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ASOCIACIÓN ESPAÑOLA DE ESTUDIOS  
ANGLO-NORTEAMERICANOS  
aedean

edita: Silvia Martínez Falquina

# AN AMERICAN PRAGMATIST:

Betty Friedan (1921-2006)

Fin de siècle:

# *FARGO* TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

Expanding Views:

# THE STUDY OF ENGLISHES ACROSS THE WORLD



ASOCIACIÓN ESPAÑOLA DE ESTUDIOS  
ANGLO-NORTEAMERICANOS

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MARÍA SOCORRO SUÁREZ LAFUENTE

UNIVERSIDAD DE OVIEDO

***An  
American  
Pragmatist:***

***Betty Friedan  
(1921-2006)***



Even at a college like Smith, women were not expected then to prepare for careers [...]. I don't think I even heard the word "career" until "career women" became a term of opprobrium, imbued with nuances of Freudian penis envy. Of course, if you were a truly brilliant student in your field [...] you might get a job on Mademoiselle or as a Time-Life researcher, until you got married. [...] girls like myself could only be researchers, doing the spadework for which the writers, the men, would get the bylines, and the promotions.

(Betty Friedan 2000)

If I tried to write about a woman artist, or a political concern, "American women won't identify," the editors would say. Those editors of women's magazines were men.

(Betty Friedan 2000)

This year we are celebrating the centenary of the birth of Betty Friedan, the woman who unbolted one fundamental door for women to gain awareness of their right to be considered as complete human subjects, to develop their personal capabilities to the full, to claim choice rights over their own lifestyle and, if or when necessary, entitlement to a second chance. Friedan picked up the banner from a whole succession of hearty predecessors (Mary Wollstonecraft, Susan Anthony, Virginia Woolf or Simone de Beauvoir, to name but a few) who pointed out to the social forces of their time the need to legislate in favour of women, and so modified public opinion about female subservience. Friedan's *foremothers* were admitted by the dominant discourse only as isolated personalities, so that they could be easily demoted back into silence and oblivion.

Betty Friedan published her momentous book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, a time when news were easily widespread by journalism, and television was also becoming important in conforming public opinion. Moreover, two decades had already gone by since the end of War World II and the spread of middle-class suburbs and values. As a result, in spite of driving a car and having all kinds of gadgets at home, white middle-class American women were deadly bored with their lives, pining for some sort of intellectual activity that enabled them to leave routine behind. Only that they didn't know it, and so their frustration was transmuted into a "problem that has no name," a hurdle that had neither official acknowledgement nor explanation. Not until Friedan pushed the right button at the right time and defined it as "the feminine mystique," a situation predefined by male power and forced into the female mind through social slogans, advertisements and women's magazines. Friedan herself acknowledges, in *Life so Far: A Memoir*, published in 2000, how lucky she had been to have her own writing converging with history in such a way.

She insists that it was never in her mind to start any revolution while writing *The Feminine Mystique*. She was a housewife with three children, striving to make some money with her freelance job as a journalist to make ends meet at home. She had been raised in the mystique herself, even though she had always been suspiciously aware of the source of her mother's bitterness. Friedan woke out of the feminine "trap" step by step, she first learnt to think and argue at college, and then, while researching for her articles she became aware of the insubstantiality of many social dicta. But it was a questionnaire commissioned by Smith College in the late 1950s that brought it home to her that the unease she felt was not unusual but an apprehension shared by many of the suburban wives she was interviewing. The questions the interviewees were confronted with dealt with marriage, sexual life, children, home, personal appearance, intellectual and social life, religion and politics, as well as the one question that would prove to be the key for Friedan's future book: "did they ever had dreams of thriving professionally." Well, most of them did. Most of the over two hundred women who answered the questionnaire confessed that they had renounced their own prospects in order to fulfil the role of perfect wife and mother. This had Friedan pondering why American women "like me"—who had gone to college, had professional opportunities and even some notion of their rights—"go back home" (2000, 149).

It is the phrase "like me" that is truly meaningful in her introspection, as it prompted Friedan to consider her own experience. She turned down a very good scholarship in Berkeley not to interfere with her possibilities of finding the "right man," she was accepting to be paid less than her male colleagues for the same work as a journalist, and did not complain when she was not served a drink in the bar at Hotel Ritz because "they did not serve women." She became only partly aware of the implications of the woman condition in her society when she was dismissed from the newspaper she was working for on becoming pregnant with her second child. So she confesses to having repeated the commonly accepted ideas about femininity, and to having taken a long time in becoming a feminist, in realizing that both the social

and economic discourses were exclusively male and that women's role in taking care of the family had no value at all. In *The Feminine Mystique* she asks a crucial, even if rhetorical question that deconstructs the myth of the Wife and Mother: "Why is it never said that the really crucial function, the really important role that women serve as housewives is to buy more things for the house" (1997a, 248).

The first step in a revolution is awareness, no doubt, and that is precisely Betty Friedan's importance in the development of feminism in the second half of the twentieth century. Pondering on the answers to the Smith questionnaire, Friedan started interviewing not only housewives but also psychoanalysts, sociologists, anthropologists and the like in order to find an answer to such a bizarre situation as women were then enduring—especially if we consider that women in the 1930s and early 1940s did not have a guilty conscience while pursuing their personal and professional dreams. So, by using a ground-breaking social technique, Friedan was able to finally pin down the problem and explain it, crystal clear, in a book that would be both acclaimed and despised, that was two years in the bestselling list of *The New York Times* and received the Pulitzer Prize in 1964. For all its controversial reception, the feminine mystique came into the limelight of social debate, and suburban housewives saw themselves described in the book and became aware of the fact that there were many more "sisters in pain" than they thought and felt a surging emotion: that they were ripe for a new stage in women's revolution.

Three years before the book's publication, in 1960, Friedan had already called the housewives' attention to what the system was doing to them, i.e. fooling them into believing that there was no other mission in life for women. That year she published, in *Good Housekeeping*, an article under the title "Women Are People Too!" denouncing the loss of a collective identity among the women of her generation, because, as she claimed, it is not easy for women to express their yearnings when

**they struggle alone, afraid to admit that they are asking themselves the silent question "Is this all?" as they make the beds, shop for groceries and new curtains, eat peanut-butter sandwiches with the children, chauffeur Cub Scouts and Brownies to and from meetings, or lie beside their husbands at night. (2010)**

So, whatever our opinion of Betty Friedan might be, we have to be grateful to her for liberating women's minds and offering them the idea that it was proper and natural to ask themselves "Who am I?" and "What do I want to do with my life?"

After the success and controversy of *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan became a public figure, called to attention by several politicians and other social forces, but also invited to speak in many academic and intellectual circles. In dealing with so many influential people, she realized that most of the political committees and new offices to promote women's rights were just *trompe l'oeil* to distract public opinion and women themselves. The idea behind the scenes was that if you wanted to become a "career woman" (wrong choice!), you better not get married nor have children.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, expressly prohibiting "employment discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex and national origin," which was a joyful moment for Friedan, a fervent believer in the need for women to work outside their home and have access to as high an employment as their personal abilities allowed. Yet, she also knew all too well that unless some effective action was taken, the Title would end up being but a useless piece of paper. Not for nothing, at that time, the Equal Rights Amendment became once more a public issue, with feminists disputing the meaning and implications of women's *equality*—for instance, women were legally "protected" by giving them shorter hours and no night shifts or limiting the weight loads they were allowed to lift, which in practice was used as an excuse for not promoting them ever.

Time was then ripe for Friedan and a fistful of conscientious women to take action in their hands and make their voices heard. This resolution led to the birth of NOW, National Organization for Women, founded in 1966 with Betty Friedan as first president. NOW lobbied, travelled through the country, organized strikes and conventions, fought in the political arena when needed, and, regardless of tensions, dissensions and sabotage, turned out instrumental in awakening the dormant spirit of feminism.

Friedan, as feminist icon and social activist, fought many battles, both personal and political, some of which she lost; others she won with flying colours, such as the Women's Strike for Equality in 1970. She finally had the chance to travel widely and to meet prominent people, such as Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, Simone de Beauvoir and Pope Paul VI, and was close, for better or for worse, to the US politicians and intellectuals of her time. In *Life so Far*, she confided that she had many good friends, was a happy mother and grandmother and had in the end a nice relationship with her ex-husband. In fact, it was Carl Friedan who gave us what is probably an accurate definition of her personality, a

definition that her writings do not defy: “She changed the course of history almost singlehandedly. It took a driven, super aggressive, egocentric, almost lunatic dynamo to rock the world the way she did” (Ginsberg 2000).

This portrait of Betty Friedan does not deduce a jot from the admiration we owe to her work. As I said at the beginning, she did what was at hand for her to do at the time, she was intelligent enough to discover where the patriarchal traps were, and honest enough with herself and the society she belonged to not only to denounce them but to *act* to improve women’s situation and further their rights. She opened the door that allowed others to act and to keep widening physical, intellectual and psychological spaces for women. Friedan was not, nor wanted to be a super heroine, she just wanted to be a human being, to have full access to her human rights, to be able to take her life in her hands and make sure that other women also had the same possibility. Friedan did not set herself out to save the world, but to voice her social beliefs and act consequently. She did so much that we have no right to exact more from her.

Anna Quindlen in her introduction to a new edition of *The Feminine Mystique*, almost four decades after the book was first published, expresses her admiration with words that can provide a good ending to this short tribute: “[a]s a first step, it is extraordinary. As a beneficiary of the greatest social revolution in the twentieth century, the resurgence of feminism that began with her book, I am obliged to add, ‘Many, many thanks’” (2001).

***N.B. about the title of this article:***

Betty Friedan interviewed Simone de Beauvoir in Paris in 1984 and, not surprisingly, found out that they disagreed in many of what Friedan considered key issues in feminism. Afterwards, one of the people present in the interview said to Friedan: “You are an American pragmatist and she is French and from the caste of the mandarins. You speak from different worlds” (2000, 281).



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CELESTINO DELEYTO ALCALÁ

UNIVERSIDAD DE ZARAGOZA

# ***Fin de siècle: Fargó Twenty- Five Years Later***

## Once upon a Time in Hollywood

Once upon a time, there was Hollywood cinema and there was independent cinema. The story is well known: when the major studios discovered the profitability of blockbusters—big investments that yielded huge profits at the box office—and decided to put most of their budgets on only a few spectacular films per year, a space was created for independent companies to occupy the space that Hollywood was no longer interested in. Starting in the late 1970s, while Indiana Jones, Rocky, Luke Skywalker, Rambo and E.T. absorbed the energies of the studios, the names of new directors like John Sayles, Barbara Loden, Jim Jarmusch, Wayne Wang, Spike Lee, Hal Hartley, Susan Seidelman and the Coen Brothers, among others, became familiar with critics and spectators, and their films, initially made on shoestring budgets, started to be economically viable. Important milestones on the road to success were *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (1989) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994), with their directors, Steven Soderbergh and Quentin Tarantino becoming, along with Kevin Smith, Alexander Payne, Wes Anderson, Paul Thomas Anderson and Robert Rodríguez, the faces of the younger generation of independent filmmakers. Predictably, artistic and, especially, economic success soon reawakened interest in the Hollywood studios, which steadily bought over the most profitable independent companies, including Miramax and New Line. With some of the studios creating their own “specialty divisions” like Sony Pictures Classics, Fox Searchlight, Focus Features and Warner Independent Pictures, by the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the dichotomy mainstream/independent that had dominated the history of U.S. cinema in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had ceased to exist. Independent companies had been, to a large extent, co-opted by the industry and had, with some exceptions, disappeared. Another way of saying this is that independent films, subsequently called “indies,” and mainstream were now part of the same industrial space.

The Academy Award ceremony of 1997, celebrating the films released in the previous year, was an important milestone in this process. On that occasion, Miramax’s *The English Patient* reigned triumphant with nine awards, including best picture and best director to Anthony Minghella. Miramax, the most successful of the independent companies, had been bought over by major Disney in 1995, while Minghella’s film was in production. Other nominees for best picture also came from independent studios: TriStar’s *Jerry Maguire*, October’s *Secrets & Lies* and Fine Line’s *Shine*. However, beyond the success of *The English Patient* on that night and the independent provenance of the nominees, the most lasting and influential of the candidates to best picture was *Fargo*, directed by the Coen Brothers, which on Oscar night received two awards: best original screenplay and best actress for Frances McDormand. The film was produced by British outfit Working Title, at the time still independent, but which would be bought by Universal in 1999. On the interface between independent and mainstream, *Fargo* may be considered one of the most important films of the end of the last century and a movie worth remembering and celebrating today, twenty-five years after its release.

All this was once upon a time. The last twenty-five years have seen huge changes in the medium of cinema: epochal developments in information technology, the digital revolution in the medium, the unprecedented success of the streaming platforms, the process of transnationalisation of audiovisual culture and, more recently, the jolt experienced by the industry as a result of Covid-19, a shock from which it is still recovering and which portends even more changes in the immediate future. In general, the first two decades of the new century have been marked by media convergence, with the boundaries between cinema, television, online narratives, small-format screen features and other audiovisual products becoming more and more elastic. To try to define what cinema is nowadays is as difficult as, probably, irrelevant. The audiovisual panorama has drastically changed and many of the working categories that applied twenty-five years ago have become obsolete. The year of the release of *Fargo* belongs, both literally and metaphorically, to a different century. Yet the movie remains intact in its cultural relevance and not only because, following the logic of the times, it spawned a television series, with four seasons to its name until 2020; or not only because, much later, the brothers would follow the tide and join the streaming platforms for their, to date, two latest features: *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs* (Netflix, 2018) and the forthcoming *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (Apple TV+). *Fargo* is an important film on its own strengths.



## The Road to Fargo: the Coen Brothers

Ethan and Joel Coen, who usually collaborate as writers, directors and producers in their films regardless of the nominal credits, burst into the independent scene with *Blood Simple* in 1984, the same year as Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger than Paradise*, and around the same time as Wayne Wang's *Chan is Missing* (1982), Gregory Nava's *El Norte* (1983), Susan Seidelman's *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985) and Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), some of the titles that consolidated the emergence of the new independent cinema in the early 1980s. The film's mixture of revisitation of classical genericity and conventions, graphic violence and occasional black humour was honed and perfected in their following features into what we might call a self-reflexive and self-referential mode of address that the Coens shared with other independent filmmakers that started their careers in the 1980s and early 90s, such as Jarmusch, Spike Lee, Quentin Tarantino and Wes Anderson, among others. However, to describe the work of these filmmakers as self-reflexive may identify a general cultural trend or a contemporaneous cinematic environment, but does not go a long way towards clarifying the specificities of their work. In the case of the Coens, references to cinema history are constant, often explicit, but crucially classical narrative tropes and conventions are a default way of constructing their stories and addressing cultural and thematic concerns of their day.

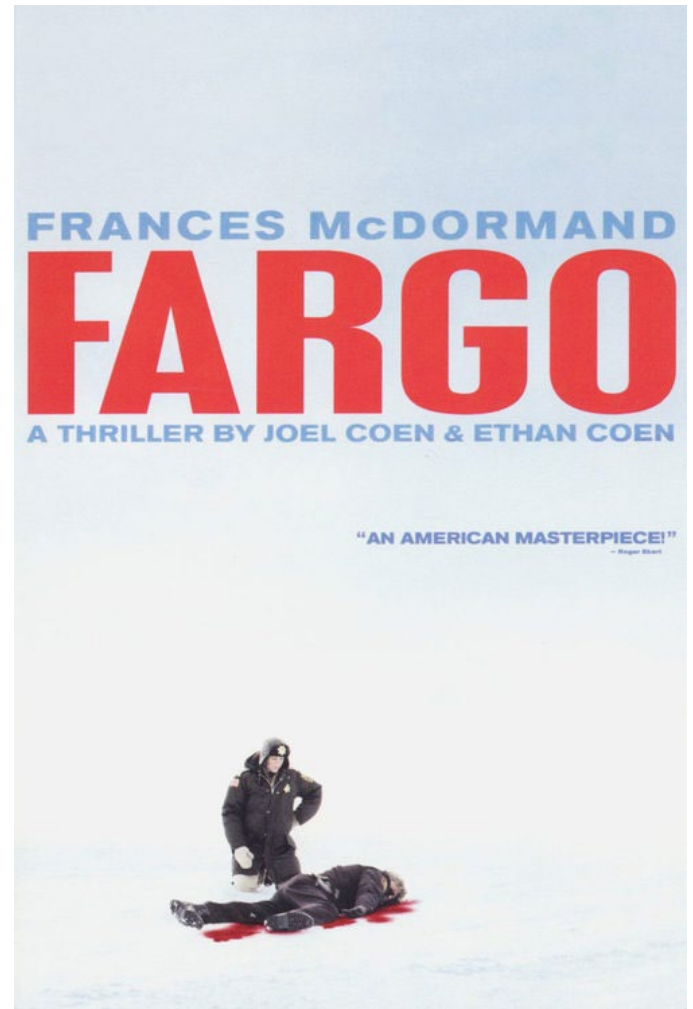


Figure 1: *Fargo*: Independent cinema in transition

Take *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000), characteristically for the brothers a comic story with darker undertones set in Depression-era Mississippi that concerns the wanderings of three escaped prisoners. The film's title replicates the pompous name of the fictional film that Sullivan (Joel McCrea), the protagonist of Preston Sturges' *Sullivan's Travels* (1941), a successful director of Hollywood comedies, wants to make. Also set in the early 1930s, Sullivan feels that his superficial comedies fail to capture the extreme poverty and suffering of millions of people travelling around the U.S. in search of a means of subsistence and he wants to make an "important" work. The title of Sturges' film is itself a reference to *Gulliver's Travels*, a narrative loosely replicated as Sullivan sets out to travel around the country disguised as one of the jobless to learn about the grim reality of people for his projected film. Instead, having really lost everything, he eventually finds himself in a humble church where a group of chain-gang prisoners teach him the importance of comedy as they watch and laugh at a comic Disney cartoon. The Coens' film, therefore, poses as the not-so-important fictional film Sullivan never made and loosely revisits *Sullivan's Travels* except this time from the perspective of the prisoners. But it also presents itself as a modern-day remake of *The Odyssey* with frequent explicit references to episodes from the foundational epic story and with a modernised version of its narrative structure. As the maze of meta-references proliferates, the comic narrative locates itself in a world of cultural references through which a "serious" meditation on the human condition is articulated. As is often the case in the Coens' oeuvre, as is the case in *Fargo*, comedy here is a serious matter.

In this and many other Coens' movies, including remakes of *The Ladykillers* (2004) and *True Grit* (2010) and adaptations of famous literary works like *No Country for Old Men* (2007) and, at the time of writing, the unreleased *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (2022), self-referentiality and parody, far from ends in themselves, are part of the cinematic idiom through which the social world is addressed. It is often the case that, rather than reference specific titles, the films revisit the narrative conventions of classical Hollywood cinema and, partly following the French *nouvelle vague*, reflect on them through reversals and defamiliarizations of stereotypes and narrative tropes. Sometimes, as in *The Hudsucker Proxy* (1994), the proliferation of references does not gel into a coherent narrative but, in their best films, self-referentiality and continuity with the history of cinema is compatible with and even the source of a seriousness of intent and a deep engagement with the human condition and the social environment. *Fargo*, their sixth feature film, crystallizes this method in a seamless combination of genre-based violence, satirical and observational comedy and an exploration of the very Hollywoodian

extremes of good and evil. This vision would become darker in *No Country for Old Men*, a film that can be considered *Fargo*'s companion piece.

The Coens' comedic revisitation of cinematic history frequently became paired with their seriousness of intent and profundity of vision. This pairing was among the best and most distinctive that the independent cinema of the 1980s and 90s had to offer, and also part of its legacy. It became a more familiar mode of address in the succeeding twenty-five years, one that spectators are increasingly culturally trained to recognise. *Fargo* may not have invented the self-referential variant of comedy described here but is certainly a crucial milestone on the road to a cinematic register in which self-consciousness is not just a game or a strategy of ideological critique, but a way to address contemporary anxieties, aspirations and forms of identity.

## ***Buried in the Snow: Space, Evil and the Comic Vision***

*Fargo* is not set in the city of Fargo, with the brief exception of the bar where Jerry Lundegaard (William H. Macy) meets the assassins he has hired to kidnap his wife in the pre-credits scene. It is unclear why the name of this city, on the North Dakota side of the border with Minnesota, where most of the action takes place, became the title of the film. In fact, *Fargo* is very much a film *about* Minnesota, the state where the filmmakers were born. Although shot in different locations around the two states, most of the narrative revolves around the "Twin Cities"—the Minneapolis-St Paul metropolitan area—and the town of Brainerd, 130 miles northwest of the capital. In the film, Minnesota is a place of flat, snow-covered landscapes, empty straight roads that disappear into an invisible horizon where the white land merges with the leaden sky. It is peopled by men and women who speak with an exaggerated accent that evokes the intonations and rhythms of the Scandinavian ancestry of many of its inhabitants, solitary individuals who seem familiar and even comfortable in their lonely surroundings. It is also the home of "Minnesota nice," the stereotypical behaviour that inhabitants from the state are known for: courteous and friendly, non-confrontational, sometimes quietly aggressive. This stereotype is put to good use in a narrative in which, as we will see, inexpressible violence and greed coexist with empathy, resilience and depth of feeling. The geographical specificity of this space is neither simply an attempt at heightened realism nor parodic exaggeration, although it has elements of both. Even those of us who are not familiar with the accent and find it amusing at first soon get used to its cadences and inflections and to the initially odd behaviour of its characters. Nobody who has seen the film will forget the landscape, the snow, the roads disappearing into nothingness, the characters' ways of socializing and the way they speak. The vividly constructed space, with its attention to realistic detail, confers credibility to the story but, at the same time, is part of what we might call the moral structure of the film—a combination of ferocious critique of thoughtless and unbridled ambition and powerful comic vision. Absurdity and kindness, venality and toughness, are all, as it were, inscribed in the landscape. In *Fargo*, space may be described as the neutral witness of extreme forms of human interaction but also as its ultimate source.



*Figure 2: Road to nowhere: Minnesota's invisible horizons*



In the film, the remote landscapes of northern Minnesota become the stage of the inevitability of the coexistence of two ancient forms of looking at the world and our place in society: tragedy and comedy. The invocation of the two foundational genres is part of the very substance of the film as a cinematic and narrative text. *Fargo* counterposes two psychological and social forces. On the one hand, a dark vision of the absurdity of lives driven by greed and accumulation, which the text identifies as patriarchal. On the other, a comic vision that encourages spectators not only to laugh at human behaviour and to recognise ourselves even in extreme forms of fallibility but also to share a vision of people as kind and resilient, determined to keep on going and enjoy the ride against the encroaching darkness, a vision that is here quietly associated with a celebration of female power.

The two assassins, Carl (Steve Buscemi) and Gaear (Peter Stormare), two characters who do not speak with a Minnesota accent, are the perpetrators of all the heinous murders that we witness (a total of seven, on my count), some with gruesome detail. Their absurdly glib disrespect for human life represents, in its self-conscious parody and *reductio ad absurdum* of Hollywood's thinly disguised fascination with violence, an extreme instance of moral depravity. Yet, they are ultimately no more than interlopers in somebody else's narrative. Neither the good nor the evil, the tragic nor the comic come from out of state. They all originate in Minnesota, they are all coated in the same peculiar accent, they all manifest themselves through the stereotype of Minnesota nice—courteousness and single-mindedness in equal measures. In a very real sense, the space *is* the story.

Out of this space emerge both tragedy and comedy: the film's two protagonists, Jerry and police chief Marge Gunderson (Frances McDormand), are personifications of larger forces, both equally dogged and determined, yet worlds apart morally. In Jerry's case, we learn to associate his Minnesotan intonations with his lack of a moral compass and his blindness to anything but his pitiful sense of self-importance. The film suggests that the greed and dishonesty of ordinary citizens leads directly to the horrid disregard for human life of the hired criminals. Jerry's terribly ill-advised decision to have his wife kidnapped by hardened criminals as a way to get the money from her father that he thinks he deserves is partly the result of his deep-seated feeling of inadequacy and humiliation at the hands of his father-in-law. Even without the economic means or the necessary modicum of intelligence, he is an example of the tragic arrogance created by capitalist greed and the proximity of money. The position of this ridiculous but horribly recognisable man at the centre of the events compounds the darkness that relentless drives the film to its tragic outcome. No tragic character himself, Jerry embodies the tragedy of a society that has gone blind.

And yet, in this desperate and despairing world, comedy ultimately prevails, mainly through the character of Marge. She represents *Fargo's* greatest triumph because through her the filmmakers, including decorated actor McDonald, attain the apparently impossible: to persuade the spectator of the ultimate predominance of the spirit of comedy in a critically flawed world, one that, were it not for her, would seem beyond hope. At the opposite end of the spectrum from Jerry, the equally obstinate police woman is deeply sympathetic towards others while, like classical comic heroes, finding in ordinary people's failings and misdemeanours the occasion for humour. McDormand's face often displays a kindly ironic expression that conveys both amused detachment and proximity, intelligence and humility. She is the character with the deepest awareness of the crumbling world around her. Yet for her, that same world remains endlessly fascinating. An accomplished police officer, she is a combination of an ordinary woman—loving wife, expectant mother—and a superhero, the result of ascribing the traditional Hollywood category of the clear-sighted male detective to a woman. In the Coens' approach to characterisation and narrative incident, neither Jerry nor Marge (nor the rest of the characters) are realistic constructions. Rather, they are embodied versions of masculinity and femininity percolated, recycled and recombined from classical Hollywood films. For the filmmakers, the cinematic tradition is as rich a source of inspiration as the real world. However, this tradition is not set in stone, but, rather, subject to constant transformation, recycling and recombination. The outcome of this process is a brutally believable and entertaining critique of patriarchal entitlement and a celebration of female power.

At the end, Jerry is summarily disposed of when the police catch up with him, literally with his pants down, while he is trying to escape. The brevity of this scene conveys the worthlessness of the character. The moment is sandwiched between two scenes with Marge at their centre. After managing to arrest the surviving gangster all on her own, in spite of her advanced gestation state, she drives him back to custody in her car. The blank expression on the criminal's face describes his ineffability and his incapability to engage with other human beings. He briefly gazes at the massive John Bunyan statue that welcomes visitors to Brainerd as they drive past. The legendary lumberjack, the folk hero of tall tales revolving around his extraordinary strength, has been turned into a threatening giant in the film, a repurposed symbol of the hidden violence lurking behind ordinary social relations. The imposing statue with the enormous axe on his shoulder seems the only thing that momentarily catches Gaear's attention while Marge's hopelessly struggles and repeatedly fails to engage him. She does not understand that people could kill in cold blood "all for a bit of money" but her despair is contained. The snow has now covered the roads and, through the windscreen of her car, we can only discern the electric posts against a uniformly greyish background, an eerie image of entrapment and darkness. But for Marge, it is a beautiful day. The serenely cheerful musical theme of the movie, inspired by a folk Norwegian song, underscores the protagonist's counterintuitive optimism. In the final scene we see her again getting into bed next to her husband Norm (John Carroll

Lynch), who announces that his painting of a duck has won a minor prize in a stamp competition. Marge is proud of Norm and thinks that, with his accolade, their baby coming, her job and their love for one another, they “are doing pretty good.”



*Figure 3: Marge and the spirit of comedy*

The line may seem charged with irony, like her opinion that it is a beautiful day, evidence perhaps of her foolishness and her apparent failure to grasp the darkness around her. Yet to leave it at that would be to fail to understand the meaning and the importance of comedy, a very regular shortcoming of film and cultural criticism, for which comedy is flimsy and superficial, not serious or complex, not worthy of serious attention. The extreme close-ups of Marge in the car tell a different story: against all odds, she has once again prevailed, her unrelenting good humour not erased by her sad acknowledgement of violence, greed and corruption in her world, in our world, her sorrow unable to erase the sparkle in her eyes, the sign of her dogged affirmation of life. The money of the ransom, stupidly hidden by Carl in the middle of the snowed landscape where he would never have been able to find it had he survived, will remain buried forever, its evil for once defeated; order has been precariously restored if only for the moment; and a baby is about to come and lighten their world, a sign of the regeneration of life. In the meantime, Norm's mallard will make the couple proud each time they use a 3-cent stamp. Small mercies, perhaps, but it all depends on the perspective. The senseless murders brought about by greed are there as a reminder of evil but they cannot erase the ultimate affirmation of life, our desire to survive, to thrive, to find joy in everyday existence. The triumph of *Fargo* and its impact on later cinema lies in its exploration of the unfathomable complexity of human behaviour through a postmodern idiom that, in an ever more sophisticated way, continues to refer to itself, quote itself and feed on itself, but demands that the games it plays be taken seriously.

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# ***Expanding Views: The Study of Englishes across the World***

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## 1. The Creation of the Research Project ViEW

In 2010, Cristina Suárez-Gómez (University of the Balearic Islands) and Elena Seoane (University of Vigo) decided to explore together the connection between variation and change in the history of English, which indeed has constituted the principal area of their respective research activities throughout their careers, and the more recent, rapidly growing field of World Englishes. As part of this joint work, we were able to identify some of the connections that Bernd Kortmann alluded to when he claimed that “non-standard varieties exhibit conservative features as found only in earlier periods of the English language” (2006, 615). With our initial corpus-based work on variation in the expression of perfect meaning in World Englishes, we applied to the Ministry of Science and Education for funding, and thus far we have been awarded funding for a total of four consecutive research projects (see section 4 on projects below).

From the outset, the project included Lucía Loureiro-Porto (University of the Balearic Islands); a few years later Paula Rodríguez-Abrufneiras, from the University of Valencia (now at the University of Santiago de Compostela), joined the project. Also involved in the project are several international affiliate members, who have contributed joint papers, co-edited volumes and special issues, and in addition we have been co-organizers of several workshops at international conferences. Notable scholars who have contributed to the project include Douglas Biber (University of Arizona), Sarah Buschfeld (University of Dortmund), Turo Hiltunen (University of Helsinki), Mariane Hundt and Gerold Schneider (University of Zurich), Valentin Werner (University of Bamberg), and Jennifer Ballantine and Mark G. Sanchez (University of Gibraltar). Most importantly, the project has grown exponentially with the incorporation of brilliant PhD candidates and postdoctoral fellows (see section 5 below).

The project IPs have changed over the years under the auspices of the general coordinator, Elena Seoane, who maintains the project’s website ([view0.webs.uvigo.es](http://view0.webs.uvigo.es)), containing information about all our research activities, and also coordinates our presence on social media, Facebook ([icegbr.gibraltarcampus.3](https://www.facebook.com/icegbr.gibraltarcampus.3)), Instagram ([gib\\_english](https://www.instagram.com/gib_english)) and Twitter ([ViEW\\_Gibraltar](https://twitter.com/ViEW_Gibraltar)).

The acronym of the project is ViEW (*Variation in English Worldwide*) and, as mentioned, our work has received continuous funding from the Ministry of Science and Education since 2011. Throughout the grant applications, changes to this acronym have reflected shifts in our focus, in parallel with the broadening of international research in the field. Thus, it became Re-ViEW when our data was seen to reflect the fact that variation and change in World Englishes is mediated by register, at which point it was decided that the project would incorporate a register perspective; this was also when our collaboration with Douglas Biber began. Later it became ViEW+, in that we added English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) to the varieties under examination. This decision was informed by the findings of our corpus work, which showed that variation in World Englishes is driven as much by globalization as it is by any other predictors of change typical of postcolonial varieties. The ground-breaking *Dynamic Model* (Schneider 2003, 2007) for the analysis of the evolution of World Englishes, which thus far we had used, could not account for recent developments clearly derived from globalization, which shapes not only World Englishes with and without a colonial origin but also English as a Lingua Franca. In light of this, we changed our analytical focus towards the more recent model EIF, *Extra- and Intra-territorial Forces*, created by the late Alexander Kautzsch and Sarah Buschfeld in 2017; indeed, we now collaborate with Prof. Buschfeld, who is an affiliate member of the project.

## 2. The Compilation of the Gibraltar Component of the International Corpus of English

In 2014, Gerald Nelson (Chinese University of Hong Kong), at that time coordinator of the *International Corpus of English* consortium (ICE), invited us to join the consortium and compile the Gibraltar component of the corpus, ICE-GBR. The ICE project was founded by the late Sydney Greenbaum in 1988, then Director of the Survey of English Usage in London. The ICE project is now coordinated at the University of Zurich by Marianne Hundt, and includes 27 international research groups in charge of different varieties, such as Canadian, Indian, Scottish and Nigerian English. Elena Seoane, Cristina Suárez-Gómez and Lucía Loureiro-Porto have so far compiled the written part of ICE-GBR, which will be available to the international scholarly community in 2022. Several affiliate members of the project have been crucial in achieving our goals: Jennifer Ballantine, the Director of the Garrison Library and a member of faculty at the University of Gibraltar, and M.G. Sanchez, an internationally acclaimed Gibraltar writer and a member of faculty at the same institution.

The compilation of the corpus entails acquiring a solid working knowledge of the idiosyncratic sociolinguistic characteristics of this small overseas British territory. As shown in 3 below, together with the compilation of relevant data, we have also published research on (i) morphosyntactic variation in Gibraltar English, and (ii) reasons for the current rapid transformation of Gibraltar's linguistic landscape from a rich multilingual setting to a monolingual English-speaking one, a fascinating topic for all of us interested in sociolinguistics, identity, attitudes towards language change, international politics, globalization, Americanization, language policy and many other issues at stake in this process.

### 3. Research Topics

The initial focus of our work was on morphosyntactic variation, which still constitutes the bulk of our research (3.1). This was later complemented by studies on pragmatic markers (3.2) as well as studies on Gibraltar English (3.3) and ELF (3.4). Most studies are corpus based, with the *International Corpus of English* (ICE), the *Corpus of Global Web-Based English* (GloWbE) and the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA) as the main electronic corpora used.

#### 3.1. Morphosyntactic Variation in World Englishes

All the topics listed below are explored in inner and outer circle varieties, including Gibraltar English, and take register variation into consideration. Our work includes a description of the data found and an exhaustive analysis of the intra- and extra-linguistic predictors of variation in each case. Some predictors are structural, like the length of constituents, priming factors, the organization of information, the *horror aequi* and the choice principles. Other predictors are cognitive, derived from the situations of language-contact and processes of second-language acquisition that characterize World Englishes, such as increased isomorphism, transparency, morphological simplification and the Cognitive Complexity Principle, to name just a few. Other language-external factors have to do with (i) geographical location and the emergence of new linguistic epicenters, (ii) evolutionary factors, which depend on the kind of contact between superstrate and substrate languages, and (iii) direct or indirect influence of substrate languages. These predictors are tested and subjected to various statistical analyses that gauge their role in the variation attested. The analyses are complemented by qualitative studies of the innovations and the contact-induced phenomena found. The general topics are:

- The expression of perfect meaning from an onomasiological perspective
- Relative constructions and variation in relativizer choice
- The expression of modality, including a diachronic perspective
- Processes of democratization, colloquialization, informalization as reflected in the use of epicene pronouns, passive voice and modal verbs
- The system of voice in scientific World Englishes
- Non-categorical variability in the sentential complementation of verbs

#### 3.2. Pragmatic Markers in World Englishes

- Markers of exemplification, also from a diachronic perspective
- The multifunctional pragmatic markers *kind of* and *sort of*

#### 3.3. Gibraltar English

- Attitudinal studies on the current situation of English in Gibraltar, via questionnaires and interviews
- The theoretical modelling of Gibraltar following the Dynamic Model and the innovative *Extra- and Intra-territorial Forces* (EIF) model



### 3.2. English as a Lingua Franca

- Analysis of the knowledge and attitude of native and non-native English teaching professionals in Spain towards ELF, as used in academic and non-academic environments
- Repercussions of the awareness of ELF on the teaching of English in Spain

## 2. Research Projects

Here we list the main project funding awarded to ViEW in national and European competitive calls (4.1), as well as the projects in which ViEW participates by virtue of it belonging to the research group LVTC, *Language Change and Textual Categorization*, coordinated by Javier Pérez-Guerra at the University of Vigo (see *Nexus* 2019.1, pp. 50-54 and 4.2 below).

### 2.1. European and National ViEW Projects

- 01/08/2011 - 31/07/2014: Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, grant FFI2011-26693-C02-02. €27,830. Title: “Morphosyntactic variation in New Englishes.” PI: Cristina Suárez-Gómez.
- 01/01/2015 - 31/12/2017: Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, grant FFI2014-53930-P. €54,450, plus one four-year PhD research position (FPI). Title: “Morphosyntactic variation in World Englishes and compilation of resources for its study (the Gibraltar component of the International Corpus of English, ICE-GBR.” PI: Elena Seoane.
- 01/01/2018 - 31/12/2020: Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, grant FFI2017-82162-P. €60,500, plus one four-year PhD research position (FPI). Title: “Re-ViEW: A register approach to morphosyntactic variation in World Englishes and compilation of resources for its study (The International Corpus of English - Gibraltar).” PI: Elena Seoane.
- 01/09/2016 - 31/08/2020: European project funded by the Academy of Finland. Research grant 285381. €280,000. Title: “Democratization, Mediatization and Language Practices in Britain, 1700–1950” (DEMLANG). International Partnership with the Tampere-Helsinki consortium. PI: Paivi Pääta (University of Tampere, Finland).
- 01/09/2021 - 31/08/2024: Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, grant PID2020-117030GB-I00. €30,250. Title: “ViEW+: Morphosyntactic variation in International Englishes and elaboration of resources for its study (International Corpus of English – Gibraltar).” PIs: Cristina Suárez-Gómez & Lucía Loureiro-Porto.

### 2.2. LVTC-Group Projects

As mentioned above, the ViEW project belongs to the research group LVTC, coordinated by Javier Pérez-Guerra at the University of Vigo. As detailed in *Nexus* 2019.1 (pp. 50-54), LVTC has obtained funding from the Galician regional government, and we have benefited from this financing. The main projects awarded to LVTC since 2012 are as follows:

- Project (Call for the consolidation and structuring of competitive research units in the Galician University System) CN2012/294. Period: 01/12/2012– 31/12/2014. Funding: €70,000. PI: Javier Pérez Guerra.
- Project (Call for the consolidation and structuring of competitive research units in the Galician University System) GPC2014/060. Period: 01/01/2014– 31/12/2016. Funding: €70,000. PI: Javier Pérez Guerra.
- Project (Call for the consolidation and structuring of competitive research units in the Galician University System) ED431C 2017/50. Period: 2017–2020. Funding: €120,000. PI: Javier Pérez Guerra.
- Project (Call for the consolidation and structuring of competitive research units in the Galician University System) ED431C2021/52. Period: 2021-2024. Funding: €120,000. PI: Javier Pérez Guerra.

LVTC forms part of the “English Linguistics Circle” research network, jointly with four other research groups from the Universities of Vigo and Santiago de Compostela. The network is coordinated by Teresa Fanego (University of Santiago de Compostela) and has won highly competitive funding from the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness and from the regional government, the Xunta de Galicia:

- FFI2014-51873-REDT “Excellence research network: English Linguistics Circle,” funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. Period: 01/12/2014–30/11/2016. Funding: €15,000. PI: Ignacio Palacios Martínez (University of Santiago de Compostela).
- R2014/016 “Research network English Linguistics Circle,” funded by Xunta de Galicia. Period: 01/01/2014–31/12/2015. Funding: €120,000. PI: Teresa Fanego (University of Santiago de Compostela).
- ED431D 2017/19 “Research network English Linguistics Circle,” funded by Xunta de Galicia. Period: 01/01/2017–31/12/2019. Funding: €150,000. PI: Teresa Fanego (University of Santiago de Compostela).

## 5. Transfers and International Projection

Together with the compilation of the Gibraltar component of the renowned *International Corpus of English*, the members of the ViEW project have been active in the organization of international conferences, workshops and seminars. The most notable conferences have been *Englishes Today* (2013, UVigo), the 7<sup>th</sup> *Biennial International Conference on the Linguistics of Contemporary English* (7BICLCE, 2017, UVigo) and *Modelling the Architecture of English: Theories and Methods* (2018, UVigo). The main workshops organized on World Englishes thus far have been held at the conferences ICAME 35 (Nottingham, 2014), 7BICLCE (Vigo, 2017), ICAME 39 (Helsinki, 2018), ICAME 40 (Neuchâtel, 2019), these always in collaboration with international co-organizers, namely Valentin Werner (Bamberg), Robert Fuchs (Hamburg), Turo Hiltunen (Helsinki) and Douglas Biber (Northern Arizona), respectively. We have also organized workshops on Gibraltar English, including *The Sociolinguistics of Gibraltar English in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (UVigo, 2016), and *Language and Identity in Gibraltar* (University of the Balearic Islands, 2017), with Jennifer Ballantine and M.G. Sanchez as guest speakers, respectively. ViEW also invites specialist scholars from international centers of prestige to conduct seminars on World Englishes, as has been the case with Thomas Hoffmann (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt), Alexander Bergs (Osnabrück), Michael Westphal, Ulrike Gut, and Dagmar Deuber (Münster).

Since the inception of ViEW in 2010, members have published more than 40 articles in international journals (e.g. *English Language and Linguistics*, *English World-Wide*, *World Englishes*, *International Journal of English*), more than 30 book chapters published in high-profile, peer-reviewed international volumes (e.g. Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Benjamins, De Gruyter, Routledge) and 12 reviews in international journals. We have co-edited five volumes on World Englishes from international publishing houses: Benjamins (two volumes in different series: *Varieties of English Worldwide* and *Studies in Corpus Linguistics*), De Gruyter (two volumes in *Topics in English Linguistics*) and Cambridge Scholars Publishing. We have also co-edited four Special Issues with colleagues from abroad in the specialized journals *World Englishes* (two issues), *Journal of English Linguistics* and *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. We have participated in more than a hundred international conferences that are central to our field, and have carried out research stays in the most prestigious universities and research centers working on World Englishes, including the Universities of Zurich, Leuven, Münster, Bamberg, Dortmund and the Research Center of World Englishes in Regensburg. The international impact of our work can be seen in the fact that members of ViEW have been invited to teach master classes and conduct seminars on World Englishes at various foreign Universities (Osnabrück, Bamberg, Dortmund, Helsinki), to be members of the *International Corpus of English* consortium, to serve as editors and members of the editorial boards of prestigious journals, such as *English Language and Linguistics* (Cambridge University Press) and *Register Studies* (Benjamins), to deliver plenary addresses at ICAME and ESSE, to act as members of the executive board of ICAME, and as panel members of the Research Foundation of Flanders (FWO).

## 6. Academic Training

Over the course of these years we have attracted the interest of very successful up-and-coming scholars, who started their postgraduate training with us and went on to defend their PhDs with flying colors. Thus, in 11 years five PhDs have been awarded to associated researchers, four of them on World Englishes, and all of them cum laude. Many of these young scholars have received international awards for their work, such as the Richard M. Hogg Prize Award, given by



the *International Society of the Linguistics of English* (IsLE) to the best research article by a young scholar, and awards for best presentations at international conferences, such as at 8BICLCE. A number of these doctoral students have benefited from research contracts that we have been able to offer them to work on their doctorates alongside the compilation of the ICE-GBR, and several of those gaining PhDs with us have obtained highly competitive postdoctoral grants, such as Margarita Salas.

Our work goes on, and three PhD candidates are currently working with us, together with various students who are working on their MAs. We welcome national and international researchers interested in various aspects of World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca, a field that is growing exponentially in the international sphere, and which has been successfully represented and developed at the national level by ViEW, as the preeminent center of research in this area in Spain.

BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***British English Phonetic Transcription***

**Paul Carley and Inger M. Mees**Abingdon (Oxon); New York: Routledge,  
2021. 159 pp.ISBN 9780367441364 (hbk),  
9780367441371 (pbk), 9781003007890  
(ebk)

**T**he book here reviewed is an up-to-date, step-by-step manual for teaching students to transcribe modern British English and thus acquire a precise knowledge of the pronunciation of the language. It contains twenty chapters, divided into three parts: PART A deals with transcribing individual words, PART B with transcribing connected speech, and PART C shows users how to analyse and mark up an utterance for intonation purposes. The volume is completed with two appendices, one explaining articulation, the other providing the symbols and diacritics necessary for transcribing the allophones or subvariants of phonemes.

The authors are well known to those interested in the intricacies of English pronunciation, having both taught on the famous *Summer School in English Phonetics (SCEP)*, run for many years in recent times by Professor John Wells, subsequently by Michael Ashby, and currently by Geoff Lindsey. The volume itself is dedicated to the late Jack Windsor-Lewis (1926-2021), also a regular contributor to SCEP and highly regarded for his work on British and American English, not least, the phonetics blog that he maintained for many years.

Recordings are provided to accompany PART A and PART C, but, surprisingly, not for PART B or Appendix B, the authors having decided that “in these cases, transcription is more about demonstrating understanding of connected speech processes and English allophones than recognising them when heard” (xxi). However, surely, it is useful to recognize glottalized /t/s, to take just one example, as opposed to, say, aspirated and/or affricated types?

The accent transcribed in the course is General British (GB), aka Standard Southern British English (SSBE) (xxi) and commendably takes into account modern pronunciation tendencies as outlined in Geoff Lindsey’s 2019 publication *English after RP*, and the pronunciation of the younger generations, for which Luke Nicholson is quoted as a valuable source (xvii).

The book is intended for both native and non-native speakers of English (xxii). Pages xxiii-xiv provide a useful comparison between British and American English pronunciation.

The most significant advantage of the presentation of the phonetic symbols is the fact that those consonant symbols that are letters of the English alphabet are introduced and practised first. Moreover, the relationship between sound and spelling is carefully explained, particularly the fact that letters of the traditional alphabet are often silent. This is especially important, as language learners often feel obliged to try to pronounce every single letter of a written word. From the start (3), it is emphasized that certain letters, namely <c>, <q> and <x>, are not used at all in English transcription. There is also much insistence on the shape of the symbols (e.g. /g/, not /g/ [4]), and a caveat recommending care with ascenders and descenders.

The vowels are covered thoroughly, including details of regional variation (e.g. northern English FOOT v. southern English STRUT). The transcription exercises are gradually built up from limited options to testing recognition and use of a wider range of symbols.

Chapter 2 deals with the complicated issue of highly recurrent schwa and KIT. Before the description of the deployment of these vowels, the concept of word stress is explained. Transcriptions of more technical words, like *polysyllabic* and *monosyllabic* (9), are given, both here and elsewhere, so theory and phonetic notation are fully integrated. However, *monosyllabic* is transcribed with schwa in the second syllable, where I would hazard a guess that, for many people, the diphthong /əʊ/ would be first choice in this specialized kind of word.

Chapter 3 presents the unfamiliar consonant symbols; then the remaining vowels and the diphthongs are covered in chapters 4 to 8, beginning with FLEECE and GOOSE in chapter 4.

In some phonetics books and dictionaries, unstressed word-final or morpheme-final FLEECE is written without the length mark and often referred to as the *happy* vowel, but the present publication avoids this practice, regarding it as a confusing complication (19), a wise decision in view of the increasing tendency among young speakers to pronounce the vowel long. However, it is stated that the only option to unstressed FLEECE followed by schwa (in fact, they could have said “followed by any other vowel”) is /j/. Here I think it would be more helpful to actually use /i/ (with or without an epenthetic yod), even though the authors prefer to avoid this symbol. Furthermore, I don’t believe that English uses a /j/ between the consonant and vowel in words like *idiot*, *brilliant*, *opinion* and *serious* any more than Spanish, for example, does, in a word like *pie* ‘foot,’ which can be accurately represented as [piɛ] rather than [pje] (Hualde 2005, 77).

Chapter 5 insists that postvocalic <r>, unless followed by a vowel, is mute, and provides commensurate practice in omitting it in transcription. The fact that /eə/ has monophthongized to /ɛ:/ is pointed out (a parallel development to /ɔə/ > /ɔ:/, it might have been mentioned), as is the use of reversed epsilon for NURSE [nɜːs].

In chapter 6, the FACE, PRICE and CHOICE vowels are given their traditional symbols ([eɪ] [aɪ], [ɔɪ]), as are the GOAT and MOUTH vowels ([əʊ] and [aʊ]) in chapter 7, even though there is a tendency in Modern English to end these diphthongs with a closer vowel quality (or sometimes a glide) when another vowel follows (Lindsey 2019, 25).

Chapter 8 covers the NEAR and CURE vowels ([ɪə] and [ʊə]) and makes it clear that the latter is obsolescent, and for some speakers probably obsolete. No mention is made of the fact that younger speakers increasingly use [ɪː] for [ɪə].

Chapter 9 provides precise information on syllabic consonants, but the authors could have dispensed with the syllabicity mark in broad transcription. For example, in *final* /faɪnəl/ (39), the /l/ is unmistakably syllabic and requires no subscript diacritic.

Chapter 10 handles the highly involved issue of secondary stress competently by beginning with words of three syllables with secondary stress on the first and building up from there to five-syllable words, and finally adjacent secondary and primary stress. The authors rightly point out that secondary stresses after the primary stress are “less noticeable than pre-primary secondary stresses” (47), but nevertheless mark them. Actually, the assumption of an inverse relationship between full-vowelled syllables and stress is debatable: is there really a difference in stress pattern between *estimate* (verb) and *estimate* (noun)? Gimson seems to have been hinting at this when he said, “Alternatively, it may be said that our feeling for such secondary accents derives largely from the quality of the vowels contained in the syllables” (1970, 147).

The transcription offered shows a preference for schwa over the KIT vowel in the second syllable of words like *estimate* (noun and verb), where Wells (2008, 283) puts the latter in first place. Under *10.5 Stressing of compounds* (51), it would have been useful to mention the difference in meaning incurred by changing the stress of a form like *pàper clip* (for fastening sheets of paper) to *pàper clip* (made of paper). An important exercise is the one that deals with the optional compression of schwa (50).

Chapter 11 provides the rules for the pronunciation of the regular past tense and past participle ending <-(e)d> and the present tense <-(e)s> verbal inflection, in addition to cases of plosive epenthesis (*sense* [sents], etc.).

In chapter 12, /r/-liaison is dealt with thoroughly, but there is potential confusion when it is stated that “There is no linking or liaison of /j/ or /w/” and that this “is merely a teaching device” (67). Some further explanation is required here, perhaps referring the reader to the information given on /j/ in chapter 4.

Chapter 13 gives full coverage of weak forms with copious practice material. A very welcome inclusion is section 13.13 (84-85), about the use of strong forms, which is generally disregarded or only dealt with sporadically in other courses. As in chapter 10 (see above), the authors assume that full-vowelled = stressed, but in an utterance like *Who are you looking for?* (84), I would prefer to say that /fɔ:/ is strong but not necessarily or noticeably stressed. Thus, if we make a distinction between strong v. weak and stressed v. unstressed, we avoid committing ourselves on the stress issue.

Like all the other topics in this book, elision (chapter 14) is dealt with systematically and exhaustively, and many pieces of useful information are included. For example, users are reminded that glottalling of /t/ does not mean that the sound is elided (87), and that elision depends on such factors as word or phrase frequency, context and individual habits (86-87).

Chapter 15 covers assimilation and deals largely with the contextual adjustments of alveolar segments. Assimilation is distinguished from elision and it is shown where either of these phenomena may be resorted to. However, asking students to transcribe phrases according to their own habits may prove to be challenging for foreign learners. It could have been pointed out that the pronunciation of the inflections <-(e)s> and <-(e)d>, dealt with in chapter 11, also involves (voicing) assimilation, and under 15.18 (*Irregular assimilations and elisions*), the transcription for *used* 'employed' and *supposed* 'believed,' with voiced consonant clusters, should have been given by way of contrast with *used* 'accustomed' and *supposed* 'expected' (obligation), which have unvoiced clusters.

Chapter 16, which provides one hundred humorous quotations and jokes as extended practice for connected speech, is a sheer delight: a chapter worth reading merely for its entertainment value.

Part C deals with the aspect of the phonology that is most difficult to cope with: intonation. In fact, some authors (García Lecumberri and Maidment 2000; Lillo 2009) do not attempt to handle it at all, or rather, limit their comments to stress. Tench (2011), as an intonation expert, makes a creditable effort in several detailed chapters, but the present work must receive full praise for the beauty of simplicity. Chapter 17 introduces the topic by actually marking up the introductory comments, which are written in alphabetic script, for intonational purposes, and makes the important observation that primary and secondary stress are not in fact different degrees of stress, but stresses combined with different types of intonation (116). The number of nuclear tones is kept to five (low/high fall/rise and fall-rise), thus dispensing with the less essential rise-fall and mid-level tunes of O'Connor and Arnold (1973). The well-established analysis into nucleus and optional head, pre-head and tail is adopted and many examples of the various possible combinations of these, performed with the different tunes, are given in chapters 18 and 19. Chapter 20 provides ten passages, each of some 10-12 lines in length, for intonational transcription.

The appendices are admirably succinct. Appendix A explains the criteria for the classification of consonants and vowels, and Appendix B gives an accurate survey of the phonetic (as opposed to phonemic) details of English with the allophonic symbols used for their transcription for more advanced students.

All in all, this is an excellent transcription course with abundant exemplification and practice material despite its occupying only 159 pages. It is a book that does not break with tradition in its use of symbols, while introducing justifiable innovations, and it is a worthy competitor, nay addition, to the courses mentioned elsewhere in this review.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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ISABEL ALONSO BRETO

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# ***Black November: Writings on the Sikh Massacres of 1984 and the Aftermath***

**Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhry (ed.)**

New Delhi: Speaking Tiger, 2019. 292 pp.

ISBN: 9389231477



As we read in this edited anthology of miscellaneous texts, 1984 is a fatidic number for the Sikh community in India. In June that year, Indira Gandhi, India's Prime Minister at the time, launched and conducted operation Blue Star, which raided the centre of Sikh spiritual life in the Subcontinent, the revered Sri Harmandar Sahib, aka Golden Temple. In those days the sacred shrine had also become a political site, thus, this operation also put an end—at least temporarily—to the aspirations to carve an independent Khalistan or Sikh state within Indian grounds entertained by some sectors of the community. This political dream, originated yet before Independence and Partition, had been energized with the emergence of the figure of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in the late seventies. The controversial leader would result dead in Operation Blue Star—annihilation of his influence being one of the main targets of the whole operation—yet he was only one of the many victims of the raid. The total number of casualties varies according to different sources, but it is remarkable even in the most lenient estimates.

This carnage was just the beginning of a tumultuous period. On October 31 of the same year, the Prime Minister was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards in retaliation. The event sparked a massive persecution of Sikhs across India, with thousands of men put to death through violent means (many of them set on fire after being collared with rubber tyres) by uncontrolled mobs, especially in the capital city, but also in other parts of the country. Women and children were often victimized as well. The massacre lasted three days, before authorities put an end to the bloodshed.

In 2014, Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhry visited the Tilak Vihara Widow's colony in Delhi, established in 1985 to home members of the victims' families, especially widowed women. Kaur Chaudhry found there thousands of photographs of the deceased, never forgotten by their loving relatives, and surviving victims who were eager to share their sad memories and present woes—among them, the regrettable fact that they never saw justice being served on their sudden losses. Those women's pain had never been soothed in the thirty-five years since the events took place. In that long span of

time, no less than fourteen commissions, committees and special investigation teams have been created to that effect—enacting justice—yet Kaur Chaudhry explains that the results of their investigations have been either insubstantial or, mostly, neglected by successive Indian governments. In her visit to the colony, Kaur Chaudhry was reassured that the attacks of Black November, as the period has come to be known, were not the result of mere frictions between Sikhs and Hindus or other communities, but pogroms purposefully orchestrated by members of the Government of the day with a clear political agenda. Sikh Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would publicly apologize in the name of the Congress Party in 2005, but this gesture was perceived as insufficient and ineffective by many Sikhs.

Kaur Chaudhry's visit to the widow colony, and the painful stories she heard there, prompted this scholar from the University of Gujarat to compile the collection *Black November: Writings on the Sikh Massacres of 1984 and the Aftermath*. Every piece in this collection throws new light on the experiences of the victims and of the survivors. As is the editor's intention, the volume manages to achieve several objectives: providing a space of testimony about Black November which does not exist—especially in English—in such consistent form; invoking a precarious and late sense of justice which has been inexistent so far; and carving a new space of resistance, since “literary spaces offer a form of activism and a space for representation [which] doesn't merely remain a space for nostalgia” (xxii).

The anthology opens with an informative essay which situates the reader, providing the necessary context: an account of the events of Black November, and the main points of its trailing aftermath; the goals and rationale of the anthology; and a revision of the main upshots of Black November in the area of historiography and literature in different languages. In recent years, Kaur Chaudhry counts up to five novels in English which are set in or around the time of the massacres, plus one collection, by Vikram Kapur, titled *In Memory and Imagination: Personal Essays and Short Fiction on 1984* (2016), which as seen in the title is close to the present collection in its mixed-genre approach.

The body of *Black November: Writings on the Sikh Massacres of 1984 and the Aftermath* is divided into four sections. The first one is entitled “The Survivors Speak,” and is in turn split in two parts. The first of these, “Interviews and personal narratives,” contains both interviews with first-hand witnesses and personal accounts of others who, if not direct victims, lived those episodes of violence close-by. Among the interviews, offered here in translation, some were published soon after the incidents, while others were conducted by the editor herself in the year of her first visit to the colony, 2014. The personal accounts are extracted from different publications, among them one by Daman Singh, daughter of Manmohan Singh, who interviewed her parents about the events and included their reflections in her memoir *Strictly Personal: Manmohan and Gursharan* (2014). In all, the texts in this part provide a panoramic account of experiences of Black November, incorporating views and political opinions on the matter of Khalistan, the government's reactions and, of course, the relations between different communities, which are signalled as convivial, with frequent inter-religion marriages and featuring all forms of productive social interaction. In some of these texts we also read of the many difficulties the families of the bereaved have endured over the decades since Black November. Still in Section I, these personal stories are complemented with the inclusion of affidavits filed to one of the transitory institutions charged with the responsibility of seeking accountability, this time the Nanavati Commission, created in 2000. The present subsection closes with the testimony of renowned Sikh writer Khushwant Singh, who also submitted an affidavit to this Commission, and then deposed as a witness before it. He recalls that during the attacks, which also targeted his home place and from which he had to hide, he could see the police stand inactive. He also states that “I had felt that the violence which had taken place during those two or three days was quite organized and probably the government of the day had a hand in it” (123).

Section II contains six short stories and a novel excerpt. Written by authors hailing from different cultural backgrounds—not only Sikh—they delve into the lives of a range of characters who, when caught in the maelstrom, are seen as entertaining convivial relationships among themselves and with others. The stories underscore interethnic friendships, generosity and courage. They also confirm the profound arbitrariness of violence. In order to eschew this violence, in the texts sometimes Sikh men are seen to cut their hair and beard, or to do so to their male children with the hope of saving them from being identified as Sikh and murdered. Frequently such sacrifice was made to no avail. For some time after the violent period, turbans and long beards were identified as dangerous by many Hindus, which made Sikh men especially vulnerable—even when the imminent threat posed by the maddened mobs was apparently over. The legacy of horror and discrimination would pass on to the next generation, and for years young Sikh men were sometimes forcibly disappeared. The special vulnerability of women in such situations, prone to rape and other forms of gender abuse, is also made manifest in some of the stories. The section closes with an excerpt from the novel *Chaurasi*, translated from Hindi by Kaur Chaudhry, which shows that violence occurred also beyond the confines of Delhi and extended to other Indian states, in this case Bihar.

Section III includes three plays, all of which provide relevant historical insight about the complexities and complicities of Black November and their aftermath, namely ineffective attempts at seeking accountability, while they also dig in the historical role of Sikhs in the nation. The first piece, *The Old Man Speaks*, charges the authorities with duplicitousness: in the open they appeared to be making an effort to restore peace and order, yet at the same time it was them who



covertly rallied the mobs against innocent men and women. Reaching beyond this particular historical moment, the play denounces the systematic manipulation of governments in the country, as they regularly set communities against each other in a game which only aims at maintaining the Status Quo. In this game, “the poor are used only as a tool” (209), be they Sikh, Muslim, Hindu or Dalit. The country, the old man of the title claims, “is ruled by plunderers who will never want the people united” (208), and the final call is for a new day in which “the hard-working people of this land will not be oppressed. Hindus will be there, Sikhs will be there, Muslims will be there and they will also be there who do not wish to side with any religion” (209).

The collection’s last section includes twenty-four poems by ten authors. Here, too, authors are both Sikh and non-Sikh. Sometimes these poetic voices remember the events, if not personally, through the intergenerational memory of bodies tainted by the inheritance of pain and, again, years of iniquity.

The section and the anthology close with two poems crafted by its committed editor, Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhury. The first one is titled “Rest in peace,” and it can serve as a corollary of the attempt meant by this meritorious book. Paradoxically, in spite of the title, there is a conspicuous absence of a sense of rest or closure: How can anyone rest in peace when killed “for the crime you haven’t committed / followed by decades / and decades / and decades / and more years of injustice” (279)?, as the poet bemoans. And the last text featured is “A Chapter of Indian History.” It briefly revises the service rendered to the nation by those whom a proud “We” represents in the poem and the whole collection: the Indian Sikh community, which as these forty-eight testimonial pieces evince is emphatically plural and secular. In conclusive manner, Kaur Chaudhry’s final poem reminds the reader yet again of the excruciating suffering the community underwent in Black November, in a sad betrayal where their own motherland othered them. As she claims: “they kill their own children” (280). But if the position and manner of the poem is conclusive, its tone and message are not: “The fatal history / is adding on to the dark chapters / and prolonged years of injustice / and indifference” (281).

*Black November: Writings on the Sikh Massacres of 1984 and the Aftermath* is an important scholarly contribution to the literary historiography of the Sikh community in India, and thus of the Indian nation, illustrating previous explorations of this poignant historical circumstance, such as Singh 2011, Singh 2017, Singh and Kaur 2016, Suri 2015 or Tully and Jacob 1986, or the more recent *The Khalistan Conspiracy: A Former R&AW Officer Unravels The Path To 1984* (Sidhu 2020).



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BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Otelo en España: la versión neoclásica y las obras relacionadas***

Ángel-Luis Pujante y Keith Gregor (eds.)

Murcia / Madrid: Ediciones de la  
Universidad de Murcia / Ediciones  
Complutense, 2020. 246 pp.

ISBN: 978-84-17865-71-9, 978-84-669-3720-7

**D**esde 2010, los proyectos de investigación dirigidos primero por Ángel-Luis Pujante y después por Keith Gregor en la Universidad de Murcia han venido dando a conocer las versiones y reescrituras neoclásicas de cuatro tragedias shakesperianas: *Hamlet* (2010), *Macbeth* (2011), *Romeo y Julieta* (2017) y finalmente el *Otelo* (2020), que se han ido publicando en diferentes volúmenes por parte de la Universidad de Murcia, en algunos casos en coedición con otras prensas universitarias españolas.

Estos cuatro volúmenes conforman una colección con idéntico equipo colaborador (Pujante/Gregor), idéntica metodología e idéntica estructura, presentando en ediciones críticas sólidas y accesibles los textos correspondientes a la época neoclásica estudiados en profundidad en la excelente monografía de Ángel-Luis Pujante *Shakespeare llega a España: Ilustración y Romanticismo* (2019).<sup>1</sup> El volumen dedicado a *Otelo*, al que está dedicada esta reseña, supone un brillante colofón a este ciclo. Su distinción con el galardón a la mejor traducción otorgado en los XXIV Premios Nacionales de Edición Universitaria (2021) es el merecido reconocimiento a una trayectoria investigadora que aúna las mejores tradiciones en los campos de los estudios shakesperianos, la edición crítica y la historia y traducción literarias.

Para quienes estén familiarizados con los trabajos anteriores de Pujante y Gregor, *Otelo en España* es un libro previsible en su estructura, pero tan necesario y ameno en su lectura como el resto de la serie. La principal novedad se debe al número de versiones neoclásicas españolas: a diferencia de *Hamlet* (cuatro), *Macbeth* (tres) y *Romeo y Julieta* (dos), solamente existe una en el caso de *Otelo*, la traducción realizada por Teodoro de la Calle a partir de la adaptación

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<sup>1</sup> Véase mi reseña a este libro en esta misma revista: Luis-Martínez 2019.

francesa de Jean-François Ducis, cuya primera edición es de 1802. Sin embargo—y ahí reside la baza de esta investigación—durante las primeras décadas del siglo XIX se compusieron en España una serie de textos dramáticos en torno al personaje trágico shakespeariano que se llevaron con éxito a la escena. Además de la traducción de La Calle, el presente volumen incluye impecables ediciones de la traducción española en prosa, del libreto operístico para *Otello*, de Gioachino Rossini (estrenada en España en 1821), del divertido sainete *Caliche, o el tuno de Macarena* (1823), parodia de la versión de La Calle de la tragedia shakespeariana realizada por José María de Carnerero, y del interludio cómico *Shakespeare enamorado* (1831), una obra original francesa de Alexandre Duval traducida y adaptada por Ventura de la Vega, en la que se nos muestra a un Shakespeare envuelto en una intriga amorosa y enzarzado en la escritura del cuarto acto de *Otelo*. Estas cuatro obras atestiguan la importante presencia de esta tragedia en el teatro español, que Pujante y Gregor describen, tomando prestado el término de Clara Calvo, como una auténtica “otelomanía” que contribuyó de forma clara a la difusión de la obra de Shakespeare en nuestro país, aunque fuese de manera indirecta en forma de traducciones de versiones.<sup>2</sup>

La introducción presenta por partes los cuatro textos que son objeto de edición, añadiendo un apartado final de conclusiones. Se da cuenta en la misma de la historia literaria de los textos, su estatus como traducciones o versiones de otras piezas, con especial atención a los textos franceses que sientan las bases de la difusión neoclásica de Shakespeare. También se resumen someramente los argumentos de cada obra y se ofrece una útil síntesis de su historia teatral, atendiendo a compañías, actores, éxito de público y recepción por parte de la crítica del momento. El amplio manejo de las fuentes y el conocimiento exhaustivo de la difusión de Shakespeare en Europa permiten a los editores armar una argumentación sólida y convincente: la adaptación neoclásica de Ducis, fruto del juicio de Voltaire sobre la barbarie literaria del genio de Startford, es la génesis de la difusión indirecta Shakespeare, que sin embargo contribuye a la fructificación del influjo de un autor que, como Pujante concluye en su monografía, “había llegado a España para quedarse” (Pujante 2019, 272). A pesar de esta huella indirecta, los detalles e hipótesis que Pujante y Gregor avanzan sobre el conocimiento de primera mano de la obra shakespeariana por parte de algunos de los agentes en este proceso constituyen uno de los principales atractivos de este estudio preliminar. Así, el monólogo de Pésaro (Yago) en la traducción de La Calle, desvelando sus verdaderas razones para tramar la destrucción de Otelo, no está en Ducis (p. 22, y Acto 2, Escena 6, p. 88). Las razones para este añadido, argumentan los editores, no se deben a una decisión directa del traductor español sino a la influencia que el actor cartagenero Isidoro Maiquez, formado a la estela de su colega francés François-Joseph Talma—quien sí conocía a Shakespeare en sus textos y lengua originales—pudo haber ejercido sobre La Calle a la hora de la representación (22–23). Otra cuestión que fortalece la introducción es el conocimiento que los editores demuestran del teatro español del momento, de sus géneros y formas. Esto les permite explicar la costumbre de adaptar los alejandrinos pareados franceses al más ligero romance heroico español en el caso de Ducis/La Calle (20), o la importancia del sainete como “vehículo cómico” a la hora de dar forma a la parodia en *Caliche* (37–39). Un tercer aspecto destacable en la introducción, y que ya está presente en la mencionada monografía de Pujante, es la dimensión cultural y política de estas piezas teatrales en los contextos europeo y español del momento—un elemento que nos recuerda de manera implícita la dimensión de Shakespeare como clásico de la literatura europea. Así, los cambios llevados a cabo por La Calle a la hora de traducir pasajes en los que Ducis rima *liberté* con *égalité* y que son muestra de las simpatías revolucionarias del dramaturgo francés se explican como un intento de eludir una censura en tiempos de Fernando VII por parte del liberal La Calle—una censura de la que no escapa en otros momentos de la obra y que el cuidado texto de Pujante y Gregor se encarga de marcar adecuadamente utilizando la cursiva (21, 87). De esta manera, la introducción hace hincapié en la dimensión mixta de unas obras en las que el entretenimiento teatral no está reñido con su importante calado ideológico e intelectual.<sup>3</sup>

Las notas complementarias a cada texto que se añaden a la introducción explican de forma somera pero clara el procedimiento utilizado para cada una de las ediciones, los testimonios que conforman la base de las mismas entre todos los existentes, así como las formas de consignar las variantes para hacerlas accesibles a los lectores. Cabe destacar, por ejemplo, el apéndice de variantes de la traducción del texto del libreto original de Berio di Salsa para la ópera de Rossini (170–174), que es muestra de la variedad de los testimonios, fruto de “la acusada presencia de esta ópera en los escenarios españoles” a lo largo de varias décadas (34).

Las cuatro obras editadas se presentan de forma diáfana, haciendo gala de oficio filológico, pero sin que las complejidades de los textos interfirieran en la continuidad de la lectura. Quien suscribe estas líneas solamente ha detectado dos leves erratas: “si he hallo” en vez de “si le hallo” (105); y “Qué tiemble” en vez de “Que tiemble” (219)—lo cual es muestra de lo cuidado de la edición. Se echa en falta, eso sí, la numeración de los versos de cara a facilitar el sistema habitual de citas de obras dramáticas. Las notas explicativas son exigüas. Los motivos por los que se decide en una edición crítica emplear una anotación más o menos extensa son siempre discutibles, y a veces los criterios van incluso más allá de las

<sup>2</sup> Para el uso de este término, véase Calvo 2008: 113–115.

<sup>3</sup> Véase también a este respecto el trabajo ya mencionado de Calvo 2008.

preferencias de los propios editores. A favor del procedimiento utilizado aquí puede aducirse que las obras son sencillas y comprensibles, y que en esos casos un texto sin interrupciones es siempre un favor a los lectores. Si se quieren buscar objeciones, podría decirse que, ya que en algunos casos los editores deciden enfatizar mediante notas a pie algunas cuestiones señaladas en la introducción como el ejemplo sobre censura comentado en el párrafo anterior, podría quizás utilizarse este mismo procedimiento para hacer más visibles otras cuestiones similares, como sería el caso de los débitos del *Caliche* de Carnerero con el *Otelo* de La Calle, que fortalecerían la atinada descripción que la introducción hace de la primera como “espejo burlesco” de la segunda (38). Así, el grotesco exabrupto de Caliche (*Otelo*) sobre un supuesto desliz de Garduña (*Desdémona*)—

**Si Garduña capaz hubiera sido  
de regalar el lazo a mi contrario  
almóndigas haría de su cuerpo,  
y luego daría a los gitanos,  
porque haciendo en las fraguas carbón de ellas,  
la moliesen a pueros martillazos (194)**

—podría quizás merecer una nota que colocase dicho espejo delante del melodrama de altos vuelos en el que incurre el *Otelo* de La Calle:

**Si Edelmira me hiciese el menosprecio  
de entregar la diadema a mi contrario,  
¡infeliz, infeliz!, más le valiera  
perecer en los climas africanos  
al furor de los tigres y leones  
y que su cuerpo vil, hecho pedazos  
y destrozados sus sangrientos miembros,  
de carnívoros monstruos fuese pasto  
que, si son verdaderas tus palabras,  
caer por su desgracia entre mis manos. (107)**

Con todo, la opción de dejar que los lectores reconstruyan estos vínculos a partir de lo argumentado en la introducción se antoja también, en este y en otros muchos momentos, totalmente legítima.

El volumen se completa con una exhaustiva bibliografía final y una útil tabla, realizada por Jennifer Ruiz Morgan, que cataloga las traducciones españolas de *Otelo* desde la versión de La Calle hasta nuestros días.

Hay muchos motivos para recomendar la lectura de *Otelo en España* a investigadores de la obra de Shakespeare y de su recepción, o a especialistas en el teatro neoclásico español y en la literatura comparada de la edad moderna, pero también a un público no académico aficionado al buen teatro. Estos motivos son la claridad y la erudición de la introducción o la alta calidad de las ediciones, pero también la importancia y el interés de las propias obras. Estamos ante cuatro piezas disfrutables en sí mismas y en el ejercicio comparativo con el original en el que cualquier lector curioso puede regocijarse. Las obras contienen momentos de voltaje dramático: el final abrupto de La Calle/Ducis, sin más concesión para asimilar la muerte del héroe que ese coral “Oh, desgracia” (132), es ejemplo de ello. Pero hay también escenas de comedia y parodia memorables, como la búsqueda apresurada por parte de Garduña de un “jergón” en el momento de su apuñalamiento (o “Garduñicidio”) “para que, cuando caiga, no me duela” (202). El acierto de Pujante y Gregor está en aunar solvencia crítica y rigor filológico en aras de la accesibilidad a la hora de presentar una investigación fundamental en el ámbito de los estudios de la recepción de Shakespeare en Europa, pero también para ofrecernos unos textos dramáticos que siguen siendo más que atractivos para la lectura y, por qué no, para la escena.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

RUBÉN VALDÉS MIYARES

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# ***Wilde between the Sheets: Oscar Wilde, Mail Bondage, and “The Profundis”***

David Walton

London: Lexington Books, 2020. 262 pp.

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**D**avid Walton writes this book, “out of [his] own calamity, recovery and pain” after a serious motorcycle accident (ix), counting on a well-proven critical baggage including outstandingly two volumes (Walton 2008 and 2012) which, while being approachable handbooks for critical practice in cultural studies, are also, like the present monograph, inspiring models of creative criticism. Whereas those two books are broad guides to various critical approaches, this one has a sharper focus applying Post-Structuralist thought to Oscar Wilde’s so-called “*De Profundis*.” Indeed, as the author claims, this Wildean text—which Walton prefers to call “the Original Manuscript” (OMS) since “*De Profundis*” was an editorial choice of Wilde’s literary executor Robert Ross (18)—had “never been the principal focus of a full-length book” before (1).

Moreover, Walton challenges most studies of Wilde’s work, which tend to see this long prison “letter” to his lover Alfred Douglas in terms of the decline and fall of Wilde’s “essential” wit (3); Walton does so intersecting three modes of criticism: detailed textual analysis, exploration of cultural contexts, and “playful forms of exegesis” (13), such as writing two short plays: one in Chapter 2 using some of Wilde’s characters discussing ideas from the OMS to prove the continuity of Wilde’s subjects and genius in that text (33), and a longer one in the final Chapter 11, “showing how Wilde has, to some extent, fashioned his fashioner” (the “AUTHOR”). The latter also serves as “an open-ended rounding off of this book” (195), since what Walton resists is, above all, textual closure and over-simplified readings. Nor does Walton give in tamely to any particular school of criticism, though he uses Greenblatt’s “New Historicist” notion of self-fashioning strategically, but actually creates his own “architectonic rhapsody,” “a method based on self-doubt which, through pun and play (and some dialogue), puts itself into question” (9). Thus, he draws on a remarkably exhaustive consideration of the vast Wilde criticism to question simplistic assumptions, positioning himself against Kantian “pure” knowledge (7), by constantly calling on the productivity of language which Wilde’s wit exploited so remarkably. It is Walton’s way to do justice to the “*polylocutionary*” (24) nature of Wilde’s OMS, as well as “thinking about how language could do justice to primary suffering” (198) implicitly linking the recovery from his painful accident to Wilde’s sorrowful time in prison.

While constantly referring to relevant scholarship, Walton prefers to create his own critical language, often inspired by Wilde’s own zest for ambivalence and the ironic shades of meaning. The book’s title, *Wilde between the Sheets*, is both an allusion to the sexual scandal in which Wilde found himself involved, and to the self-fashioned figure which

emerges from within the sheets of his prison manuscript. The *Male Bondage* in the subtitle is, in addition to the issue of gender identity and “homosubtextuality” (46), also “mail bondage,” a reference to the material conditions which forced the manuscript to be formally written as a letter in order to be sent out of the prison for publication (though Walton opens to question its generic status as an epistle), as well as an aspect of Wilde’s fashioning of himself as an anguished Promethean hero bound to his chains (20-21). The recurrence to polyphonies of (slippery) meaning enables Walton to avoid pigeonholing Wilde’s signifieds in any final way, yet enriching his writing with dialogic readings. Emblematic of Walton’s fashioning of the OMS is his quote from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, whose hero considers humanity as “a being with myriad lives [...], a complex multiform creature” (36, citing Wilde 1976: 12). In order to preserve this respect for shifting meanings, one of the conceptual neologisms most often used in the book is *semes* for “seems,” for example in arguing that “‘Homosexuality’ only *semes* to ‘exist’ in the OMS as a gap that needs to be filled by readers” (49). As the author explains, *semes* as “seems” replacing “is” indicates a sensible hesitancy, while the homonym “seam” as a cleft or crack alludes to the gap there is always (since Post-Structuralism at least) between signified and signified, and the “cyme” as a cluster of flowers on a common axis is suggestive of multiple readings grounded in context to stabilize signified, as well as Barthes’s *semic* code is related to the accumulation of connotations and traits of character in narrative (8). This linguistic self-consciousness, however, seldom obscures Walton’s points, only poses his “subject” (both as topic and as fashioned individual) in a more “iridescent” (196) light, in my opinion the only coherent way to do literary criticism from a Post-Structuralist viewpoint.

A brief revision of the book’s structure should offer some glimpse into its scope. After a personal preface on how “The Accidental Book” came about, Chapter 1 presents “The Wilde-Angle Lens” by justifying its wide/ Wilde perspective as expounded above. Chapter 2, “The Exposure of Private Parts,” deals with the production and transmission of the OMS as a material, cultural artifact, defying any categorical definition of its genre. Chapter 3, “Sentencing Wilde; Wilde on Trial,” with its Nietzschean subtitle “The Gay Science,” is the most Foucaultian of all chapters, as it surveys the legal, medical, moral, social and other discourses which subjected Wilde to “technologies of power.” The following Chapter, “Man of Letters” expands on the trials with a combined materialist and political reading related to Edward Said’s concept of *worldliness*. Chapter 5, “Fashioning Wilde in the Space of the Other,” explains how Wilde’s narrative persona in the OMS “*semes* to construct himself *against* Douglas” (the author’s emphases) as his Other, drawing centrally on the Derridean notion of “pharmakon” (87). Then in Chapter 6, “An Author Authored,” the book goes into what I am tempted to call a deep sem(e)iotic analysis, adapting “Derrida’s concept of ‘trace’ (where the trace of selfhood is also its erasure)” (95) to explain how Wilde uses his construction of Douglas’s character to fashion himself. Chapter 7, “Doing Time,” draws upon Bakhtin’s notion of the “chronotope” along with Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space* (1969) to explore the dimensions of Wilde’s narrative imprisonment in spatio-temporal terms, followed by a special focus on the chronotope of future time in the next Chapter, “Sentencing a Self in the Future,” which, “defining the indefinable” (135), looks into Wilde’s representation of his post-prison time. Chapter 9, “Fashioning Wilde as Intertextual Man,” is a rhapsody of brilliant subsections, each dealing with Wilde’s use of quotations from different authors (Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Swinburne, Dante, Goethe, etc), including himself on his own Baudelairean “I-dandy-ty” (155). Finally, Chapter 10, “From the Multiplication of Social Voices to Christ on the Wilde Side,” discusses the OMS’s major intertext, that of Christ, challenging, among others, Dollimore’s claim that Wilde’s “deviant desire” and “transgressive aesthetic” was finally replaced by “a tame accommodation of self to Christian humility” (Dollimore 1991, 14, 72, 97; Walton 2020, 185, 186). Releasing the OMS from the reductive readings of even recent critics, such as Gillespie (2017), Walton argues compellingly that Wilde was actually “reaffirming and strengthening his transgressive aesthetic and desire” (189). Reacting against such common wisdom is what makes *Wilde between the Sheets* must-reading for those interested in “*The Profundis*.” Moreover, I believe the book also has a broad appeal for Wilde specialists and readers of Post-Structuralist literary criticism in general.

The cumulative, binary 10-chapter structure outlined above (in which two chapters are chiefly methodological, two about the trials, two about fashioning, two about chronotopes, and two intertextual), is completed by the (in)conclusive Chapter 11, “Playtex(i)t: A Dialogue.” Here Walton means “to sum up the general approach of the architectonics of rhapsody while showing how Wilde has, to some extent, fashioned the fashioner” (195), that is, Walton himself. He then appears as the character AUTHOR in his play, in dialogue with the ghost of Oscar Wilde, who appears as WILDE praising him for his “crwitticism” and for “fashioning mirrors mirrored in a self-aware looking glass” in what, to Wilde’s ghost, “is your best work” (196). A third important character then materializes in the ghost of Crites, an allegorical speaker from Dryden’s “Essay of Dramatick Poesie” (1668) who stood for classical criticism, and here acts as a sort of prosecutor in the name of the humanist tradition, since Walton maintains an anti-humanist position throughout the book. WILDE himself justifies the author arguing that he (anachronistically, of course, but WILDE is a ghost) is influenced by Foucault’s theory of “the end of man,” that is, of “man, as a fixed category” which was “an invention of ‘modern’ thought” (200), and supporting this on his own statement that the “only real people are the people who never existed” in an essay which is key to Walton’s understanding of Wilde’s ideas as a whole, “The Decay of Lying” (Wilde 2007, 79). In addition to these central characters a host of other ghosts are summoned, mostly critics acting as defence witnesses for the author, who appear only briefly, such as Greenblatt, Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams or Barthes, and also ENDNOTE, explaining the tradition of “putting words into Oscar’s mouth” (214), and BOOK speaking for itself.



The play gives the author an opportunity to add many such “endnotes” in a more attractive way for readers, for instance a reference to the useful concept of “shifter” in interpretations of the self (217), or the fact that the OMS is, after all, a performative text, as proved by Frank McGuinness’ recent adaptation of “*De Profundis*” to theatre.

As BOOK argues, “like the Wilde presented in these pages, the so-called ‘book’ [by Walton] cannot be considered as some unproblematical coherent whole [...]. It is already divided within (dramatized by its style and form) and fashioned by ‘outside’ forces—the readers whose intellect and imagination enact meaning” (226). It is here I felt most interpellated as a reader, and wished to fashion myself as another potential character in Walton’s critical play, one called REVIEWER, who would apologize for trying to revise, in under two thousand words, a very heteroglossic, witty, sophisticated volume which truly deserves a proper reading.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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SHEILA HERNÁNDEZ GONZÁLEZ

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# ***Inspired: How to Put your Thoughts about Literature into a Term Paper***

María Jesús Hernández Lerena

Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja, Servicio de Publicaciones, 2021. 85 pp.

ISBN: 978-84-09-28282-1

**I**n the first volume of *Moralia*, Plutarch states: “For the mind does not require filling like a bottle, but rather, like wood, it only requires kindling to create in it an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for the truth” (1927, 259). This inspiring idea comes to mind when approaching María Jesús Hernández Lerena’s new open access book *Inspired: How to Put your Thoughts about Literature into a Term Paper* (2021). A literature professor at the University of La Rioja, Hernández Lerena writes this manual as a reaction to Spanish students’ insecurities and difficulties when it comes to writing critical essays in literary English studies. It also becomes a response to the fact that no other similar guide had been published in Spain until now and that up to this point professors could only redirect students looking for guidance to personal blogs run by other educators, as is the case of Sara Martín Alegre’s “The Joys of Teaching Literature: A Blog for Ranting and Raving about (Teaching) English Literature and Cultural Studies.”

Hernández Lerena’s book presents several questions students will come across during the process of writing an essay and the author tries to help them to overcome an existing problem in the classroom: a sense of insecurity when it comes to trusting our own experience of the text. Her aim is, in her own words, “to encourage students to engage in a satisfying and fruitful exploration of the wonders of literature” (9). In order to do so, Hernández Lerena includes real essays written by eleven of her students. She comments on said essays, makes suggestions and encourages students to explore their own ideas. This down-to-earth approach focused on the reality of the Spanish classroom from Hernández Lerena’s experience is what differentiates her book from the more academic and theory-focused research on the field, traditionally written exclusively from the professor’s perspective and including mostly fabricated examples. Moreover, the book is concise and easy to follow. All in all, it is significantly useful for both students and educators.

Hernández Lerena opens her book, which is divided into nine short sections, with an introduction where she discusses its “potential usefulness” (7). She uses this section to expose the problems she has observed in essays written by students

during her years of teaching and presents the book as an element of assistance. The problems at hand seem very real and her observations are acute and perceptive. The introduction, moreover, presents an overview of the aspects the book will discuss and specifies the author's purpose and goals. Regarding the inclusion of real essays in the book, for instance, she states: "I wanted to include some of their submitted work in an open access book that would analyze the processes of writing term papers and thus serve as motivation, inspiration and reference to future students that may feel uncertain as to what to expect in the literature courses on their last year of their degree. Looking at the work of others, as in the quote by Wole Soyinka, is the best way to learn a craft" (9).

The second section of the book serves as a space to debunk some misconceptions students tend to have when it comes to writing essays. She discusses common mistakes when structuring and titling papers as well as the danger of unknowingly falling into plagiarism when students solely rely on other academics' explanations. Here, as in other sections of the book, Hernández Lerena thoughtfully takes a moment to offer pieces of advice on how students might approach the analysis of a text as she insists on students' ability to produce worthy insights and the importance of learning how to transport them onto paper.

Perhaps a bit repetitive, the third section is an introduction to the three difficulties that the book intends to address in the following sections and to provide transparency regarding the materials used in the manual. We are informed that the students' essays she incorporates into the book were written specifically for this publication and that they are organized following an increasing order of complexity. More importantly, their purpose is to "create a site for observation and learning and allow some space for improvement" (13). She states that she wants to explore the potential that resides in essays as not just gradable homework, but also as a means to observe how students "connect their knowledge of the world they live in to that of the stories and poems they discuss" (13).

Section number four focuses on the search for a topic and presents different approaches a student can take as inspiration. She mentions, for instance, the option of comparing a novel to its filmic adaptation and the potential of such comparison. Here, each subsection presents varied possibilities and different sample essays (or extracts) to illustrate said possibilities. Hernández Lerena comments on the students' choices, processes and goals and includes students' interesting answers to some questions. We can also perceive how she tries to subtly encourage students by painting these possible topics in a positive light or mentioning their potential. Not only that, but she even encourages readers to think about how they would approach each sample essay and its possibilities. In addition, she provides links to useful websites and blogs and lists authors that could propel students' research in certain fields of study.

The fifth section briefly deals with the structure and writing of the essay, initially paying special attention to introductions and conclusions and then relying on sample essays to show the organization of ideas in the body of the text. Hernández Lerena makes sure to clearly define what each section consists of and provides general tips to improve our writing. Once again, the chapter includes comments on sample essays, pieces of advice, considerations by students, words of encouragement and external links with further instructions on these matters. Remarkably, a student reminds us that "when someone has to re-read an academic text more than twice to understand the message, then your writing is not as good as you think it is" (48).

Section number six provides useful tips for students to contemplate before even researching the topic. These are aspects of the process of writing that need to be remembered every step of the way. Moreover, the section emphasizes the issue of plagiarism and offers explanations on what counts as plagiarism and how it can be avoided. It also includes external links to further dive into these matters and, once again, topic ideas. Coherently, section number seven offers a brief and to-the-point guide on how to cite sources both in the text and in the "works cited" page using the MLA format. It includes explanations that are complemented with visual charts, examples, and a multitude of quality websites and resources that students can consult when in doubt.

The eighth section focuses on self-assessment and provides some general guidelines for students to get an estimate of how their paper might be graded. It mentions some aspects that students should pay attention to while proofreading their essays and includes suggestions on how to approach said aspects as well as a tentative grading guide based on areas of excellence. Finally, the last section includes some illuminating testimonials "where students pay homage to the magic of literature" (13), as they freely talk about their experiences and perspectives. Some of these are even handwritten, which gives the reader a feeling of proximity and accentuates their veracity. Students talk about the power of literature, their sources of inspiration, their origins and connections and the effects of reading poetry. The book closes with Hernández Lerena's observations regarding one of these testimonials and some of her thoughts on literature.

*Inspired* is a multitude of things. Firstly, it is an accessible guide that gives students some basis as well as additional resources to explore their abilities as readers, researchers and writers. This means that it is also a fantastic and realistic tool for educators to redirect their students to. It is, moreover, an encouraging space for young researchers to express themselves and provide useful pieces of advice based on their experience as students of literature in Spain. This realness is

probably one of the book's most valuable aspects as it is partially produced by students and aimed at students, respecting and validating the importance of experience. It also shows that the intended audience is constantly considered: Hernández Lerena focuses on issues she has noticed students struggle with and she does so while using real examples, simple language, clear explanations and a sense of proximity that ensures the reader's understanding and attention. While the book is considerably modest and one might miss information on certain matters or perhaps more depth in the ideas it presents, the truth is that it proves to be respectably self-aware. It shows a constant recognition of its limitations and I believe this to be one of its most charming characteristics. This is a book that does not present itself as something it is not, which, in academia, sometimes feels like a breath of fresh air. Set as a general guide, the manual accomplishes its goals and happens to be quite inspiring as it radiates Hernández Lerena's passion for literature and education and her desire to help students express what she believes is already in them.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Of ye Olde Englisch Langage and Textes: New Perspectives on Old and Middle English Language and Literature***

**Rodrigo Pérez Lofido, Carlos Prado-Alonso and Paula Rodríguez-Puente (eds.)**

Berlin: Peter Lang (Studies in English Medieval Language and Literature 57), 2020, 340 pp.

ISBN: 978-3-631-81795-7

**T**his book follows the celebration of the 30th International Conference of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature (SELIM), which took place at the University of Oviedo in September 2018. It consists of thirteen essays by renowned national and international linguists and philologists, covering a wide spectrum of topics within Old and Middle English studies from lexical semantics, phonology or translation to palaeography and text transmission. This volume (number 57) forms part of the series “Studies in English Medieval Language and Literature”—published by Peter Lang—and is the first one solely edited by Professor Magdalena Bator. The collection has a long trajectory in the field of English philology and the history of the English language, as it was started by Professor Jacek Fisiak, to the memory of whom the present volume is dedicated, in 2003. The book reviewed here adds substantially to edited work on the history of English carried out by Spanish scholars in recent years (Díaz Vera and Caballero 2009; Martín-Arista et al. 2012; Conde-Silvestre and Calle-Martín 2015—published in the same series, vol. 47; Esteve Ramos and Prado-Pérez 2018; Esteban-Segura and Calle-Martín 2020), proving that the discipline is well and thriving in our country. The volume is organised in two distinct parts, plus a preceding “Introduction” from the editors (13-20).

## Part I: Language Analysis and Variation

This is divided, in turn, into three subparts or sections, each gathering three essays. Oxana Kharlamenko's contribution opens the volume and the first section, entitled "Lexis and semantics" (23-106). This author studies the link between the shift to the neuter in some Old English nouns and non-individuation. For the purpose, she undertakes a corpus-based analysis of several noun categories displaying gender variation, which can be ascribed to the semantic feature of collectiveness in nouns carrying the collective prefix *ge-*, in measure nouns and in aggregates or plural collectives. The data suggest that nouns referring to measures and aggregates, which are usually marked by the genitive plural or the neuter plural forms, erase the referent's identity, "thus creating a separate semantic category with the negative value of the feature [individuated]" (44). As far as the prefix *ge-* is concerned, those nouns containing it were assigned to the neuter case, perhaps due to analogy with collectives. It seems that the prefix lost productivity as a collective marker at the end of the period. Therefore, the neuter plural forms were used to express non-individual features in nouns.

Olga Timofeevas' paper traces the origin and diffusion of the Middle English binomial construction *nith and onde* ('spite and hate') by resorting to *A Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (LAEME, Laing 2013) as the main source of data. In this well-informed piece of research, the author thoroughly investigates the construction from both quantitative and qualitative parameters. The latter include the semantic field to which the nouns in the binomial belong (ENVY), their ordering and reversibility, the influence of metre and rhyme on its fixation and the idiomaticity of the phrase. Attention is also paid to the dialect in which the construction occurs, which is almost exclusively that of the Midlands. The author concludes that the origin of the binomial may have been in the East Midlands and then its use was fostered in the legislation and doctrinal literature from the West Midlands. The order of the construction became fixed during the first half of the thirteenth century; the fact that it is attested in verse could have favoured its diffusion. The author also contends that the construction acquired the idiomatic meaning 'the deadly sin of envy' in some social and/or geographical contexts.

In the last essay of this section, Zeltia Blanco-Suárez sheds light on the early history and development of the forms *deadly* and *mortal(ly)*, from their earliest records up to the first decade of the sixteenth century. She adopts for the purpose a corpus-based approach, which allows for quantitative and collocational analyses. The latter considers two semantic variables: (i) the type of meaning of the forms, which can be descriptive, affective or intensifying; and (ii) their semantic prosody, i.e., whether the collocates are inherently positive, negative or neutral. In the light of the corpora data, *deadly* and *mortal(ly)* have similar semantic profiles in early English and tend to occur with negative collocates. Neither of the forms show intensifying uses during the periods analysed.

The second section, "Spelling and phonology" (107-84), also comprises three essays, as mentioned above. The first one, by Gjertrud F. Stenbrenden, explores the historical development of English approximants from Old English to Present-Day English, reviews phonetic findings from modern processes affecting coda approximants and appraises how these processes can help to explain historical changes. The author argues that the best model to elucidate the behaviour of British English approximants is one that combines both articulatory-gestural and acoustic features, in addition to accommodating syllable structure and re-analysis.

In the next essay, Nelson Goering looks at Eduard Sievers's *Altgermanische Metrik* (1893), which remains a seminal work for research in Germanic languages. The author contextualises the work and discusses its impact on the field from a threefold perspective, considering its typological, theoretical and prosodic legacy. He asserts that the most important of these is Sievers's prosodic analysis of Germanic poetic language, especially the identification of resolution, as Sievers "noted that a sequence of a light syllable followed by another syllable functioned together as the metrical equivalent of a single heavy syllable" (152). This system is still the basis for any rigorous metrical analysis in Old Germanic.

This section closes with Jacob Thaisen's contribution, which seeks to demonstrate the advantages of quantitative analyses of quantitative data in palaeographical variation to the detriment of visual analyses, which are the dominant. For this purpose, he focuses on the Anglicana and Secretary scripts, which have been traditionally classified as two varieties of Gothic cursive. Instead of this binary opposition, the author randomly establishes six classes of hybrids by analysing patterns of co-occurrence of seventeen allographs found in English texts from the period 1350-1450. The methodology employed is regression modelling. His results pursue "to lend greater precision to the quantitative study of palaeographical variables" (180).

The last section of Part I, entitled "Register" (185-254), begins with Jesús Romero-Barranco and Paula Rodríguez-Abruñeiras's paper, which assesses coordination and subordination across three different types of Middle English medical texts (theoretical treatises, surgical treatises and remedies) following a corpus-based approach. After an in-depth analysis, their results reveal that coordination is much more frequent than subordination in Middle English scientific prose. Subordinators are most widely distributed in theoretical treatises, the most formal of the three text types. A detailed account of the use of coordinators and subordinators is also provided.



Magdalena Bator and Elżbieta Pawlikowska-Asendrych's paper follows. They compare culinary recipes in English and German from the fourteenth century by focusing on the most salient linguistic features of the recipe as a text type in order to ascertain shared elements and overlapping properties. The features analysed comprise: (i) the form of the heading; (ii) the style of sentences and sentence structure; (iii) verbal forms; (iv) pronominal use; (v) the use or omission of objects; and (vi) temporal sequence and the use of adverbs. Although the typology of the recipes in both traditions seems to be apparently similar, the comparative investigation evinces certain differences between them in the early stages of the development of the text type.

Finally, within this section, Sergio López Martínez touches on the periodisation of Scots. The model traditionally adopted is Aitken's (1985), which has recently been questioned by Kopaczyk (2013). The author provides a review of both models and, after analysing a set of linguistic criteria related to inflectional morphology, phonology, and vocabulary and spelling, he concludes that Kopaczyk's alternative periodisation fits the linguistic scenario of the development of Scots better than Aitken's traditional proposal.

## ***Part II: Textual Analysis and Translation***

Part II consists of two subparts: "Translation" (pp. 257-98) and "Text transmission" (pp. 299-340). Each of these is composed of two essays. In the first essay of the translation section, Ayumi Miura looks at the degree of Latin influence on the use of *who of* in Middle English, which has been attributed to a calque of Latin *quis* ('who') followed by a genitive or prepositional phrase. The author carries out a comprehensive corpus-based analysis of the interrogative construction focusing on the Wycliffite Bible and comparing the usage of the structure in the Latin Vulgate. The conclusion is that, while Latin influence is observable, *who of* is not purely a Latinism and "direct Latin input was not absolutely indispensable" (278).

Jorge Luis Bueno-Alonso explains the editorial approach followed in his translation of the central poem *Beowulf* into Galician. The author pays special attention to the problems posed by several Old English passages when rendering the text into alliterative Galician verse and discusses the steps taken to produce the translation.

In the text transmission section, Richard North furthers academic endeavour in relation to Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. He examines the figure of the Knight and challenges the assumption of him having fought at the siege of "Algezir" (or Algeciras) in 1342-44 by giving reasons to place him at a different siege of Algeciras, that which took place in 1369. This discovery makes the Knight more than fifteen years younger. The author vividly reconstructs the history and vicissitudes of the Knight by resorting to authoritative sources.

The transmission of a Middle English text is tackled by María José Esteve Ramos in the closing paper of the volume, which contributes to the understanding of the history and reception of scientific texts in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England. The focus is on the herbal known as *Agnus castus*. The author specifically looks at British Library, MS Sloane 7 in order to study the manuscript context of the herbal copy held therein. The combination of authoritative and practical texts contained in MS Sloane 7 seems to cater to the needs of a medieval practitioner.

All the contributors demonstrate an acute understanding of the issues tackled in their papers and, as the title of the volume enticingly promises, offer in fact "new perspectives" and interdisciplinary insights into the vast area of English medieval language and literature, as well as potential avenues for innovative research. Although the target audience of the book may seem to be experts on English medieval language and literature, the volume helps to make this intricate and multifarious region more accessible to non-specialists by providing, for instance, translations from Old and Middle English into Present-Day English for those readers not conversant with the language of those periods, in addition to useful bibliographies at the end of each chapter.

Overall, this is a wide-ranging collection of focused and high-quality papers. One must therefore congratulate the editors on their selection and on the careful and neat presentation of the volume, and make this extensive to the publishers for an excellent and welcome addition to the "Studies in English Medieval Language and Literature" series.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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***Visitors from beyond the Grave: Ghosts in World Literature*****Romero González, Damañis, Israel Muñoz Gallarte, and Gabriel Laguna Mariscal, eds.**

Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2019, 303 pp.

ISBN 978-989-26-1763-3

**G**hosts as a literary motif have been the subject of many critical studies. The previous studies done on this subject are either too limited, or too broad. Felton (1999) and Uden (2020), for example, analyze the image of ghosts in Classical antiquity. Wolfreys (2002) limits her scope to Victorian literature and Edmundson Makala (2013) concentrates on women's ghosts in nineteenth-century Britain. Kovacs (1972) also examines the appearance of ghosts in a small number of literary and cinematic works. Some other studies discuss the gothic literature in general (see Varnado 1987; Mulvey-Roberts 1998; Hogle and Hogle 2002; Spooner and McEvoy 2007; Killeen 2009; Berthin 2010; Hughes 2013; Brown, Senf and Stockstill 2018). The monograph reviewed here—*Visitors from beyond the Grave: Ghosts in World Literature*, edited by Romero González, Muñoz Gallarte, and Laguna Mariscal—traces the definitions, origins and representations of ghosts in Western tradition from a variety of literary and philosophical perspectives, including works not necessarily belonging to the gothic genre.

This monograph, as its title indicates, deals with the appearance of ghosts in world literature, although the terms world literature or even “universal literature,” as indicated in the introduction (12), are not appropriately used, since the book mainly deals with occidental literature, which is, in this case, Classical Greek and Latin, Spanish, English and Italian literature. This monograph is edited by three professors of Greek and Latin philology at the University of Córdoba. Each of the seventeen chapters is written by a different Spanish author, except for one by D. Ogden, who is a professor of Ancient history at the University of Exeter (UK). Each chapter aims at examining literary and philosophical texts to see “how ghosts have been translated and transformed over the years within literature” (12).

The chapters are ordered from Classical Greek tradition towards modern European and American Literatures. However, the order of the contributions lacks a thematic organization. This could be justified by the fact that some of the articles, such as the one written by C. Ruiz Montero, discover “parallel narratives” in two different languages, which are in this

case Greek and Latin literature (31-32). Some others discuss the Classical reception of ghosts in modern culture. For example, G. Laguna Mariscal examines the evolution of a literary episode from Classical tradition to contemporary Spanish literature. This contribution is especially interesting, since it fulfills the main objective of the book, which is to show “the resilience of these figures from the very beginning of literature up to the present day” (12). However, a clear-cut thematic classification of the articles in the table of the contents could make it easier for the readers to follow.

The first five chapters of the book deal with Greek texts, followed by three chapters on Latin literature. The book continues with one article about Italian medieval literature, three articles about Spanish literature and four about texts written in English. The last article is an anthropological study within the context of Spanish culture. The number of chapters dedicated to each language is not proportionate. Moreover, except for one chapter written by M. Porras Sánchez that addresses the idea of Jinn in Anglo-American literature, non-western literary works have been excluded, in spite of the fact that Eastern literature and culture are replete with images of ghosts in different forms. The last chapter of the monograph written by I. Alcalde Sánchez is also theoretically different, since it deals with the subject in anthropological and not literary terms.

In the introduction, the editors provide a concise history of the presence of ghosts in literature from the poem of Gilgamesh. This is followed by a short summary of each chapter. The first five articles, dedicated to Greek texts, study the theme of ghosts from a variety of perspectives such as philology and philosophy. C. Ruiz Montero applies a typological approach to some episodes from ancient Greek novels that deal with the figure of ghosts, with the aim of categorizing them into different types such as “tale enunciation, authentic and false ghosts, terminology, and physical description” (19) and of classifying them structurally (29-30). D. Romero-González examines the appearance of ghosts as the main character of the prophetic dreams in Plutarch’s *Lives*. In this study, dreams are studied in terms of their “biographical or motivating functions” as well as their techniques and characterizing elements (34). In the third chapter, P. Gómez Cardó analyzes the reappearance of the figure of the philosopher Mennipus as a ghost after a trip to Hades in the works of Lucian (47). Although the image of Mennipus as a ghost is not scrutinized in this study, the ghost brings an important message to humankind, that is, “the exhortation to common sense and the importance of humour as a universal guide of conduct” (63).

The book continues with D. Ogden’s chapter, which deals with three pagan and early Christian stories that appear in the works of Lucian and Augustine to see how ghost stories, “despite their religious unacceptability,” have been appropriated in Christian texts (78). The section of the articles related to Greek literature ends with a philosophical study by M. Bermúdez Vázquez. This article deals with the ways in which the apparently rational philosophical arguments of Socrates, Descartes and Hegel incorporate “irrational concepts, such as demons, ghosts and spirits” (81). The author finally concludes that “the rational and the irrational are strongly interconnected” (89).

There are three articles written by experts in Latin philology. A. J. Traver Vera in “The Atomistic Denial of Ghosts: From Democritus to Lucretius” uses philosophical ideas of Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius to show that for philosophers belonging to the atomistic school, ghosts are only “flying images or old prints that [...] the mind recovers from its memory” (103). M. Rodríguez Pantoja focuses on the typology of ghosts and provides an analysis of the appearance of ghosts and the concept of afterlife in Seneca’s tragedies (105). This section ends with G. Laguna Mariscal’s chapter, which traces the history and evolution of the literary *topos* of the appearance of the ghost of the beloved to the lover, from Homer’s *Iliad* towards modern Spanish poetry as in works by Jaime Gil de Biedma and Luis Alberto de Cuenca as well as in contemporary American cinema. This chapter gives very enriching insights on the ways in which literary motifs originated in the Classical tradition continue to evolve into modern culture. As the author states, “the classical motif is alive today, even in mass culture” (137). The reasons behind this appearance as well as its functions are also explained in detail.

The only chapter on Italian literature is written by F. J. Rodríguez Mesa. His paper, entitled “On Women’s Faithfulness and Ghosts: About Decameron 7.1,” focuses on the importance of “the ghost as a comic and pseudo-religious motif” (139) as well as on the origin of the terms used about ghosts in Boccaccio’s *Il corbaccio* and *Decameron* (141-143). The next section of articles deal with texts written by Spanish authors from different ages. A. Rísquez, for example, analyzes the concept of ghosts from Aristotle towards the magic treatises written by Lope de Barrientos (155-158). The author concludes that there exists a “duality of the concept of the ghost in the Treatises” and the definition of the ghost in these texts is related to the “philosophical and theological theories” of the time (158). Also, A. Zapatero Molinuevo bases her analysis of the ghosts on parallel structures in two plays written by Calderón, with special consideration of two recurrent motifs: ‘phantom lady’ and ‘ghost gallant.’ The author goes further to examine some of the variations of the motif as well as the devices used in stage productions (164-170). The last chapter of this section written by M. Martínez Sariego serves as a bridge between Spanish and English literature, since it analyzes the reception of the appearance of ghosts in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* and its 1955 film adaptation in Javier Marías’s contemporary novel *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me*. The author argues that Marías’s intertextual connection works “as an extended reflection on guilt and remorse” based on Shakespeare’s tragedy as well as “a postmodern rewriting of the ghost theme” (173).

The following part of the book is dedicated to the study of the appearance of ghosts in British and American literature. J. L. Pérez-de-Luque examines three characters, namely, Dr. Muñoz, Curwen and Ward, to demonstrate the connections between these characters and “the classical gothic ghost” (187). The author concludes that, although the three figures are not faithful to the tradition, they “follow the conventional features of that motif” (197-198). C. A. Huertas Abril opens a discussion of American Gothic literature. After elaborating on the “constant parameters in the evolution of the Gothic genre” (199), Stephen King’s *The Shining* and its reception of Walpole’s novel is studied. María J. López goes further to apply a psychological approach to postcolonial literature. The author concentrates on Jean Rhys’s “use of the figure of ghost to underline her characters’ alienated and marginal condition” (211). Freud’s notion of the uncanny and Kristeva’s notion of the abject have been used in this study.

The monograph ends with two anthropological studies. In the first one, written by M. Porras Sánchez, the author tries to broaden the scope of the book by examining the figure of Jinn, which has an important role in Islamic culture. After tracing the concept of Jinn in Islamic mythology and the Moroccan culture (224-226), she analyzes its reception in the works written by Paul Bowles and Tahir Shah. The second article, written by I. Alcaide Sánchez deals with the idea of purgatory and Blessed souls in the context of the local rites of villages in Andalusia.

The chapters are followed by three very well-organized indices, which make it easy for readers to find the materials they are looking for. All in all, this book can be a useful guide for the students of English and American literature, since it discusses the reception of ghosts in famous works written by Shakespeare, H. P. Lovecraft, Stephen King and Jean Rhys. However, bearing in mind that the authors are all non-native English speakers, the book should have been benefitted from editorial correction in terms of English style. Having addressed the theme of the ghosts from a wide variety of perspectives, the book is indeed a useful handbook for literature students and scholars. It can be introduced as a university coursebook for students of literature to familiarize them with ghost stories from Classical literature towards the present culture.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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***Antología poética*****William Wordsworth**

Edición bilingüe, traducción y notas de Antonio Ballesteros González

Madrid: Cátedra (Letras Universales), 2021, 732 pp.

ISBN: 978-84-376-4311-3

***El último hombre*****Mary Shelley**

Edición y notas de Antonio Ballesteros González.

Traducción de Lucía Márquez de la Plata

Madrid: Akal (Clásicos de la Literatura), 2020, 574 pp.

ISBN: 978-84-460-4856-5

**E**l panorama editorial español, en general, y los estudios románticos, en particular, están de enhorabuena. Ven la luz dos ediciones magistrales, necesarias, que vienen a glosar un período tan rico como es el Romanticismo inglés: *Antología poética* de William Wordsworth y *El último hombre* de Mary Shelley. Siempre son de agradecer ediciones de este tipo que permiten ampliar el horizonte del lector no especializado pero que, igualmente, ofrecen al especialista un texto valiosamente anotado y prologado. Esta doble reseña encuentra su razón de ser en el hecho de que ambas ediciones corren a cargo de Antonio Ballesteros y que ambas poseen un alto valor simbólico: William Wordsworth da la bienvenida al período romántico inglés y su poesía nos sirve de guía a través de distintos reinos estéticos, “favorecido a la vez por la belleza y el miedo” (9), con el fin último de aunar hombre y naturaleza; Mary Shelley, por el contrario, dice adiós al Romanticismo con *El último hombre* y conduce al lector al final de un viaje donde la capacidad redentora de la imaginación, tan defendida por Wordsworth, se revela como una promesa vacía y la distancia entre el ser humano y el mundo, insalvable.

Antonio Ballesteros, en calidad de editor y traductor, nos brinda una *Antología poética* sencillamente impecable y destinada a convertirse en un referente obligado en los estudios wordsworthianos. La edición que nos ocupa es la antología bilingüe de la obra poética de William Wordsworth más completa hasta la fecha; y completa no sólo en lo que al corpus poético se refiere sino también en lo concerniente al exhaustivo marco crítico. La presente antología se suma, así, y viene a liderar una tradición de diversas compilaciones y traducciones a la lengua española para con las que el editor subraya su justo reconocimiento (Siles y Toda 1976; Resines 1980; Corugedo y Chamosa 1994; Galván y Sánchez Robayna 1999; Atreides 2003; Sánchez Fernández 1999, 2018; entre otras recogidas en la bibliografía relativa



a las traducciones de las obras de Wordsworth en España). Cabe recordar, en este sentido, que el propio Antonio Ballesteros, también como editor y traductor, ya participó de esta tradición como antologuista con su edición bilingüe, *Poesía romántica inglesa* (Publicaciones de la Asociación de Directores de Escena de España, 2011), donde William Wordsworth tenía un papel destacado junto con diversas poetas románticas inglesas.

La edición, a la altura del sello Cátedra–Letras Universales, está magníficamente anotada y va precedida de una introducción crítica que Antonio Ballesteros articula a modo de *biographia literaria*, donde hilvana la vida de William Wordsworth con su obra poética; como el propio editor señala, “el criterio cronológico permite al lector una visión de conjunto de la obra del poeta de más amplio alcance y disfrute, siendo así posible percibir la evolución del pensamiento, el ideario y las técnicas poéticas del autor a lo largo y ancho de su trayectoria vital” (119). Los epígrafes que delimitan cada etapa vital resultan muy acertados y sugerentes, y dan sobrada cuenta del profundo conocimiento que el editor tiene de la vida y la obra de este “poeta que cambió el mundo,” haciendo uso de la frase acuñada por Jonathan Bate (83)—algo que ya pudimos comprobar en la semblanza biográfica conmemorativa de los 250 años del nacimiento de Wordsworth que escribió para *Nexus* 2020.2 (Ballesteros González 2020). La introducción ofrece al lector una honda aproximación al pensamiento wordsworthiano: su visión panteísta de la naturaleza, su forja como poeta-profeta y su eventual consagración como poeta-héroe, entre otros temas, nos sirven de guía para una mejor apreciación de la amplia obra poética seleccionada, como *La casa de campo en ruinas*, las *Baladas líricas*, sus *Poemas en dos volúmenes* y los posteriores a 1817, y *El preludio*. Respecto a esta magna epopeya, el editor ha optado por la versión en trece cantos de 1805, coincidiendo así con la mayor parte de la crítica especializada sobre su alto valor poético. Igualmente, como parte de una nutrida y bien seleccionada bibliografía, Ballesteros acierta al destacar la relevancia de William Wordsworth tanto para los estudios de Ecocrítica como para las Teorías de los Afectos, así como el papel fundamental que desempeñó la presencia de Dorothy Wordsworth en la vida y obra de su hermano: “Ella me dio ojos, me dio oídos” (12)—de la hermana del laureado poeta el lector puede encontrar los poemas “La isla flotante” y “Reflexiones en mi lecho de enferma” en la antología bilingüe de *Poesía romántica inglesa* arriba citada y los *Diarios de Grasmere y Alfoxden* traducidos por Gonzalo Torné en Alba Clásica (Wordsworth 2019).

La traducción, como no puede ser de otro modo, es fiel al original y destila una gran sensibilidad. Antonio Ballesteros—él mismo autor de poesía—tiene una larga trayectoria como traductor y, no en vano, le fue concedido en 2005 el Premio “María Martínez Sierra” de Traducción Teatral por la traducción inédita en España de la obra de William Shakespeare *Eduardo III*. En esta *Antología poética* bilingüe logra transmitir con gran maestría y mediante esa aparente simplicidad del lenguaje wordsworthiano los “significados trascendentes” que encubren la obra del poeta. William Wordsworth, como bien deja claro el editor, “es mucho más que el poeta de la naturaleza” (60). Y, recogiendo las palabras de Hunter Davies, “In his poetry and in his life, the giant Wordsworth has left more than enough for each of us” (2003, 343).

Como contrapartida a esa visión de la naturaleza nutricia que predica William Wordsworth y que encontramos en la *Antología poética* arriba reseñada, Antonio Ballesteros nos ofrece la edición crítica de *El último hombre* de Mary Shelley. Akal–Clásicos de la Literatura es la editorial que acoge, en esta ocasión, esta obra injustamente marginada, siempre a la sombra de su hermana mayor *Frankenstein, o el moderno Prometeo*. La traducción corre, en este caso, a cargo de Lucía Márquez de la Plata, a quien la obra de Mary Shelley no le es en absoluto desconocida. Esta traductora fue la encargada de verter al castellano—también para Akal en su colección Grandes Libros—la formidable edición de *Frankenstein* prologada y anotada por Leslie S. Klinger, con introducción de Guillermo del Toro y un epílogo de Anne K. Mellor (Shelley 2018). Márquez de la Plata es, por tanto, buena conocedora del estilo de Mary Shelley; hecho éste que se deja entrever en la acertada traducción de un texto complejo, denso, y que busca clarificar con notas diversas.

Tampoco Antonio Ballesteros es, ni mucho menos, ajeno al universo shelleyiano. Junto con Silvia Caporale, llevó a cabo una completísima edición de *Frankenstein* (siguiendo el texto de 1818) para la editorial Almar-Angléstica en 1999 (Shelley 1999). Es más, que es un gran conocedor y maestro del género gótico y fantástico lo atestigua el reciente “Premio Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu 2021” con el que *Sui Generis Madrid* ha galardonado tanto a Antonio Ballesteros como a ese otro grande del gótico que es Julio Ángel Olivares; ambos, sin ir más lejos, editores y traductores de la más exhaustiva y completa antología anotada de cuentos góticos *Fantasmas. Relatos victorianos y eduardianos*, publicada por Akal también en 2021 (Ballesteros González y Olivares 2021).

Esta edición de *El último hombre* de Mary Shelley—recordemos que *The Last Man* se publica por vez primera en 1826—viene a paliar un importante vacío en el panorama editorial español. Si bien no es la primera traducción al castellano de la obra (véanse Shelley 2007; Shelley 2017), sí tiene el honor de ser la primera edición crítica anotada en España. El hecho de que nos encontremos con una edición tan completa como esta, con una bibliografía aquilatada y un estudio preliminar exhaustivo, restaura la obra al lugar que se merece, a la vez que nos recuerda que Mary Shelley no sólo es *Frankenstein*. En este sentido, la publicación que nos ocupa responde a la llamada reivindicativa promovida por las editoras Audrey Fisch, Anne K. Mellor y Esther H. Schor en *The Other Mary Shelley* (1993), donde instan a los estudiosos del tema a profundizar “beyond *Frankenstein*” (7). Y es que más allá de *Frankenstein* hay cinco novelas, una

“novella,” docenas de cuentos e historias cortas, ensayos, reseñas, dos libros de viajes y un largo etcétera. Parece lógico, pues, prestar atención a una obra que cuenta con un rico—y trágico—trasfondo biográfico y que supone una honda crítica a esa renovación milenarista, ese apocalipsis por imaginación, en el que confiaban los románticos (González Moreno 2007, 251).

Antonio Ballesteros presenta *El último hombre* con una introducción lo suficientemente clara y concisa para un público no especialista, y lo debidamente certera en su análisis crítico para el lector avezado. Abre el prólogo una contextualización de la obra y la génesis de la misma, prestando especial atención a la relación que la propia Mary Shelley tenía con la que fue su tercera novela, “una suerte de exorcismo del pasado, un encuentro con su propias emociones, con sus propios fantasmas y monstruos interiores” (7). En una etapa vital marcada por “la soledad, la melancolía y la incompreensión” (18), Mary Shelley alumbra *El último hombre* como un trasunto de su propia vida donde Verney no sólo viene a encarnar a “la última mujer” (18, 21 y ss.; González Moreno 2007, 246-250), sino también a alzarse como un reflejo de “the fears and hopes of the last Romantic” (Bennett 1995, 152). Y es en este punto donde Antonio Ballesteros engarza su siguiente capítulo de la introducción para profundizar más en la obra y desglosar algunas de sus múltiples lecturas, destacando la lectura de la novela como una distopía y como emblema del apocalipsis romántico. La novela, seguramente la más ambiciosa de Mary Shelley, es, en este sentido, mucho más que un *roman à clé* y es por ese motivo que los lectores encontrarán “muchas conexiones temáticas y conceptuales con el mundo que nos circunda, justamente preocupado por cuestiones como la ecología, el desencanto político, la frustración posmoderna y posthumanista,” e incluso “los límites de la tecnología para dar solución satisfactoria a los problemas cotidianos” (22). Ese cuestionamiento y desencanto con el mundo que la rodeaba, donde el poder salvífico de la imaginación que defendía William Wordsworth para salvar la escisión entre yo y mundo, hombre y naturaleza la traiciona, cobra vida en la narración por medio de esa plaga que extermina a la humanidad (¿es acaso la propia humanidad la que merece ser exterminada como un plaga que agosta la vida en la Tierra?).

Así, Antonio Ballesteros cierra la introducción con un capítulo profundamente significativo y tristemente relevante hoy en día con la pandemia del COVID-19: la plaga. *El último hombre* se enmarca, por tanto, no sólo dentro de los estudios de ciencia-ficción—a la par que dentro de otros tantos dada la riqueza de la obra—sino también de la “literatura de la plaga o de la epidemia.” Ofrece el editor un detallado recorrido por este género mientras analiza cabalmente el papel que desempeña la peste en la narración como detonante de ese apocalipsis “sin milenio,” como diría Morton D. Paley (Fisch et al. 1993, 107-123). Mary Shelley redefine aquí la visión romántica de la naturaleza como ajena a cualquier categorización estética, indiferente al ser humano, “no longer as female but as natural” (Fisch et al. 1993, 8). El principio femenino lo ocupa ahora la Peste, que aparece personifica como una poderosa diosa para Adrian, y que recuerda a la diosa hindú, Kali; mientras que para Lionel es una diosa de las nieves que, tras siete años, abdica. Eventualmente, la plaga evidencia que bajo el velo de Maya no hay nada (ni nadie) (González Moreno 2007, 253 y ss.). Sin embargo, pese al nihilismo que envuelve la narración, como señala Antonio Ballesteros, parece haber una pequeña puerta abierta al optimismo; “un hilo de esperanza” (38) que Mary Shelley parece haber dejado, cual hilo de Ariadna, oculto en su narración: “los ideales de fraternidad, compasión... y solidaridad con respecto al prójimo... Abrazar al otro... en su doliente humanidad” (38), parecen ser la solución propuesta por una mujer cuya obra, como ya sucediera con *Frankenstein*, parece resultar profética. En este punto, recuerdan estos ideales a los de Wordsworth, “el gran poeta del dolor humano, de la tristeza, de la aflicción y la pena, pero no desde una perspectiva pesimista o negativa, sino desde una actitud compasiva y solidaria... pues, al fin y al cabo, desde una perspectiva organicista de la realidad, todos formamos parte de la doliente humanidad” (33).

Estas dos ediciones, la *Antología poética* de William Wordsworth y *El último hombre* de Mary Shelley representan, por tanto, las dos caras de una misma moneda, que es el Romanticismo en toda su complejidad; una suerte de alfa y omega, de génesis de un gran movimiento filosófico-literario y de su propio apocalipsis. El gran poeta laureado, “el poeta que cambió el mundo,” ese gran “poeta-profeta,” anuncia lo que posteriormente Mary Shelley plasmaría: nuestro “intelecto analiza para disecar” mientras la Naturaleza se rebela (y revela) como inexorable y ajena a lo humano.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

M<sup>a</sup> LUISA PASCUAL GARRIDO

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# ***La gitanilla española: poema dramático, de George Eliot***

**María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia (ed.) y María Donapetry Camacho (trad.)**

Sofía: Vertere, 2020, 304 pp.

ISBN: 9788416446650

**T**he book discussed in the following pages is the first Spanish edition of a scarcely known poetic work composed by the celebrated British novelist Mary Ann Evans, also known by her pseudonym, George Eliot. Published by Vertere, in a series of monographs issued by the translation journal *Hermeneus*, the volume is part of a scheme to disseminate selected essays in the field of Translation Studies as well as translations of significant foreign works as yet unpublished in Spanish. Such is the case of *The Spanish Gypsy: A Poem* (1868), a composition mostly overlooked by scholars researching Eliot's oeuvre, and one which María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia and María Donapetry Camacho have rescued from oblivion by means of the present volume.

The Victorian writer's reputation was undoubtedly built on the success of her novels, a circumstance that has relegated her essays, poems and translations to the status of minor works. As the title of Herbert F. Tucker's essay, "Poetry: the Unappreciated Eliot" (2013) suggests, Eliot's verse received little approval and this was partly due to the fact that the earliest reviewers of *The Spanish Gypsy* failed to value Eliot's poetic craft. W. D. Howells, and J. Morley's unfavourable appraisals were grounded on her apparent flaws in versification and the occasional obstruction of poetic flow by her "ponderous intellection" (Tucker 2013, 179-180). Although Eliot did try several poetic subgenres and a variety of metrical patterns and registers as the present text reveals, it was paradoxically the writer's poetic "versatility" that invited critics to take her verse much more lightly than her prose, considering it as just amateurish work by a distinguished novelist. In fact, Tucker states that the author herself "made it a point to come before the public in the character of a minor poet" (Tucker 2013, 189).

As it is, choosing to translate and prepare a Spanish edition of this particular dramatic poem by George Eliot may seem at the outset an oddity, mostly given that the English text has scarcely circulated after Eliot's death and given rise to little scholarly research. Yet, the authors' decision is substantiated on their wish to make readers familiar with other aspects of Eliot's production, her fascination for Spanish culture and her erudition regarding its literary and historical past. Considering the editor's and the translator's own scholarly background in the field of Gender Studies, it should also come as no surprise their having selected a work with a strong and willed female protagonist torn apart by her having to face a hard ethical choice—either fulfilling her personal will or complying with her "duty" as member of her ethnic community.

*The Spanish Gypsy. A Poem* is structured into five books roughly equivalent to the five acts of a closet drama, a popular dramatic subgenre in Eliot's time. This "hybrid text" (21), as Lorenzo-Modia defines it, might have been seen by the author as a challenge, a test to her own poetic skills, as she was working out how to convey in English verse the primitive essence of Spanish ballads. But, above all, this verse drama was viewed by Eliot as a fertile ground to write and engage herself with an absorbing but complex period of Spanish history, a period characterised by constant struggles for power and the cohabitation of different ethnic communities—Christians, Moors, Jews and gypsies. Such a background easily lent itself to the handling of moral issues concerning unbreakable communal ties, deep personal convictions and antagonistic religious beliefs. And it is precisely in this regard that *The Spanish Gypsy* may acquire greater significance within the Eliotian corpus according to the editor. In support of this argument, Avron Fleischman also cautions readers against considering the dramatic poem simply as "a statement about race and nation, a piece of symbolic doctrine" (Fleischman 2012, 130). Instead, he argues, Eliot's text should be interpreted as a work tracking utopian and national ideals by enacting the tragic destiny of characters that sacrifice themselves for the sake of their people.

The Spanish translation in this edition is made much more reader-friendly thanks to Lorenzo-Modia's well documented introductory essay on *The Spanish Gypsy* (16-39). This section accounts for the variety of first-rate sources that Eliot in all probability read before and while composing and revising her poem. Those range from Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares* (1616) to the many secondary sources on literary and medieval history in several languages. The rich assortment of readings noted by Lorenzo-Modia attests to Eliot's profound knowledge of Spanish culture and the historical background that inspires *The Spanish Gypsy*. Fully conversant with the writings of Mary Anne Evans and her engagement with Spanish letters, the editor provides greater insight into this composition by offering a detailed account of the author's knowledge of the complex Spanish cultural heritage, particularly nourished by one of her many European trips—her visit to Spain in 1866. Lorenzo-Modia makes a commendable effort to trace references to Spanish literature and history in Eliot's correspondence and journals, an intellectual pursuit that did go on the rise after her liaison with her life-long companion, George Henry Lewes, author of a study on the drama of Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca.

A substantial number of pages is also devoted to evince Eliot's interest in the gypsies inhabiting the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages, which as Lorenzo-Modia puts it, the writer deemed as "la quintaesencia de lo español" (2020, 23), in accordance with the romanticised view of the exotic European South not few of her contemporaries shared with George Eliot (24). George H. Borrow's famous writings on the history of the Bible in Spain and the Spanish gypsies are likewise mentioned as part of the substratum to which Eliot reacted by choosing Fedalma, a gypsy female character, as the heroine for her drama in *The Spanish Gypsy*. Eliot's tendency to identify idealistic and rebellious traits associated to the gypsy stereotype with such novelistic heroines as Maggie Tulliver or Dorothea Brooke is also remarked here (25), thus enabling the reader to discover possible links between a seemingly atypical composition of Eliot's and her most popular novels.

Apart from providing a summary of the plot and the tragic conflict which separates the lovers, the Christian nobleman, Don Silva, and the gypsy Fedalma, the introductory essay is implemented by a very useful annex for researchers working on comparative literature and reception studies, entitled "Obras de George Eliot y sus traducciones al español y otras lenguas peninsulares" (40-43). The comprehensive and up-to-date list of Eliot's works translated into Spanish, Catalan and Galician, reveals very significant details regarding the reception of Eliot's works in Spain. As author of this introductory study points out, Eliot's novels were only quite belated made available to Spanish readers. It seems remarkable that *Adam Bede* (1859) should be the only novel to see a full-length Spanish translation in the nineteenth century (1884), together with a significantly reduced version of *Felix Holt* (1866), which saw the light in *Folleto del Diario de Barcelona* as early as 1867. Despite the positive appraisals of her contemporaries, and her being singled out by F.R. Leavis as a worthy representative in "the great tradition of the English novel" (1948), Eliot's novels only reached the Spanish public by the second half of the twentieth century, as the list of translated works attests. As for Eliot's poetic output, this volume is the first one to offer a sample of it in Spanish.

Turning now to the Spanish translation of *The Spanish Gypsy*, it must be acknowledged that Donapetry Camacho's version is a very literal one, clearly aimed at "hacer comprensible el texto para el público lector español de hoy en día" rather than "hacerle justicia a la vena poética de esta obra" (45). As a result, the translator has disposed altogether of the metrical and prosodic qualities which, although at times inconsistent in the original, do convey its poetic quality. Mainly composed in blank verse, the source text contains some sections imitating the style of Spanish ballads as announced on the title page of the 1868 edition. Undeniably, the translator faced a demanding task here, so her decision to render the text in legible prose—displayed in lines of variable length—is a sensible one. However, even if the translator renounces to recreate the text in verse, I dare say that the poetic nuance might be heightened by a pondered selection of words endowed some musical resonance or by the introduction of hyperbatons, a very common strategy in poetic translation to stylise the text as archaic. It could also be argued that the awareness that Eliot intended her text to be read as a "poem" should have equally encouraged the translator to be a bit more audacious in trying to produce a functional equivalent, accounting for some of the lyrical effects of the original piece. On the other hand, the



dialogues are generally successfully rendered, while some of the narrative passages may occasionally betray too literal a rendering of certain English structures and perhaps an extreme zeal in keeping with the source text's punctuation conventions. Nevertheless, on the whole, Donapetry Camacho manages to convey the essential elements of plot and character of Eliot's poetic drama in a prose version that reads well.

To conclude, this is a volume that will prove a valuable resource for scholars working on Victorian literature. Within the scope of Comparative literature, it will also be an indispensable tool for those interested in the reception of English and Spanish literature, regarding, in particular, the manner in which Eliot's work was made available in Spain. We must congratulate ourselves for having a new sample of Eliot's work rendered into Spanish, which is always a good pretext to gain greater insight into how a Victorian intellectual and traveller like George Eliot viewed certain cultural (stereo)types and imaginatively shaped specific periods of Spanish history in the poetic medium.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Queer Whispers: Gay and Lesbian Voices of Irish Fiction***

José Carregal

Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2021,  
218 pp.

ISBN: 9781910820889

**Q**ueer Whispers: Gay and Lesbian Voices of Irish Fiction, written by José Carregal, is a book concerned with lesbian and gay representation in literature and how the texts analysed challenged the silence that was imposed concerning LGBTI+ issues in Ireland. With literary case studies that range from the 1970s to the late 2010s, the book approaches these texts from the silence/language dichotomy and thus explores how they are related to the socio-cultural contexts that the author generously offers the readers. Therefore, as Carregal himself points out, the choice of the texts seems to be defined by how they “articulate a new language of resilience and recognition of the particular struggles faced by homosexuals” (2). Carregal divides the book into eight chapters, each of them exploring a specific topic or author of significant relevance regarding Irish gay and lesbian literature. The first chapter analyses the intersections between isolation and vulnerability in the lesbian community and how these were portrayed in Irish fiction between 1980 and early 1990. The second chapter is concerned with the figure of Mary Dorcey, focusing on her works and how the relationship between feminism, lesbianism, and the empowerment of women through those life experiences is depicted in them. The third chapter delves into the culture of cruising and how it has been represented in Irish contemporary literature, while the fourth chapter considers the coming out novel and its ties to a culture of silence and repression. The fifth chapter explores narratives about AIDS and how its impact in the gay community has been dramatised through literature, and the sixth chapter, mirroring the second one, aims to explore the works of a particular literary author, this being Emma Donoghue. Finally, the seventh chapter examines how the Celtic Tiger Ireland affected gay and lesbian narratives, and the final chapter explores the specific subgenre of historical fiction and how it has allowed to offer a language to periods where silence was the norm in gay and lesbian narratives.

José Carregal, then, brings together an exhaustive and comprehensive compilation of gay- and lesbian-themed texts in Irish literature as well as a thorough account of the socio-economic contexts for each of the texts. Taken together, the book offers a balanced selection of texts and authors in terms of gender and sexuality, as well as a historical tracing of Ireland’s treatment of the LGBTI+ community and how it has been reflected in the literature produced by the nation. Carregal’s book stands out for using a well-written yet accessible language, which makes it a great read regardless of previous knowledge on the topics addressed throughout the chapters. Moreover, although it draws from

the previous scholarship that was written about these short stories individually (which includes authors such as Anne Mulhall and Cormac O'Brien), the book shines in the academic field as "the first comprehensive survey of gay and lesbian-themed Irish fiction" (16). The book will feel particularly relevant to those who are looking specifically for an extensive account of Irish gay and lesbian voices in Irish literature and how the cultural shifts have affected them, but it can also be enjoyed by anyone interested in LGBTI+ representation in general.

As mentioned above, the first chapter deals with Irish lesbian fiction from the 1980s to early 1990s, focusing particularly on the "isolation and vulnerability" (17) of this community, subjected to by a "hetero-patriarchal Ireland" (17) which was not only sexually oppressed because of a "conservative Catholic morality" (17), as Carregal points out, but also economically and legally forgotten. In order to explore how this is reflected in literature, Carregal chooses four books that exemplify the lack of language due to the invisibility endured by the lesbian community, and these books are Maura Richards' *Interlude* (1982), Linda Cullen's *The Kiss* (1990), Edna O'Brien's *The High Road* (1988), and Pádraig Standún's *A Woman's Love*.

The second chapter, as the title "The Feminist Politics of Mary Dorcey's Lesbian Fiction" (34) suggests, deals with the figure of Mary Dorcey, whose work Carregal approaches "from the perspective of its feminist politics" (35). The works that are analysed here, thus, in one way or another reflect the relationship between lesbianism and feminism, overall giving a more "positive and empowering representations of Irish lesbians" than in the previous chapter, which focuses more on the silence and repression. These works are "A Country Dance" (1989), "The Husband" (1989), "Introducing Nessa" (1989) and "Biography of Desire" (1996). The characters that lead these stories tend to go through a transformation, deconstructing heterosexist assumptions that they have acquired throughout their lives and most of the times emerging on the other side of this process as empowered women.

The third chapter deals with how cruising became a subculture in Ireland and how this culture was represented in Irish gay short stories. As Carregal contends after giving an insightful account on the context of cruising, the short stories that are chosen for analysis "provide a new language to understand the reality of cruising" (50), and thus offer an exploration of how these types of relationships develop. The works that Carregal chooses to exemplify the culture of cruising are Micheál Ó Conghaile's "At the Station" (2012), Eamon Somers' "Nataí Bocht" (1994), Keith Ridgway's "Graffiti" (1994) and Joseph O'Connor's "The Hills are Alive" (1992). The four of them challenge the public perception of cruising as a negative practice, exposing instead how the violence that can be enacted comes precisely fuelled by external factors such as homophobia.

The fourth chapter delves into the Irish coming-out novel, a subgenre that, as Carregal explains, emerged in the 1990s defying the silence that had been imposed on gay experiences and fuelled by the Celtic Tiger Ireland's new ideals. Due to a history of repression, "many same-sex attracted teenagers have experienced feelings of self-denial and worthlessness" (63), and it is mainly this journey of self-realisation along with the violence that may come because of the clash of one's identity with a culture of silence that the novels Carregal examines expose. These novels are Desmond Hogan's *The Ikon Maker* (1976), Damian McNicholl's *A Son Called Gabriel* (2004), Tom Lennon's *When Love Comes to Town* (1993), as well as Jarlath Gregory's *Snapshots* (2001) and *G.A.A.Y.: One Hundred Ways to Love a Beautiful Loser* (2005). They deal not only with the coming out experience, but also with the ideas of hegemonic masculinity that permeate throughout the five novels and expose the underlying heteropatriarchal system.

The fifth chapter examines the narratives of AIDS in Irish fiction, focusing on Micheál Ó Conghaile's "Lost in Connemara" (2012), Keith Ridgway's "Andy Warhol" (2018), Anne Enright's *The Green Road* (2015), Desmond Hogan's *A Farewell to Prague* (1995), and Colm Tóibín's *The Blackwater Lightship* (1999). These narratives offer a better understanding of how a "culture of sexual shame and HIV/AIDS stigma" (100) can affect the lives of HIV-positives not only in the past, but also in the present.

The sixth chapter explores Emma Donoghue's works, particularly those set in a more contemporary context: *Stir-Fry* (1994), *Hood* (1995), and *Landing* (2007). These novels, as Carregal thoroughly addresses, stand out precisely because they do not offer an idealised version of queer lives, but rather deal with both the positive experiences and the negative ones. As such, the characters provide a "nuanced depiction of lesbian experience in 1990s and 2000s Dublin" (117), exposing new languages to understand these experiences.

The seventh chapter, focused on gay life and identity in Celtic Tiger Ireland, is concerned with how the politics of this period affected the public discourse regarding the LGBTI+ community, paying particular attention to the capitalisation of the liberal gay's image. The works analysed in this chapter are Tom Lennon's *Crazy Love* (1999), Belinda McKeon's *Tender* (2015), Colm Tóibín's "The Pearl Fishers" (2010), Ridgway's *The Long Falling* (1998), "Angelo" and *The Parts* (2003), and Frank McGuinness's "Chocolate and Oranges" (2018). They all in one way or another defy the public discourse previously mentioned, drawing attention to the underlying issues of this political ideology.

Finally, the last chapter deals with the subgenre of historical fiction, for as Carregal explains, while the previous works had been more interested in their respective historical contexts, from the 2000 onwards the texts started to be more concerned with the past and the way queerness was represented in it. As he argues, this interest in the past “can serve as an act of cultural empowerment, tracing the continuities between past and present while offering alternative renditions of non-heterosexual lives” (143). The historical narratives were thus selected partly because they “re-imagine the past in an attempt to unearth previously silenced voices, experiences and identities” (144). These texts—Emma Donoghue’s *Life Mask* (2004), Sebastian Barry’s *Days Without End* (2016), Jamie O’Neill’s *At Swim, Two Boys* (2017), and John Boyne’s *The Heart’s Invisible Furies* (2017)—exemplify a period of time when the characters had no language to talk about gay, lesbian and bisexual experiences, and consequently “open up a space for the recovery and revaluation of queer histories, traditions and identities, subverting the historical silencing of homosexual lives” (161).

As can be inferred from all of the above, and using the author’s own words, the book sets out to offer “an exploration of gender and sexual dissidence, queer empowerment and social change in Ireland from the 1970s until the present moment” (16), and it definitely fulfils this objective. The author threads the transhistorical narratives as well as their cultural and socio-economic contexts, which are very comprehensively accounted for. The texts used for the analysis are exemplary for the points Carregal is trying to make in every chapter, and the scholarship used is extensive and relevant not only in terms of literary scholarship but also regarding the statistics given to further understand the socio-economic context of the narratives analysed. Although perhaps somewhat limited in terms of the sexualities represented in the stories chosen, as the author himself humbly acknowledges, the book not only offers the reader what it promises but it also opens the doors for further exploration regarding LGBTI+ representation in Irish contemporary literature. All in all, the book proves to be a fresh and pivotal academic contribution to both queer and Irish studies, and anyone interested in either of those fields will find Carregal’s book not only informative but also highly compelling, well-researched, and utterly fascinating.

## BOOK REVIEWS

M<sup>a</sup> ÁNGELES TODA IGLESIA  
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# *Aurora Leigh*, de Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Carme Manuel (intro. y notas) y José Manuel Benítez Ariza (trad.)  
Madrid: Cátedra, 2021, 711 pp.  
ISBN 978-84-376-4284-0

A primera vista, no hay dos obras más diferentes que *Aurora Leigh* (1856) y *Moby Dick*; sin embargo, ambas coinciden en que editarlas, traducirlas y anotarlas plantea una tarea en extremo ambiciosa, por no decir titánica. El extenso poema de Elizabeth Barrett Browning—un texto entre épico y narrativo que desarrolla el crecimiento personal y artístico de su protagonista femenina, pero que también se arraiga profundamente en los conflictos sociales y referencias culturales del siglo diecinueve, además de en un amplio marco de pensamiento clásico y cristiano—tuvo una enorme popularidad internacional hasta aproximadamente la década de 1930, para después caer en el olvido. Como otras obras de autoría femenina, *Aurora Leigh* fue rescatada y reeditada en su idioma original a partir de la década de los setenta del siglo pasado, al hilo de la revisión del canon que tanto afectó al panorama literario decimonónico de la literatura en lengua inglesa. Sin embargo, no estuvo disponible en español hasta 2019, cuando José C. Vales la tradujo para la editorial Alba (Browning 2019).

La nueva traducción y edición que proponen Carme Manuel y José Manuel Benítez Ariza, publicada por Cátedra dos años más tarde, cubre un terreno que solo en parte se superpone con el trabajo de Vales. En la tradición de la colección “Letras universales” de esta editorial, esta versión se dirige prioritariamente a un público académico y en este sentido cumple plenamente su objetivo con una traducción magnífica y un aparato crítico casi abrumador, pero insustituible para cualquiera que se aproxime a *Aurora Leigh* desde esta perspectiva. Traductor y editora están ampliamente a la altura de la empresa que acometen. José Manuel Benítez Ariza aporta su amplia experiencia como escritor de diversos géneros y traductor de varias obras en prosa del siglo diecinueve británico, y sobre todo como poeta; Carme Manuel, Catedrática de Filología Inglesa de la Universidad de Valencia, su larga y fructífera trayectoria en investigación, así como en traducción y edición de textos, en parte como responsable de la Biblioteca Javier Coy que a tantos autores y autoras en lengua inglesa ha hecho accesibles en español.

El texto de *Aurora Leigh* está precedido por una extensa introducción, “correctiva” según los cánones de la retórica clásica; una corrección necesaria en vista de los muchos mitos—en particular el de la inválida victoriana rescatada de un padre tiránico por el amor de un poeta—que han rodeado la vida de Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Para hacerlo, Carme Manuel esboza la conceptualización de la obra de la autora dentro de la cultura hispánica y europea y proporciona una biografía revisionista, firmemente asentada en cartas y diarios, en la que enfatiza el elemento de “autoconstrucción” de esta imagen de inválida, pero sobre todo la formación filosófica y literaria de la autora, destacando de qué modo Browning parte, como mujer, de una posición de exclusión de los grandes depositarios de la cultura, y estableciendo sus vínculos con movimientos sociales y reformistas de la época. Manuel subraya el “impresionante acervo cultural e intelectual” de la escritora y “su impresionante familiaridad con los textos bíblicos, los clásicos griegos y latinos, la literatura inglesa, francesa e italiana de todos los tiempos, con las ideas filosóficas de los pensadores más relevantes de la historia.” Todo lo cual, junto con el “desprecio absoluto” de la autora “a la hora de facilitar al lector la apreciación de tales apuntalamientos,” determina la necesidad del ingente aparato crítico del que hablaremos en breve (Manuel 2021, 65). Por lo demás, la

introducción termina enmarcando el poema en el contexto de su recepción, tanto inmediata como en la crítica posterior, y guiando a quien lee por la trama y la temática de los ocho libros que componen el poema. A continuación aparece una amplísima bibliografía, compuesta por cerca de trescientas referencias, que resulta de enorme utilidad a cualquier persona interesada no solo en la obra de Browning, sino en cualquier aspecto de mediados del siglo diecinueve británico, en particular desde la perspectiva de los estudios culturales y de género; bibliografía que se suma a otras referencias de tipo más general recogidas en las notas.

Benítez Ariza también introduce brevemente su traducción, que a mi parecer es excelente. Llevado del deseo de recoger el máximo número de matices del texto original sin ceder a la “hipertrofia” en el texto meta, y consciente de la importancia del ritmo y el metro en la creación del discurso a menudo argumentativo y reflexivo del poema, elige y justifica una traducción en verso, basada, como explica, en los patrones endecasílabos y heptasílabos de la “silva blanca” castellana, a la que se le añaden ocasionalmente versos de mayor extensión. El resultado es un ritmo a la vez persistente y elástico que se queda en la memoria y que juega con gran habilidad con los patrones sintácticos, recogiendo con éxito las innovaciones que introduce la propia autora, por ejemplo al incorporar un lenguaje propio de la novela realista que se yuxtapone con el discurso metafórico más tradicionalmente “poético”:

**Decía algunas veces: “Aurora, has hecho ya  
tu tarea de hoy? ¿Has leído ese libro?  
Aquí están tus labores de ganchillo”  
como quien dice: “Sé que aquí hay algo malo,  
sé que no te he molido lo bastante  
para amasarte y darte el punto de cocción  
que requieren la vida doméstica y sus usos,  
antes de que la lluvia penetre en mi granero  
y ponga el grano a germinar [...]” (Manuel 2021, 197-98)**

El texto resultante da una gran sensación de coherencia, en la que apenas se vislumbra la “extrañeza” de un lenguaje traducido, pero que sí mantiene la “extrañeza” que surge de la experimentación formal de Browning.

En una reseña de esta edición, José Luis García Martín se lamenta de que esta excelente traducción quede “encarcelada entre infinitas notas que ocupan la mayoría de las páginas” y argumenta que “la adecuada lectura del poema requiere saltar sobre ellas como si no existieran” (2021, n.p.). Nada más falso. Otra cosa es preguntarse cómo hacerlo, físicamente, en el formato quizá poco *user-friendly* de las ediciones de Cátedra, que efectivamente pecan en ocasiones de colocar escasas líneas del poema (como ocurre, por ejemplo, en la página 181) sobre una extensión de notas más bien intimidatoria en un tipo de letra escasamente legible. La lectora duda de si sería deseable leer el poema sin interrupciones, o detenerse únicamente en aquellas que le sean necesarias para la comprensión, o incluso leer todas las notas seguidas como una especie de *Aurora Leigh* paralelo, como la sombra intertextual—en plena línea neovictoriana y postmoderna—del poema. El problema es irresoluble sin una edición en hipertexto, pero el texto impreso obliga a elegir uno de estos caminos, o una combinación de todos. Es sin duda posible argumentar que algunas notas son excesivas y hubieran podido omitirse, pero la mayoría surgen de una enorme energía intelectual, un interés vivo y un profundo conocimiento de los aspectos más diversos de la misma cultura que con tanto acierto describía en una entrevista justamente el otro traductor de *Aurora Leigh*: “aquel mundo pintoresco y dickensiano, cruel, fabril, campestre, urbanita, noble, mísero, educado, violento e hipócrita que pintó Barrett Browning en su obra” (Vales 2020, n.p.). Las notas, por ejemplo, explican alusiones bíblicas, clásicas o Shakesperianas; relacionan la narrativa con episodios de la vida de la escritora, como lo hacen al establecer un paralelo entre las exploraciones literarias sin guía de Aurora y de la propia Browning (Manuel 2021, 176); aclaran referencias contemporáneas, o trazan los ecos de Browning en la obra de Emily Dickinson a través de la palabra “logaritmo” (263); y por supuesto sugieren interpretaciones del texto propuestas por el abundante aparato crítico ya citado. Pero también hay notas que se adentran en los más variopintos aspectos de la cultura material y popular de la época: desde la costumbre de esparcir paja en la calle delante de la casa de un enfermo para amortiguar el ruido de los carruajes (395) hasta las características y horarios del viaje en ferrocarril hasta Marsella (567), pasando por la costumbre florentina de vender jaulas de grillos en la festividad de la Ascensión (598). Exceso, sí, pero un exceso en la línea “melvilliana” de la misma Browning, y un festín tanto para quien estudie con profundidad la época victoriana como para cualquier persona aficionada a ella. Como afirma Félix Rebollo Sánchez, las mil cien notas a pie de página manifiestan “un trabajo arduo, fructífero, con una riqueza cultural que hacía mucho que no leía” (2021, n.p.).

Dicho esto, la propia Carme Manuel afirma que “*Aurora Leigh* es un texto por el que se puede pasear placenteramente,” aunque se aprecie mejor con la ayuda de esa tarea de “zapador” que ofrecen estas notas (2021, 65-66). No hay que olvidar en todo esto la validez del poema en el que se derrocha todo este trabajo, puesto que el objetivo, en último término, es dar a conocer a un público hispanohablante *Aurora Leigh* y todo lo que significó este poema. *Aurora Leigh* incluye, entre otras

muchas cosas, una reivindicación de la valía intelectual de las mujeres, una condena de la narrativa de la mujer caída, una propuesta de familia alternativa, un desafío a los rituales del cortejo y el matrimonio victorianos y sobre todo un estudio del proceso de maduración necesario para reconciliar el arte con la vida. Es un texto a la vez plenamente arraigado en su época y sorprendentemente moderno, y sin duda esta edición, con su brillante traducción y sus múltiples notas, es la forma más recomendable de emprender su lectura.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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***Shakespeare's Sublime  
Ethos: Matter, Stage,  
Form*****Jonathan P. A. Sell**London: Routledge, Routledge Studies in  
Shakespeare, 2021, 278 pp.

ISBN: 9781032018140

***Shakespeare's Sublime  
Pathos: Person,  
Audience, Language*****Jonathan P. A. Sell**London: Routledge, Routledge Studies in  
Shakespeare, 2021, 254 pp.

ISBN: 9781032017945

The notion of the sublime is, to the modern eye, one of the cornerstones of Romantic aesthetic and philosophical criticism. Although Longinus' seminal work on the sublime (first century CE) was not available in English during Shakespeare's lifetime (John Hall's translation dates from 1652), the concept itself was far from foreign to the mind-set of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Indeed, as Jonathan P. A. Sell argues, early modern and Romantic readerships and audiences are effectively contemporaneous as far as the sublime is concerned. Their understanding of sublimity is so similar that the latter seem to provide a fuller and more articulate account of what the former "often thought but not always so well expressed" (11). Sell, who reviews the myriad philosophical and discursive traditions around sublimity (from Antiquity to Romanticism, via the early modern world), considers the sublime to be neither a genre nor a mode, but rather "a potential not always achieved which for its full effect depends on elements harnessed within a work but also on factors and circumstances alien to it," hence occurring "when internal elements combine in the right way with external factors and circumstances" (*Ethos*, 11), and resulting in a momentary experience.

Sell's encyclopaedic two-volume essay on the Shakespearean sublime painstakingly identifies and dissects the workings behind the supposedly ineffable intellectual and emotional awe that overcomes audiences when experiencing Shakespeare, as well as the strategies, techniques, and resources upon which the sublime functions and is constructed in the work of the Bard. The two volumes of this comprehensive study, *Ethos* and *Pathos*, are envisioned as both complementary and free-standing, and together aim to decipher the mystifying pinnacle of sublimity, the holy grail of literary—and generally aesthetic—criticism, by means of a language firmly grounded in a form of solid erudition that deliberately avoids the all too tempting rhetoric of what the author calls "the Sublime Critics." This is not to say that Sell's work is an easy read for a distracted mind: this thorough essay is a fine piece of scholarship, and is addressed to a dedicated reader with the time and intellectual commitment necessary to explore the thought of an impressive list of venerated thinkers, from Empedocles to Digges, Bruno, Bacon, Leibniz, Herder, and Deleuze, whose theories Sell artfully interlaces.

Sell's work constitutes an in-depth analysis of an avenue of research that takes the sublime as an insightful perspective on Shakespeare's oeuvre. Methodologically, the identification, explanation and contextualisation of the means and processes involved in, and leading to, Shakespearean sublimity, and the account that Sell provides of its meanings and signification in terms of philosophical aesthetics, is based on analyses of all of Shakespeare's plays, as well as some of his poetry. As such, these two volumes extend a scholarly approach initiated by David Norbrook in his *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Poetics, 1627-1660* (1999) and continued in Patrick Cheney's *English Authorship and the Early Modern Sublime* (2018), and also anticipated in two further studies which, although avoiding the term sublime, are nevertheless understood by Sell as precursors to his own: *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* (1996), by T.G. Bishop, and *Reason Diminished: Shakespeare and the Marvellous* (1997), by Peter G. Platt.

After an introduction which provides a historical contextualisation of the origins and early history of the concept, focussing on Ancient and Christian models of sublimity (Chapter I, "On the Sublime"), *Shakespeare's Sublime Ethos: Matter, Stage, Form* goes on to consider in detail the means and strategies that establish a mood for the sublime in the audiences of Shakespeare's works. These strategies may operate at the level of invention (Chapter II, "'Brightest Heaven of Invention': Sublime Topics"), topical matter (Chapter III, "'The Fairy Way of Writing': Sublime Matter"), staging and scenography (Chapter IV, "'Twixt Heaven and Earth': Sublime Scenography"), and other mechanisms (Chapter V, "Divine Mechanisms: Sublime Form and Shape"; Chapter VI, "Bastard Art, Innocent Experience"), and ultimately seek to create a threshold beyond which notions of the real-fictional, immanent-transcendent, and material-immaterial are destabilised, where ontological boundaries are blurred, and where the tensions between human beings' mortality, metaphysical aspirations and desire to transcend are explored and exploited.

*Shakespeare's Sublime Pathos: Person, Audience, Language*, for its part, revolves initially around the interplay of character (Chapter I, "The Conundrum of Character"), which Sell understands as "mutualistic" in the sense that character becomes a mutual transaction between Shakespeare's characters and the subjectivities of playgoers and readers by which "transcendence of the material through union with the aesthetic" (Chapter II, "Hollow Men") is achieved. Furthermore, his study considers the particularities of the imagination that enables such "transport of mutualistic character" (Chapter III, "Sympathetic Imagination"), and how the language of passion becomes an ally to the workings of this sympathetic imagination (Chapter IV, "Language of Passion"). The volume concludes with a chapter that recounts how Shakespeare's sublime pathos provides a release from the social self and a gateway to audiences' and readers' "own unknowable and irreducible moral cores" (Chapter V, "The Mutualist's Dividend"), followed by some final reflections on the relationship between sublimity and beauty and perfection ("General Conclusions"), and politics and political change ("Epilogue").

Taken together, then, these two works on Shakespeare's sublime represent an outstanding contribution not only to Shakespeare studies, but more broadly to intellectual history. In seeking to make intelligible the seemingly inexplicable, Sell has succeeded in revealing the secrets of the apparent magic of the sublime.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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***Secrecy and Community  
in 21st-Century Fiction*****María J. López and Pilar Villar-Argáiz, eds.**

New York: Bloomsbury, 2021, 229 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-5013-6553-9

**M**aría J. López and Pilar Villar-Argáiz's groundbreaking collection of essays is an essential read for literary researchers across the field, and will no doubt contribute much to ongoing and future investigations. The volume addresses the role of secrecy in literature on a number of levels, entering into conversation with such diverse thinkers as Barthes, Calinescu, Kermode, Miller, Attridge and Royle. In its exploration of the interconnectivity of theories of secrecy and those of community, it largely expands on the work of Derrida, Nancy and Blanchot. Whilst it builds on studies carried out in Martín Salván, Rodríguez Salas and Jiménez Heffernan's 2013 volume *Community in Twentieth-Century Fiction*, as well as López, Martín Salván and Rodríguez Salas's 2018 volume *New Perspectives on Community and the Modernist Subject: Finite, Singular, Exposed*, what this collection adds to the previously well-defined communitarian perspective is precisely this emphasis on the role of secrecy in the construction (and deconstruction) of communities. Likewise, although there are numerous publications on literary secrecy, few examine the interconnectivity of the concepts of secrecy and community, and fewer still do so in combination with such evocative and novel empirical studies to which this volume lays claim. Whilst the focus of these analyses is on twenty-first-century English fiction, the chosen writers are from greatly diverse backgrounds, allowing for what J. Lopez describes in her introduction as "a comprehensive view of the different national, ethnic and racial communities out of which contemporary English narrative emerges" (5). From the outset, the collection presents a clear and convincing thesis: that the notions of secrecy and community are entangled in ways beyond a simple conjunction; and that literature, as the only medium that allows for the Derridean absolute secret, provides an exemplary space for this entanglement to be further explored.

J. Lopez's introduction provides a concise and compelling overview of the main theoretical lenses from which the literary analyses expand, as well as a brief account of what is to come in each chapter. She succeeds in highlighting to the reader the natural progression of the texts if read in the selected order, tracing the semantic threads that move throughout the book, whilst also demonstrating how the arguments made in the final essay draw us back to where we begin. Indeed, although each individual chapter holds its own pertinence, the success of the volume lies greatly in its composition.

The book is divided into three parts. The first is titled "Secrecy, literary form and the community of readers," in which the scholars enter into dialogues with Barthes, Calinescu, Kermode and Derrida in their explorations of the role of secrecy in literary form. The chapter begins with Attridge's thought-provoking contribution on Scottish writer Ali Smith's 2014 novel *How to be Both*. He draws largely on Derrida's definition of secrecy in *Given Time* and its relevance to the literary

form, experienced as an event, of ergodic texts. He claims that the experience of the ‘act-event’ of literature in turn demands a certain responsibility from the reader (30). Discussions of form are, according to Attridge, inexhaustible precisely because of the secrecy of literary singularity: “which is to say form’s resistance to being absorbed into questions of content” (34). Finally, he connects the secrecy of literary form with the so-called ‘community of readers’—those who recognise the responsibility that the singularity of fiction demands. The reader finds themselves immediately immersed in questions as to both the nature of literary criticism and the dialects of revealing and concealing in literary texts.

This idea of responsibility, or responsible reading, is echoed in Díaz Dueñas’ essay on Canadian writer Alice Munro’s *Too Much Happiness* (2009). This chapter brings Calinescu’s 1994 paper into discussion, in which he defines the ‘critical reader’ as one who re-reads texts with critical attention to narrative secrecy and intertextuality. Approaching Munro’s work from such a perspective reveals its potential to challenge traditional perspectives of femininity through presenting multifaced female characters who resist moral judgement on behalf of the reader. Questions of judgments are also raised in Martín-Salván’s chapter, in which she focusses on the relation between narrative sequence and textual secrets in African American writer Toni Morrison’s *Love*. What is particularly interesting in her contribution is her exploration of how, “once disclosure has taken place, the added information forces us not only into a mental rearrangement of the narrative sequence [...] but also an ethical readjustment” (61).

Lochner’s essay on South-African Scottish writer Zoë Wicomb’s work also draws on Attridge’s notion of literature as an event, but with the aim of exploring “the relationship between authentic knowledge, postcolonial authorship and authority, and the nature of knowing the postcolonial world through reading its literature” (92). She is also committed to Miller’s insistence on the importance of separating the fiction from its social, political or biographical context in order to experience the alterity, or singularity, of a text. She concludes that such an approach holds ‘transformative potential’ for the so-called ‘academic community’; a potential she claims is grounded in the contestation of identitarian notions of community. A clear connection can be made here with the thesis put forward in López’s contribution.

Finally, Royle’s chapter on protective mimicry sets forth a theory of the novel in reference to biological concepts, in which he draws on recent science books in his examination of community and secrecy in fiction, with reference to Derridean secrecy as a kind of haunting presence. We read, “there is no limitation to imitation, to having one’s words haunted by another or others” (40). Further, echoing Attridge, Royle highlights how the singularity, and ungraspability, of the literary text may be understood in terms of community, “for it entails a response to more than one voice [...] human and non-human, alive, dead and not yet born” (41). From here, we arrive at his notion of telepathy in literature, which he connects with Derrida’s discussion of the psychoanalytic concept of the crypt. Royle’s chapter is perhaps the most ambitious of the collection, and I would argue that its success lies partially in his intentionally cryptic and playful style of writing, which perhaps best captures his, and indeed many of the other contributors’, view of the novel as a site of inexhaustible interpretations.

The second section is titled “Communities of Secrecy” and engages with post-phenomenological communitarian theory as presented by such thinkers as Nancy and Blanchot, but with a focus on how these theories enter into dialogue with Derrida’s uneasiness with the notion of community. This section begins with Pascual Garrido’s contribution on South-Asian American author Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland*, in which she draws a connection between theories of community and Royle’s concept of cryptaesthetic resistance, or “the inbuilt opacity that turns literary texts into hermeneutically inexhaustible objects” (108). Particularly compelling in her analysis is her depiction of the lowland in the novel as a site of both revealing and concealing secrets which results in the creation of a crypt. Her argument is that the undecipherability of the area leads to it being simultaneously the symbolic site of the operative community, and the place in which the disclosure of its inevitable collapse is nonetheless revealed.

The concept of the crypt is equally important in Rodríguez-Salas’ chapter on Māori New Zealander Witi Ihimara’s *The Uncle’s Story*, in which he sets out a very convincing application of the concept to the character Sam’s half burnt diary, which conceals silenced past traumas. One thing he adds to the debate is the relevance of Derrida’s notion of hauntology in the haunting yet unspeakable presence of Uncle Sam in the text (a notion we see further developed in Poutiainen’s and Worthington’s chapters). Equally, his analysis draws our attention to the role of secrecy and transgenerational trauma both in the formation of inoperative communities, but also in the mythical foundation of operative bonds.

Similar themes of silenced others are explored in L. Pérez-de-Luque’s contribution. He examines firstly, how English writer Jeanette Winterson’s *The Daylight Gate* gives voice to those previously silenced, and secondly, how secrecy as a formal feature of the text allows the genre of the novel to transform for the reader at moments of disclosure, from historical to fantasy. Especially poignant is his discussion of the traditional operative community’s freight to unveil the secrets of the elective community of witches. He writes, “[t]he predatory hunger of the immanent community knows no limits, as it devours any trace of opposition it may find” (153).

Connected with silenced others is Poutiainen’s focus on the ‘art of not speaking’ in her essay on English writer Hilary Mantel’s *Beyond Black*. Her analysis moves from questions of interiority to exteriority, from the living to the dead, and

from ‘airside secrecy’ to ‘earthside community’ (159). Most compelling, however, is her discussion of what she calls the ‘double voice’ of the novel and the medium’s words encapsulated in it: “[a]ddressed to the audience, these words reveal; addressed to the reader, they reveal that to reveal is to conceal” (165). Finally, as the novel deals with the voices of ghosts and spectres, it is no surprise that Derridean hauntology is also prominent in her analysis, which in turn supports her broader theory of literature, well captured when she says, “[t]o mediate is to read, and to read is to suffer haunting” (157). This statement certainly resonates with the reader as they move into the final section of the volume.

This last section titled “Secrecy, postcolonialism and democracy” explores questions that could hardly be more relevant given our current climate: those related to postcolonialism, nationalism, democracy and the digital age. It begins with Marais’ analysis of Zimbabwean author Holding’s novels *Of Beasts and Beings* and *What Happened to Us*. Marais engages with similar themes to those addressed in Lochner’s, Pascual Garrido’s and Rodríguez-Salas’ chapters, all of which call into question the communal fusion of the operative community. What he brings to the discussion is his exploration of how Holding’s novels address both the failure of post-independence Zimbabwean communities to rid themselves of the colonial relation and how the novel points towards an imagined, futural, post-racial, truly postcolonial community founded on radical alterity.

Marais’ emphasis of the political significance of secrecy is further developed in Blanco Hidalgo’s chapter on American writer Jonathan Franzen’s *Purity*. This essay provides interesting insights into the dangers of the current drive for total political and social transparency, with reference to the theories of Byung-Chul Han. With striking pertinence to our current socio-political context, Hidalgo’s contribution makes for a bracing read. His analysis reveals how *Purity* works in identifying the dissolution of the borders between inner and outer spheres and private and public spaces, drawing on Derrida’s identification of the totally transparent society with the totalitarian space.

Very much connected with this thesis is Derrida’s notion of the ‘democracy to come,’ which is well sketched out in Worthington’s analysis of Vietnamese American writer Thanh Nguyen’s novel *Refugees*. This is a fitting chapter to end on, as it links together so much of the theory that has been discussed thus far: the secret in literature; the secret as an event; ghosts and hauntology; political secrecy and democracy; and notions of hospitality and autoimmunity. Worthington’s conclusion is clear: “[t]his is a secret that is not a secret at all, for it is in full view: however tightly bolted the door, vast the ocean or high the (Mexican!) wall, ghosts will haunt our democratic narratives and encourage rereading, singular and endlessly open at once” (220).

It is a challenge to concisely state the stakes of a volume that engages with such diverse theoretical lenses and literary texts, and one which, I claim, actively resists being refined into a single argument. Nonetheless, the aim of the collection is made clear in the introduction: “we intend to approach the relationship between our two main concepts as what constitutes a *nonrelation*, the ‘impossible filiation’ (Derrida 2008, 117) of the secret *of* community and secrecy *in* community” (5), and it is my firm opinion that this has been successfully achieved.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***The Poetics and Politics of Hospitality in US Literature and Culture***

Amanda Ellen Gerke, Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan and Patricia San José Rico (eds.)

Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020, 236 pp.  
ISBN: 9789004407930

Often conceived as only a virtue, the classic concept of hospitality involves a potential cure for stigma and social exclusion, as it ideally designates the unconditional reception of the stranger into a politically demarcated space. From its earliest figurations in the classical world to later interpretations of the term in the Old Testament, ancient hospitality represents a social and sacred duty that ensures the protection of foreigners—sojourners and pilgrims, primarily—upon arrival into a different home, city or culture (Manzanas and Benito 2017, 4-5). In these contexts, hospitality is altruistic and absolute (Derrida 2000, 25), embracing a radical opening of the home as a philosophy—an ethics, perhaps—of relation. Today, however, the meaning of and conditions for hospitality seem radically different. Reinterpretations of the term within the context of the migration and refugee crises encourage readings of the act of hosting Others as empty words. In our mobile world, the paradigm of hospitality has shifted, becoming utterly commodified: an industry more than a virtue. Hence the strengthening of borders to regulate the arrival of tourists and visitors and prevent the access of migrant flows. This suspension of ancient hospitality in favor of more rigid boundaries begs the question of whether it is desirable or even possible to act hospitably nowadays, situating the concept at the center of critical debates on the construction and imposition of otherness within the nation-state.

Amanda Ellen Gerke, Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan and Patricia San José Rico, in *The Poetics and Politics of Hospitality in US Literature and Culture*, are aware of this conundrum, examining the social, political and cultural implications inherent to hospitality contexts in the US. In their introduction, the editors build on the existing body of literature, probing into the philosophical foundations of the concept of hospitality only to reveal its role as a mechanism for exclusion. They trace this paradigmatic notion from its Kantian origins to its most contemporary readings, focusing on the representation of hospitality in American literature and culture. Gerke, Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan and San José Rico situate hospitality at the intersection of the political and the aesthetic, explaining the aporetic relation of hospitality and hostility in literature and culture while reclaiming this interspace as a refuge for ethical encounters (Michaud in Manzanas and Benito 2017, 7). Drawing essentially from Kant, Levinas and Derrida, the editors devise a critical lens for analyzing intercultural negotiations that vertebrates the rest of the volume through the triangulation of space, language and hospitality. They discuss the central role of literature and culture in the construction of national identities with a focus on power and disempowerment and conclude that hospitality is now a synonym for abuse and violence. As such, the editors suggest, it is only in the expression of intercultural contradictions and convergences found in literary and cultural texts that we can truly convey the intricacies of American policies and politics.

*The Poetics and Politics of Hospitality in US Literature and Culture* contains a total of twelve chapters, the first of them being the aforementioned introduction. The second chapter, “Hospitality from Below? Native Americans in the Host-Guest Binary,” by Puspa Damai, looks into the possibility of reversing power roles within the host-guest binary, applying Gayatri Spivak’s theory of “hospitality from below” to three Native American novels: *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta* (1954), *Ceremony* (1977) and *Flight* (2007). Damai aptly demonstrates that hospitality, as a structure, has been historically abused and argues that it can also be *flipped over* to challenge the ideology of colonialism from a postcolonial perspective. In this reversal, the author identifies a recourse for the decolonization of Native American experience, interpreting the liminal figure of the “resident alien” from a planetary worldview.

Chapter three, “Language Interaction and Hospitality: Combating the *Hosted-Host* Figure,” addresses the Foucauldian correlation of knowledge and power with a focus on code-switching. It approaches language as the ultimate code for hospitality and examines it as the architect of linguistic spaces endemic to, in this case, migrant experience. Amanda Ellen Gerke’s contribution focuses specifically on Junot Díaz’s *This Is How You Lose Her* (2012) and Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street* (1983) and reads them through the figure of the “hosted host” (38). The “hosted host” functions as a frame for concentric hospitality, as it temporarily expands the host-guest binary giving way to internal hierarchies within migrant communities. These concentric structures respond, according to Gerke, to a male desire to gain political power, relying on control strategies that feed on patriarchal conceptions of gender.

Through the lens of sociolinguistic hospitality and code-switching, Luisa María González Rodríguez explores linguistic demarcations of space in Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street* (1983) and Piri Thomas’ *Down These Mean Streets* (1967). Drawing on the Levinasian contention that language is an act of hospitality, González Rodríguez traces representations of linguistic encounters between migrant guests and hosts, examining the ways in which ethnolinguistic identities are constructed through the negotiation of language, power and prevailing stereotypes. Hence, “Latino Immigrants at the Threshold: a Sociolinguistic Approach to Hospitality in US *Barriocentric* Narratives” interprets the acceptance or refusal of the prestige language by Mexican and Puerto Rican communities as a mechanism to defy a logic of exclusion, configuring migrant identities as hybrid and liminal, while exposing vulnerability to question the possibility of hospitality in the US.

Following up on this notion of sociolinguistic hospitality, José R. Ibáñez’s contribution, “(In)Hospitable Languages and Linguistic Hospitality in Hyphenated American Literature: the Case of Han Jin,” analyzes Chinese author Ha Jin’s “exilic condition” (81) through the adoption and defense of the English language over his mother tongue. Ibáñez describes Ha Jin’s decision to write in English as a mechanism for survival, studying “In Defence of Foreignness” (2010) and *The Writer as Migrant* (2008) as examples of how such decision can challenge the rules of conditional hospitality. He claims that Ha Jin’s *exile* from his native language and its political connotations allowed the writer to secure a literary career whilst escaping limited approaches to language. As such, Ibáñez reads hospitality as a plurilingual negotiation that opens up as a metaphorical space for reimagining notions of belonging, cross-cultural identity and communication.

Moving from language and into literary representations of hospitality, Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan redefines the term in “The Contention for Jollity and Gloom: Hospitality in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Historical Short Fiction.” Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan posits hospitality from a Kantian lens, as a limited admission based on the condition that the context of hospitality may not be abused to harm the host. With this in mind, Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan reads Nathaniel Hawthorne’s early short fiction—“The May-Pole of Merry Mount” (1836), “The Gentle Boy” (1833) and “Endicott and the Red Cross” (1838), specifically—through the author’s religious concerns and political beliefs, looking into the ways in which religious tolerance is ironized in Hawthorne’s early writings to question the foundations of America as a nation.

Laura López Peña also provides a compelling analysis of unconditional hospitality in her chapter “(In)Hospitable Encounters in Herman Melville’s *Clarel*,” where she spells out the difficulties of administering open hospitality in Herman Melville’s *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* (1876) and, secondarily, in previous works such as *Moby Dick* (1851). Drawing from Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Martin Buber, Hannah Arendt and Judith Butler, López Peña addresses representations of community and hospitable encounters in Melville’s work to interrogate the possibility of embracing otherness to configure a dialogic host-guest relation. While she concludes that such relational bond remains unsuccessful in some of Melville’s depictions of social encounters due to fear of the Other, López Peña identifies a possibility for unconditional hospitality in the character of Rolfe, who engages in open dialogues, embodying a multiplicity of thought systems and worldviews.

In the following chapter, “Eating, Ethics and Strangers: Hospitality and Food in Ruth Ozeki’s Novels,” Cristina Garrigós turns to *My Year of Meats* (1998), *All Over Creation* (2003) and *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013) by Ruth Ozeki, to argue that food can become instrumental in the adoption of unconditional hospitality, as it stands for a sign of hospitable connection and contact. Garrigós interprets the act of eating and of feeding Others as an ethics of encounter that fosters mutual understanding and reciprocity, erasing difference between hosts and strangers. Yet, she also posits hospitality beyond its Biblical representations, as an act of metaphorical consumption and cannibalism that, as Manzanar and

Benito illustrate, proves that “[t]he most extreme manifestation of hospitality is being devoured by the host” (2017, 4). This meaning reversal of the ethical act of offering and sharing food points to a transformation in Ozeki’s understanding of the relation between hospitality and eating, which, Garrigós argues, leads to “hospitality through disembodiment” (151) or, in other words, to a radical dissolution of boundaries pointing to our worldly interconnections and interdependencies.

Patricia San José Rico speaks out against systems of exclusion in “‘It’s a Long Way to Tipperary’: the Relation between Race and Hospitality in the Irish-American Experience and its Literary Representation,” where she navigates the troubled waters of American migration, investigating the relation between racism and hostile hospitality through late twentieth-century Irish-American novels. San José Rico delves into representations of Irish-American experience and details the processes whereby Irish migrants in America became rapidly assimilated to their host community. Drawing on Noel Ignatiev, San José Rico claims that acceptance in the host country depends on the complete erasure of difference, understanding race as a marker of exclusion that is not necessarily based on physical or linguistic dissimilarities. San José Rico expands the term to encompass cultural, religious and social specificities, too, which trigger hostile attitudes against the Irish in Frank McCourt’s *Tis* (1999), Mary Gordon’s *The Other Side* (1989) and Taylor Cadwell’s *Captains and the Kings* (1972).

Ana María Manzanás Calvo’s contribution, “Hospitality Rituals and Caribbean Migrants: Tom Wolfe’s *Back to Blood*, Ana Lydia Vega’s ‘Encancaranublado,’ and Francisco Goldman’s *The Ordinary Seaman*,” revolves around the notion of Derridean “hostipitality,” or hospitality at the limen, exploring the tensions that spring when Caribbean migrants arrive in the US. Manzanás Calvo dissects transitional and transactional spaces of hospitality in Francisco Goldman’s *The Ordinary Seaman* (1997), Ana Lydia Vega’s ‘Encancaranublado’ (2001) and Tom Wolfe’s *Back to Blood* (2012), focusing on the interactions among migrants and between migrants and Americans. She does so to demonstrate how hospitality, in migration contexts, often implies limited and unstable incorporations of the Other, inasmuch as it denotes hostility. Manzanás Calvo explores representations of bodies in and of water that are tethered to the past to reinterpret the figure of the contemporary migrant as a “neo-slave” (190), who occupies spaces oscillating between acceptance and rejection. Hospitality, then, is not conceived as a connective, ethical gesture, but as a liminal and limited social act forcing racialized characters to perpetually navigate intermediate positions within the host-guest binary.

In “Tim Z. Hernández’s *Mañana Means Heaven*: Love on the Road and the Challenge of Multicultural Hospitality,” María Antònia Oliver-Rotger evinces how hospitality is inherently tied to issues of mobility and positionality, drawing attention to the shifting host-guest identifications in Tim Z. Hernández’s *Mañana Means Heaven* (2013). A fictionalized account of Jack Kerouac’s actual meeting with Mexican Beatrice Franco, *Mañana Means Heaven* advances readings of the road as a transgressive location where social, cultural and political boundaries can be dissolved to reclaim the story of the Other beyond clichéd fantasies or representations. Hence, as Oliver-Rotger points out, hospitality in the novel is reasserted as the power structure that sustains hierarchical sociocultural distributions and reinterpreted as an example of Ricoeurian “narrative hospitality” (1996, 6-7): as a narrative that vindicates the figure of Bea Franco by retelling her story and liberating her from the romantic plot as well as from Kerouac’s othering gaze.

The final chapter, “‘Parasites in a Host Country’: Migrants, Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Other Zombies in *The Walking Dead*,” by Ángel Mateos-Aparicio and Jesús Benito Sánchez, concludes the book with a discussion on migrant parasitism and the im/possibility of hospitality in zombie fiction. Mateos-Aparicio and Benito Sánchez concentrate on the ambivalences of inclusion through the figurative reception of the undead that, Kyle William Bishop writes, are “a metaphor that reflects prevailing social anxieties—such as oppression, violence, inequality, consumption and war—that plague the contemporaneous culture that produces any given zombie narrative” (2010, 207). Hence, it comes as no surprise that Mateos-Aparicio and Benito Sánchez read the zombie creature in *The Walking Dead* (2010-) in connection with neoliberalism and current immigration debates. Extrapolating the helplessness, dehumanization and social consent to violence surrounding migration to zombie contexts, Mateos-Aparicio and Benito Sánchez reveal both a reticence to show hospitality or admit strangers—both zombie and human—that questions the appeal to unconditional hospitality and a promise of radical inclusion that, in the series, results in murder and literal cannibalism. Hence, the book’s final chapter condenses its main premise while showing no definite solution to our current hospitality crisis. Mateos-Aparicio and Benito Sánchez pose an additional uneasiness about violence that the spectator may experience as one of the anxieties of hosting or settling in an increasingly hostile world.

On the whole, *The Poetics and Politics of Hospitality in US Literature and Culture* is a valuable addition to the growing field of hospitality studies, as it conflates experiences of exclusion with imaginings about inclusion and political transformation. Gerke, Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan and San José Rico compile a wide range of contributions that trace the concept from a variety of critical angles, ensuring the volume’s relevance for those

interested in American literature and culture, migration, space, border and transnational studies. *The Poetics and Politics of Hospitality in US Literature and Culture* calls for a genuine reappraisal of literary and cultural texts, stressing their potential as agents of change. Ironically, change is precisely what this volume entices, reflecting on hospitality as a conceptual prism to discern the cultural, political and social patterns that prefigure the future potentialities of cultural representation, language and literary space.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

EVA PELAYO SAÑUDO

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# ***Trauma, Gender and Ethics in the Works of E.L. Doctorow***

María Ferrández San Miguel

New York: Routledge, 2020, 218 pp.

ISBN: 9780367236274

**M**aría Ferrández San Miguel's *Trauma, Gender and Ethics in the Works of E.L. Doctorow* (2020) constitutes a monograph about the prolific and critically acclaimed E.L. Doctorow by particularly concentrating on four of his novels: *Welcome to Hard Times* (1960), *The Book of Daniel* (1971), *Ragtime* (1975) and *City of God* (2000). Unlike other book-length studies previously published about this Jewish American author, Ferrández San Miguel has approached his work not just from a specific framework of analysis but combining analytical tools from trauma studies and feminist criticism with a view to discern an underlying ethical concern. Through this hypothesis of the so-called "ethical impulse" (5), the study also sets out to prove the social projects involved in the profession of writing literature. This undoubtedly contributes to validating its power in healing human suffering due to pressing problems of oppression and violence such as in the historic Holocaust but also against women as well as 'other' races or social minorities. After the close-reading analysis of each of the four chosen novels that establish the corpus, a final chapter retakes the discussion about the ethical and political implications of literature, which again highlights the overarching focus as it expands the results from a perspective considering also reader response.

The book is based on an enlightening research of core notions relevant to the fields of trauma and feminist studies, using a theoretical framework which both exposes the denunciation of victimization and intersectional oppression (suffered by gender, race and class minorities) and offers a space for resilience and healing. It also presents the growing relevance of literature as a tool of social and cultural analysis, and particularly in the case of Doctorow's work for the expression or representation of trauma experiences that are otherwise difficult to articulate. Hence the focus on traditional trauma categories of the victim, perpetrator and bystander. These concepts are particularly refreshed by shifting attention to the question of "insidious trauma" (6), with the tentative claim that this is intimately related to the identity issues reflected in the works analyzed. In this respect, one of the most salient aspects of the research is the author's introduction and her proficient exposition of the fields of study supporting literary analysis, perfectly summarizing for the (un)familiar scholar the keystones and evolution of trauma theory and feminist criticism, including postmodernism and poststructuralism as key subjects in which Doctorow's production has been mostly interpreted.

Ferrández San Miguel's study also provides a clear structure that makes it easy for readers to follow since the book is neatly structured into separate sections, each corresponding to one of the novels discussed. The first chapter, "*Welcome to Hard Times: The Frontier Reconsidered*," deals with the relationship between trauma and gender identity as reflected in Doctorow's debut novel. One of the main traumatic experiences discussed is precisely rape, set in a context of further physical violence and sheer destruction of life. Particularly interesting is the analysis of "the victim-bystander-perpetrator

figure” which goes “beyond binarism” or problematizes traditional trauma categories (52). Ferrández San Miguel shows how character description relies on the ambiguity of subject positions and hence traumatic notions. In other words, one cannot easily pinpoint responsibility or identify victims and perpetrators since the issue of collusion, for example, challenges the illusion of innocence and makes it difficult to ascribe the degree of participation in the experience of trauma. At the same time, this uncertainty is linked to the reversal of traditional gender roles typical to the genre of the Western in that the male and female characters are simplistically depicted as the perpetrator of violence and the vulnerable victim respectively.

The second chapter, “*The Book of Daniel: A Memoir Gone Awry*,” similarly addresses the complex aftermath of trauma that can lead to the paradoxical condition of a victim becoming a future oppressor. Here a traumatic childhood for the murder of his parents is understood as the explanatory event that turns the main character into a perpetrator of gender violence. Although the literary analysis focuses more on memory, repression and reenactments of traumatic violent scenes, the fact that fictional Daniel tends to victimize everyone in general does not preclude the explicit denunciation of gender violence. Particular episodes of sexual abuse are analyzed in connection to reader response, pointing both to the necessity as well as dangers of bestowing this kind of representation. One troubling effect is how witnessing violence through the act of the imagination can produce “ethical hesitancy” (95) as feelings of disgust or even voyeurism may entail engendering undesired answers and foreclosing attempts for the reader to act. Hence, the effectiveness of the critique could be downplayed.

The third chapter, “*Ragtime: Remembering the Future*,” discusses the experimentation of form and how Doctorow’s innovative style relates to the adamant representation of social issues, moving from trauma to resilience, from the individual to the collective, and from the reflection of violence against women to that caused by intersecting forms of oppression such as racism or socio-economic exploitation, among others. All in all, this section delineates a sharp scrutiny of US society and its manifold accounts of traumatic or violent experiences going beyond physical abuse or overt discrimination and including institutional oppression and the power of cultural norms that also serve to uphold the hegemonic status quo.

The last analytical chapter, “*City of God: With Eyes Past All Grief*,” returns again to memory and the crucial question about the possible limits or problems of representation, now in relation to the trauma caused by the Holocaust. Nonetheless, Ferrández San Miguel addresses the crucial concern of equally representing or giving voice to a female perspective as she is particularly aware of the fact that critical analyses of the so-called genre of Holocaust fiction “tend to overshadow a number of relevant aspects with regard to gender” (162).

On the whole, *Trauma, Gender and Ethics in the Works of E.L. Doctorow* is a remarkable and exceedingly well-researched study that reads E.L. Doctorow’s literature through an innovative and intricate lens. Apart from the exquisite writing style, one of the book’s greatest virtues lies in its theoretical exuberance, which constitutes an essential tool to navigate the analysis and understating of the novels discussed. It is a brilliant study offering compelling and insightful material that should prove to be of great interest to lovers of literature and specialists in the fields of feminist and trauma studies.



## BOOK REVIEWS

EDURNE GOÑI ALSÚA

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# ***Crossing Linguistic Boundaries: Systemic, Synchronic and Diachronic Variation in English***

**Paloma Núñez-Pertejo, María José López Couso, Belén Méndez-Naya y Javier Pérez-Guerra, eds.**

Londres: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. 288 pp.  
ISBN: 9781350053854

**E**l volumen *Crossing Linguistic Boundaries. Systemic, Synchronic and Diachronic Variation in English*, editado por Paloma Núñez-Pertejo, María José López Couso, Belén Méndez-Naya y Javier Pérez-Guerra, está compuesto por once artículos, divididos en dos capítulos. El primero, “Tensioning the System,” contiene siete de ellos, entre los que podemos establecer cinco áreas temáticas: la formación de palabras, dos estudios sobre sendos términos, fraseología, *idioms* y entornos discursivos. La segunda parte, “Synchronic and Diachronic variation,” consta de cuatro artículos que versan sobre el inglés hablado en Gibraltar, el uso del pronombre *they* en singular en los dialectos de India, Hong Kong y Singapur, el uso de los subjuntivos y el *stative progressive* de la variación inglesa de Singapur.

En la primera parte, el capítulo “Word-search as Word-formation? The case of *uh* and *um*” contribuye a la definición de los vocablos mencionados en el título como palabras, en vez de como marcadores pragmáticos (Erard 2008), y al estudio de su uso. Basado en Tottie (2019), que utiliza el corpus de la revista *Time* y en el *Corpus of Contemporary American English* para la investigación de términos dentro del vocabulario periodístico, el autor desarrolla su propio estudio cuantitativo, basado en el *Santa Barbara Corpus*. Para ello, selecciona 40 de las 60 conversaciones grabadas y transcritas, con una muestra de unas 175.000 palabras. Aunque es un artículo muy completo, echaríamos en falta una pequeña referencia a la definición de estos términos en el inglés británico, para poder establecer una comparación entre ambos dialectos.

En la segunda área, “The Fall and Rise of English *any*” es un estudio sincrónico del término *any*. Los autores se enfrentan aquí a dos preguntas, a saber, por qué su uso decayó tras el *Old English* y por qué volvió a resurgir con

posterioridad, durante las primeras décadas del *Middle English*, en un lapso de tiempo de tres siglos (XI-XIV). Al igual que en el resto de los artículos, este también presenta una novedad al no focalizar en el uso gramatical de *any* en las estrategias de la doble negación de la lengua inglesa (como, por ejemplo, en Hoeksema 2012), que tienden a estudiar el periodo que comprende los siglos XIV, XV y XVI (*Middle English* y *Early Modern English*). Aun entendiendo la dificultad del estudio propuesto, la conclusión carece de la profundidad a la que se ha llegado en el desarrollo del estudio.

Asimismo, “Grammaticalizing Adverbs of English: The Case of *still*” se centra en un término, *still*, y la expansión de este adverbio temporal y espacial, que ha dado lugar a tres escisiones semánticas. Partiendo de una perspectiva diacrónica, que observa la evolución de la frase adverbial en el inglés moderno, la autora profundiza en los debates actuales sobre estas divisiones. Son muy relevantes tanto las conclusiones a las que llega como el apéndice sobre el uso diacrónico del término estudiado.

En la tercera área, “Demonstratives licensed by Cultural Co-presence” examina dos frases nominales demostrativas, una referencial y otra predicativa que el hablante asume, desde un punto de vista sociocultural, que son de dominio común. De esta manera, el estudio de los demostrativos evoluciona hacia una perspectiva apenas investigada antes, la sociocultural, siguiendo el camino marcado por Acton y Potts (2014), en contraposición a los estudios previos, que han tendido a centrarse en los pronombres desde el punto de vista del entendimiento entre dos hablantes, tal y como lo definieron Clark and Marshall (1981).

Por otro lado, en “Revisiting ‘*it*-extraposition’: The Historical Development of Constructions with Matrices (*it*)/(*there*) + *be* + Noun Phrase followed by a Complement Clause,” los autores investigan el desarrollo diacrónico de este tipo de construcciones (de complemento, cuya matriz es una frase predicativa que contiene una frase nominal completa, seguida de una subordinada). A su vez, y siguiendo a Traugott (2008), delinean las razones para caracterizarlas como “macroestructuras” y posicionan el estudio dentro del campo de la semiótica (Langacker 2002). Sin embargo, clarificaría la conclusión una explicación más específica sobre el este posicionamiento.

Con referencia a los *idioms*, en “Prosodic Templates in English Idioms and Fixed Expressions,” el autor abandona los caminos tradicionales de estudio—gramatical (Horvath and Siloni 2017), semántico (Gehrke and McNally 2019) o lexicográfico (Ayto 2009)—para centrarse en el estudio de sus rasgos prosódicos, más concretamente, en el estudio de los patrones de sílabas acentuadas y no acentuadas, basadas en el concepto de *foot*, dejando atrás estudios sobre el mismo tema como el de Shiobara (2010). Si bien este artículo enlaza dos campos, *idioms* y prosodia, aparentemente opuestos, pensamos que podría haberse adentrado más en las implicaciones semánticas relacionadas con la estructura métrica, aunque esto, quizás, pueda ser objeto de otro estudio vinculado al que tenemos entre manos.

En el último artículo, titulado “On Grammatical Change and Discourse Environments,” se investiga el rol que desempeñan los entornos discursivos en el cambio lingüístico en los niveles micro (organización lingüística de la expresión) y macro (tradiciones discursivas, marcos culturales, contextos socio-históricos y debate social), desde tres perspectivas: Discurso y tradiciones textuales, entornos discursivos en los que se produce el cambio lingüístico (siguiendo a Petré 2014) y entornos discursivos con referencia a los escenarios culturales y contextos socio-históricos de una comunidad de hablantes. El autor analiza el “cambio desde arriba”; sin embargo, se clarificaría más el conjunto si se hubiera completado el estudio con alguna referencia al cambio opuesto.

En la segunda parte, “How British is Gibraltar English?” analiza el dialecto inglés hablado en el Peñón, ya que este supone una excepción sociolingüística (Weston 2011). Los autores estudian el resultado de 312 cuestionarios (que corresponden al 1% de la población), para situar esta variación lingüística dentro de las dos grandes tendencias dialectales del inglés, británico y americano, y para identificar patrones de cambio lingüístico. Aunque entendemos que la recogida de encuestas es una labor ardua, consideramos que un porcentaje del 1% puede no ser relevante, debido a lo exiguo de la muestra. Por otro lado, 155 encuestas entre menores de 20 años, grupo poblacional que suele detentar el cambio lingüístico, y que está en contacto con el inglés americano (pensemos en series de televisión y películas, por ejemplo), frente a 38 del grupo de población de más de 60 años, quienes tienden a un uso más conservador de la misma, puede indicar que los patrones de análisis no se han perfilado suficientemente.

“It is important that Mandatives (*should*) be studied across Different World Englishes and from a Construction Grammar Perspective” profundiza en las construcciones subordinadas de subjuntivo regidas por un verbo de sugerencia, posibilidad o mandato, a raíz de un titular publicado por la agencia Reuters que derivó en una discusión sobre su gramaticalidad en el foro *Language Log*. Tomando de fondo el cambio lingüístico, cuya vanguardia va marcada por el inglés americano (Hundt 2018), y tras enumerar las estructuras de las que dispone el hablante, la autora completa una investigación piloto de Hundt (2018), estudiando los componentes disponibles en el *International Corpus of English* (ICE). Tras demostrar que el detonante de uso de los subjuntivos es léxico y dialectal, se explica la discusión a la que estos resultados inducen dentro del campo de la gramática.

Para terminar, el volumen incluye dos artículos referidos al uso del inglés en Asia. En “Singular *they* in Asian Englishes: A Case of Linguistic Democratization?,” la autora parte del uso del pronombre *they* como referente para cualquier sujeto, tanto singular como plural en un contexto inmediato, que podemos trazar hasta Chaucer y ha sido ampliamente estudiado (Parini 2013). Tras un examen diacrónico de este uso, la autora se centra en los tres dialectos del inglés en los territorios asiáticos de India, Hong Kong y Singapur, estudia sus antecedentes, a la luz de la teoría del modelo dinámico de Schneider, prestando atención a sus substratos lingüísticos, para acabar describiendo la utilización del término en las variaciones lingüísticas mencionadas. Hubiera sido relevante que se mencionara la posible influencia, si existiera, del uso sincrónico del término *they* como pronombre no marcado para evitar la distinción masculino/femenino.

“The Stative Progressive in Singapore English: A Panchronic Perspective” profundiza en los tiempos progresivos o continuos, tiempos de los que carecen lenguas muy cercanas al inglés. Aunque la literatura más abundante los estudia desde el punto de vista diacrónico, de su formación y desarrollo, y sincrónico, de su uso actual en los diferentes dialectos del inglés, este artículo sugiere una aproximación pancrónica, en la que, de acuerdo con las palabras de la autora, se emplea el pasado para explicar la gramaticalización presente. Por otro lado, como avance sobre el estudio de Ziegeler (2017), también se trata el uso de los progresivos en dos dialectos recientes del inglés, el de Singapur y el de India, con un corpus basado en las formas de *be + have* en contextos adversativos y sus restricciones léxicas en el inglés de Singapur. Quizás, este último epígrafe hubiera requerido un pequeño apunte teórico, ya que siempre se ha definido al verbo *have* como estativo y en el texto aparecen ejemplos de su uso no estativo.

A pesar de todas las puntualizaciones que se han realizado, se puede afirmar que más allá de la profusión de los temas que los autores nos presentan, gracias a sus profundas explicaciones, tablas y análisis y a las sólidas referencias, en todos los artículos encontramos nuevas perspectivas en los estudios de sus campos correspondientes, lo que supone un enriquecimiento indudable de los mismos. Por todo ello, podemos concluir que este volumen supone un avance en la definición y descripción actual de la lengua inglesa y las variaciones que vienen dadas por su uso global, por lo que su lectura es muy recomendable.



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