leveraging a transcorporeal, response-able, non-hierarchical opening toward human and non-human others.

ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LITERATURE/CULTURE

CLAUDIA GARCÍA PAJÍN
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Enraged Young Women: A New Wave of Angry Anglo-American Literature

Supervisors: Marta Fernández Morales and Laura Martínez García

Since affective theories entered social sciences and humanities during the late 20th century, the interest in emotional spheres in diverse fields of study has grown exponentially. Within the context of Anglo-American literature, the affect of anger would become the prism from which several literary groups would develop their literary tradition. During the second half of the 20th century, the Angry Young Men would turn the 1950s into the “British Angry Decade”, depicting through a social resentment that defined an entire generation of working-class men. Not long after that, within the context of the Civil Rights Movement in USA, the New Black Renaissance would also appeal at a social intergenerational resentment after decades of racial oppression. Once again, in the 1990s, anger would become the protagonist of some of the most notorious literary pieces of the decade once again, through the works of authors like Bret Easton Ellis and Chuck Palahniuk, who explored the damaging effects of expressions of masculinity based on violence.

It is easy to observe now a significant change in the panorama of Anglo-American “angry literature.” Literary works that focus on rage and anger exclusively from a feminine perspective have started flooding best-selling lists. Works like Gillian Flynn’s *Gone Girl* (2012), Ottessa Moshfegh’s *Eileen* (2015), Mindy McGinnis’s *The Female of the Species* (2016), Mona Awad’s *Bunny* (2019), or Chelsea G. Summers *A Certain Hunger* (2020) are only some of the most popular titles. It is, thus, clear, that a new wave of popularity of angry literature has arrived; this time, characterized by a perspective exclusively female and a production so wide that it spreads

across different literary subgenres. All of these publications place their focus on the mental health of their protagonists, and topics of self-perception and isolation are explored, understanding the characters' anger as a response to individual, complex, and inherited trauma.

Through the analysis of a corpus that is representative of this new wave of angry literature, referred to in this project as "Enraged Young Women" literature, the research is articulated around three main goals. Firstly, the corpus is studied from the intersection of the fields of narratology, gender studies, and trauma studies to discover how anger in these works is presented as the aftermath of the protagonists' trauma, and to determine how the effects of said trauma shape both the development of the story and the narrative forms. Secondly, the intertextual relationship between the novels by the Enraged Young Women authors are traced in order to find patterns, similarities, and influences that allow for a cohesive and appropriate grouping of the authors into a defined generation. With this grouping neatly done and being able to observe what characterizes it and how it fits in the current literary scene, the Enraged Young Women will be further contextualized as the latest wave of angry literature in the contemporary Anglo-American panorama. Thirdly, the material conditions behind the production and spread of these anger-centered works will be examined and questioned from the perspective of cultural materialism to understand what causes angry literature to rise in popularity at given times and places in history and, considering the Enraged Young Women specifically, feminist studies will be used to address whether and how these works fit within fourth-wave feminism.

ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LITERATURE/CULTURE

ANGIE GÓMEZ-GARCÍA

UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

“Everything about me invites you in”: the Monster and its Creation; Masculinities and Viewer Reception in Dracula, The Vampire Diaries, Fifty Shades of Grey and After

Supervisor: Patricia Fra López

As a result of the premiere of Coppola’s film, many dissertations were written on the topic of the monster and *Dracula* (1992), its iconography, and even queer perspectives. But there is an unsolved need for how this monster was created and how it was transformed by the viewers into an object of desire. Dracula became the face of a different kind of monster, capable of neutralising some of the aspects that canonically defined the monster. This is of high importance as it has become popular in the current society where it happens with monsters per se, as in *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017) but also with some human characters as in *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015-2019) and *After* (2019-2023).

The analysis I am carrying out tackles how monsters, which used to convey fear, convey desire now, as readers and viewers end up feeling compassion and sympathy for them. At the same time,

somehow their aura of sinister power, based on rooted rules from the yet patriarchal society, spawns some degree of desire from the audience who, although rejecting those masculinities, seems to be eager to see these monsters embodying them.

With this project, I intend to answer how the monster is constructed and perceived by the audience through a cultural and psychological perspective to understand why it becomes object and subject of desire. Altogether and based on gender studies, I am also trying to understand how the rather feminine audiences interact with the monster and how it reinforces rooted existent masculinities in society. The answers for these questions will critically explain or not the relationship that apparently exists among these human-like monsters and the reasons why these societies would choose a monster over a normal human.



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ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LITERATURE/CULTURE

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Other Indias: Heterodox visions and representations in Indo-Anglian or Anglo-Indian Writing in English

Supervisor: Antonio Andrés Ballesteros-González

Half local and half foreign, Anglo-Indians embody the burden of the British Empire in India. Cosmopolitanism was natural for them, a logical result of their cultural, and sometimes racial, syncretism, while their language, despite being inherited by their foreign forefathers, needed to adjust to represent new local realities or perspectives.

On the one hand, their dual belonging or cultural affiliation has taken its toll on these authors at several levels: in Aubrey Menen's case—born in London from an Irish mother and an Indian father—oblivion, in Irwin Alan Sealy's, the fact that Salman Rushdie's work has overshadowed his own, which is scarcely known in the West. On the other hand, the use of satire or humor allows them to demystify and relativize, an exercise of post-modernity that many others have followed, especially when referring to episodes of discrimination or to controversial chapters in Indian history.

Indo-Anglian or Anglo-Indian writers—terms that we will use meaning the sum of its parts as to avoid sterile controversies—are so-called in some cases simply because they write in

English or due to their condition of diasporic. Some of the authors to be analyzed are a perfect example of “uncomfortable subalterns,” which neither Indian critics have been interested in (for being a group that did not hide its British, i.e. oppressive and colonial, heritage, even if this was only literary or cultural) nor post-colonial studies (by extending the concept of subaltern to a traditionally considered privileged group, certainly a minority though, whose voice, in many cases, has been silenced or questioned because of a presumed “lack of authenticity” justified on essentialist grounds).

Thus, this research will consider very well-known works of internationally acclaimed authors along with a deeper analysis of others that have offered new representations of India (such as Aubrey Menen, Irwin Alan Sealy or Ruskin Bond) as to enhance the importance of such works from a new vantage point. The reasons for the obscurity they have remained in, despite their relevance as postmodern and postcolonial authors and, moreover, their underlying influence in other major, reputed authors, will also be addressed.

Cultural and Postcolonial Studies, New Historicism, as well as Postmodern critical approaches and terminology will be used to disentangle the current critical trends and controversies, whereby some authors are validated or rejected according to their origins, their ideological standpoint, or their place of residence. The selection of the texts is varied and covers a broad time span that starts before Independence, with the writings of Aubrey Menen (1947), and reaches into very recent novels, such as *Gods and Ends* (2021), written by Lindsay Pereira. Through Discourse and Textual Analysis, this research will try to unveil the different representations of the diverse Indian identities that remain hidden under the restrictive labels associated with Indian Writing in English.

ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LITERATURE/CULTURE

MARTA MARTÍN AMOR
UNIVERSIDAD DE ALCALÁ

The Construction of the Female Experience in Contemporary Feminist Irish Drama

**Supervisors: Juan Francisco Elices Agudo and
Isabel de la Cruz Cabanillas**

Throughout the last few decades, a new wave of female playwrights has carved their place within the Irish dramatic scene to challenge the way often controversial topics—female sexuality, family dysfunctionality, motherhood, sexual abuse, abortion—had previously been depicted from a uniquely male perspective. Authors like Marina Carr, Emma Donoghue or Anne Le Marquand Hartigan have reshaped the way both female characters and their experiences have been portrayed on stage. Therefore, they have contributed to making theatre a genre that is increasingly more aware of issues regarding gender oppression and, at the same time, have given visibility to the complex female experience and its struggles, attempting to expose, criticise and even subvert the ever-present male bias when it comes to the representation of women in drama.

Thus, the purpose of my thesis is to carry out a comparative analysis between the abovementioned dramatists through some of their key works, seeking out the way each of them, in their own way, employ drama to highlight, explore, and challenge gender tropes and to redefine the previous archetypal female figure in theatre and the exploration of experiences and concerns pertaining women. Particularly, this study explores the construction and representation of female characters and the development of arguments and discourses related to gender issues and female oppression in the context of contemporary feminist Irish theatre. Moreover, it delves into the influence that the proposed playwrights have had—and continue to have—in the present

and future Irish dramatic landscape. Fundamentally, both gender and feminist criticism will be employed as the baseline for the analysis through the exploration of concepts such as identity, motherhood, and trauma, among others, and how these notions have been previously applied, or not, to Irish literature in general, and Irish drama in particular.

Hopefully, the results obtained will shed some light on female contemporary drama in Ireland which has been, more often than not, overlooked in both the scholarship and the canon, and explore the way these dramatists have strived to develop more nuanced, rich, complex, and real images of women and, consequently, have contributed to a genre that had previously, and almost exclusively, been monopolized by men.

ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LITERATURE/CULTURE

PAULA RUSTARAZO GARZÓN
UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA

Maternity, Fertility and Loss in Contemporary Memoir

Supervisor: María del Rosario Afías Doblas

This research considers how the experiences of miscarriage and involuntary childlessness affect women's identities and relationship with their bodies. My main objective with this study is to provide visibility to the difficulties that women who undergo these traumatic experiences have to face, and to show in what ways Western society limits and shapes how they can grieve and continue living with the new, unwanted reality they are in.

In order to carry out this analysis, I consider six contemporary memoirs written by female authors, and examine them through a methodology that combines phenomenology and body studies. The former, phenomenology, is the philosophical study that establishes reality as subjective. It gives importance to an individual's experiences and how they shape the way people understand their own reality. The later, body studies, encourages the understanding of reality as experienced through the physical body and, thus, as something that is deeply affected by the presence or absence of pregnancy, or its loss. By combining both approaches, I can understand how women are impacted by miscarriage and involuntary childlessness from a perspective that gives importance to their own voices and lived experiences. The six memoirs considered in my research are: Paula Knight's *The Facts of Life* (2017); Emilie Pine's *Notes to Self: Essays* (2018); Joanne Gallant's *A Womb in the Shape of a Heart: A Story of Miscarriage and Motherhood* (2021); Jessica Zucker's *I Had a Miscarriage: A Memoir, A Movement* (2021); Myriam Steinberg's *Catalogue Baby: A Memoir of (In)Fertility* (2021); and Sian Prior's *Childless: A Story of Freedom and Longing* (2022). Together, these works provide an overview of miscarriage and involuntary childlessness, and shed light on their common struggles.

Due to the wide scope of this research, I have decided to limit it to consider white women who are trying to conceive. It remains relevant to represent varied realities of pregnancy or lack thereof, a gap that will surely be overcome in future research. In the meantime, the works written by these women show that they have faced similar problems, such as feeling neglected by the healthcare system, disconnection from their bodies, self-blame and loss of purpose and self-identification, which proves that there is a societal gap in these circumstances that works against them to stigmatize and isolate them further. I anticipate that my research will consolidate the similarities in concerns and needs that these women have, and will encourage further research on miscarriage and childlessness in an effort to create healthier ways to face this trauma and better, more empathic communities that can act as support systems.

ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LITERATURE/CULTURE

ASUNCIÓN SÁNCHEZ PADILLA
UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID

Ideological Reception of Translated LGBTI+ Theatre in the Post- Franco Era: British and American Plays on the Spanish Stage

Supervisor: Jorge Braga Riera

My research focuses on the analysis of translated LGTBI+ plays on stage after Franco's death and their reception. Starting from a background of previous censorship, where every literary work was submitted to the censorship apparatus established, my aim is to analyse how it has affected plays which feature LGBTI+ topics or characters on Spanish translations that were represented on stage from both British and American authors. Therefore, this study focuses on two marginalised groups: theatre translations within the field of translation studies, and LGBTI+ plays, which are largely ignored in comparison to heteronormative works. Although the research is in the beginning stages, I am building a theoretical framework based on investigations on translated theatre, translated *queer* works and *queer* theory. I will also be drawing on general censorship literature, and specific censorship in Spain, to establish the historical and sociological background. I am building a corpus of British and American plays that are considered LGBTI+ and were translated and performed on Spanish stages. For this reason, I will be utilising the original texts and the available translated texts put

on stage. When possible, I will watch the recordings of the original plays thanks to the public archives but, due to the fleeting nature of performed theatre, these recordings are not always available, so I will also be using reviews from critics in different media like newspapers or magazines to analyse the response of the public. As the research is in its preliminary stages, expected results are still unclear, but I hope to establish a pattern of LGBTI+ plays translated and performed after Franco's death, whether the audience response was better and less censored, and whether lesbian representation is minor to gay representation in the selected plays.

ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LITERATURE/CULTURE

IRIA SEIJAS-PÉREZ
UNIVERSIDADE DE VIGO

Queering Girlhood: Representations of Sapphic Adolescents in Contemporary Irish Young Adult Fiction in English

Supervisor: Belén Martín-Lucas

Irish young adult—YA—literature dates back to the 1990s, and during its early years it was marked by a reluctance to address subjects that could be deemed controversial or inappropriate for young readers (Kennon 2020). It has been in the last decade that Irish YA literature has seen a remarkable increase in its number of publications and in popularity, which has been accompanied by the inclusion of more varied topics within these texts. This development has been attributed, on the one hand, to the cultural change that Ireland has experienced in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and, on the other, to the emergence and accomplishments of a range of YA authors, many of them women (Cahill 2017; Mooney 2022). Today, it is possible to find Irish YA novels that address those questions and concerns that are of interest to a young readership, including the representation of queer sexualities. Irish LGBTQ+ YA texts have significantly increased in the last few years, with a variety of queer characters appearing at the centre of the narratives.

Taking into consideration the recent growth of Irish YA narratives that represent LGBTQ+ characters, this dissertation aims to analyse YA novels with lesbian, bisexual or queer female

protagonists written in English by Irish women. In order to carry out this research, a methodology based on critical and comparative readings of critical studies and analyses on YA literature and LGBTQ+ narratives is followed. Furthermore, queer and feminist theories are also fundamental, due to their interest in interrogating hegemonic discourses of heteropatriarchal society through the critical study of cultural productions, and because these offer the necessary perspective to approach the main research theme of this project.

A set of criteria were established to select the texts that would conform the corpus of study, taking into account those aspects that were of particular interest for this research. After a preliminary reading, limits were narrowed in order to offer a coherent and thorough analysis of the selected works. The resulting corpus is comprised of nine YA novels written by six different Irish authors: Moira Fowley-Doyle, Sarah Maria Griffin, Claire Hennessy, Adiba Jaigirdar, Ciara Smyth and Deirdre Sullivan. Their novels provide a variety of elements to be studied, and while attending to different matters they all share the representation of a sapphic protagonist.

Thus, the focus here lies on Irish YA narratives and on sapphic characters in an attempt to offer new perspectives on the critical study of YA fiction and to challenge dominant discourses of LGBTQ+ YA literature that continue to centre on gay male representation. Among other goals, the main objective of this research is to provide a critical assessment of the literary representation of the lives of sapphic teenage girls in contemporary Ireland, to explore the different strategies through which sapphic sexualities are approached in Irish YA literature, and to evaluate the social changes that Ireland has experienced concerning the rights of the LGBTQ+ community.



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ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LITERATURE/CULTURE

PAULA SERRANO ELENA
UNIVERSIDAD DE ZARAGOZA

Rethinking Motherhood: The Representation of the Intersection between Psychic Suffering and Early Motherhood in Post-Pandemic US Literature

Supervisor: Silvia Martínez Falquina

Although reflection on the issue of motherhood has not stopped since the second feminist wave, it has received neither the theoretical consideration nor the political, social, and cultural value that such a significant issue for the definition of gender roles would require. In this sense, motherhood is considered the pending subject of feminism in the 21st century. One of the intellectuals who most fervently subscribes to this statement is professor and essayist Andrea O'Reilly. She denounces that as women's studies have grown and developed as an academic field incorporating various theoretical models to represent the specific perspectives and concerns of particular groups of women, they have not similarly recognized and embraced a feminism developed from the specific needs/concerns of mothers. Moreover, the manifest need for a feminism specific to the issue of motherhood

increases when we place the focus on the situation of precariousness and poverty in which the mental health of women mothers finds itself. It is therefore vital to examine, strategically and specifically for their 21st-century context, the causes, and agents most detrimental to the experience of motherhood. In light of this, my doctoral thesis focuses on the representation of mothers' psychic suffering in the post-pandemic US narrative. More specifically, I intend to conduct a comparative study between American post-pandemic works—*Nightbitch* (2021) by Rachel Yoder, *The School for Good Mothers* (2022) by Jessamine Chan, and *The Upstairs House* (2021) by Julia Fine- to demonstrate that these authors are part of a new trend, within the new generation of novelists writing about motherhood, which aims to expose the intersection between the experience of motherhood, as it is demanded in the 21st century, and psychic suffering or even its aggravation leading to mental illness. My methodological approach will be based on a close reading of the selected works that will allow me to delve into their relevance—and the new trend that, as I argue, they represent—within the North American tradition in particular, but also on a global level. I will carry out a textual analysis of the selected works focused on the study of the narrative voice, stylistic resources, narration, characters, and themes, which I will then link to the study of the literary genre. *Grosso Modo*, it is a dystopia and two novels of psychological realism that fit perfectly within the gothic genre, more specifically within the subgenre known as “female Gothic” (Moers 1976). Also, the analysis will draw on feminist theory, motherhood studies, and critical perspective on the pathologizing of female pain. Specifically, for the review of feminism, it will be examined the creation of a new theoretical model called “matricentric feminism” proposed by Andrea O'Reilly.



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ABSTRACTS |
IV AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2023) LITERATURE/CULTURE

SARA TABUYO SANTA CLARA
UNIVERSIDADE DE VIGO

An Intersectional Approach to Girlhood in The Handmaid's Tale Franchise: Beyond Gender Constraints and (Mis-)Represented Narratives

Supervisor: Belén Martín Lucas

Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* has soared in popularity with the release of its series adaptation in 2017, followed by the publication of the sequel *The Testaments* in 2019. As these new additions to the fictional universe expanded the scope of the narrative and achieved extraordinary success, scholarship suggested that these three works should be considered as an ensemble, as their narratives are interwoven and complement each other. These new releases also favored the academic interest towards *The Handmaid's Tale* franchise and its impact, as well as in Atwood's rich literary career. Despite academic attention paid to the series adaptation and some focus on *The Testaments*, the cultural representations of girlhood in both materials remained largely unexplored.

My thesis aims to study the depictions of girls in both productions, primarily adopting an intersectional approach that allows me to explore the monolithic models of girlhood set by the

fictional theocratic regime in contrast to the variety of experiences of girlhood that exceed the prescriptions of the politics of Gilead. *The Testaments* and *The Handmaid's Tale* series include rich descriptions of what it means to be a girl surrounded by patriarchal constrictions. In the sequel, Atwood dives deep into Gilead's regulations of girlhood, while both series and sequel include depictions of girlhood that challenge and contest the codes imposed by the regime. My aim is to use girlhood as an interdisciplinary methodology that seeks to avoid creating a discourse of a homogenized view on girls' lives.

I will firstly explore the regulation of the girls' embodied experiences through gendered categories created by those in power, which encourage them to cover and contain their bodies. Self-regulating and assuming responsibility for others' emotional well-being are expectations they must fulfil while they absorb cruel acts of violence. Nevertheless, the girls presented in the franchise manage to contest the expectations placed on them and break away through diverse processes and to different degrees of success. Their courageous acts allow them to redefine the meanings of finding joy outside of Gilead's politics and affect others to resist and refuse to accept damaging and violent situations. In this context, the quality of girlhood as a liminal phase will also be studied as a productive space to question and potentially transform the boundaries imposed from above.

This thesis will also address the myriad of experiences of girlhood, paying especial attention to the neocolonial context in North America in general and the author's Canadian context in particular. I will analyze the clear links between the education system in *The Testaments* and the Canadian Residential School System, both working as total institutions aiming to erase non-normative identities. These connections highlight the lack of indigenous representation in the franchise and the importance of giving prominence to indigenous girls' voices living in complex neocoloniality.

