

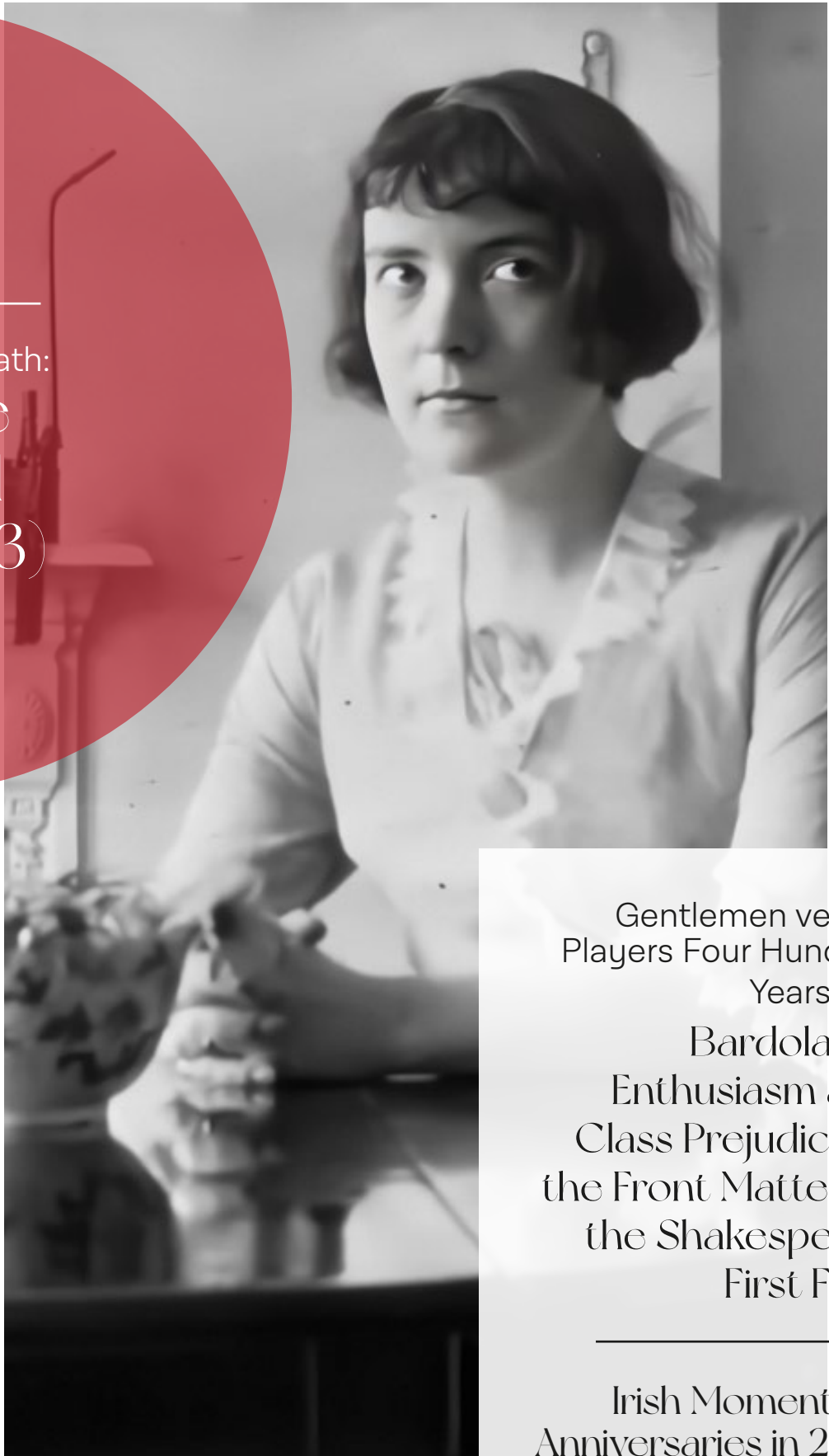
TRIBUTES  
LITERATURE  
AND CULTURE

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Dancing with Death:  
Katherine  
Mansfield  
(1888–1923)

The History of  
English Studies  
in Spain

Sobre el  
profesorado  
universitario  
de Filología  
Inglesa hace  
cuarenta años:  
recuerdos,  
curiosidades,  
reflexiones



Gentlemen versus  
Players Four Hundred  
Years On:

Bardolatry,  
Enthusiasm and  
Class Prejudice in  
the Front Matter of  
the Shakespeare  
First Folio

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Irish Momentous  
Anniversaries in 2023



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**Graphic design** TONI CAMPS  
www.deacorde.com

**ISSN** 1697-4646

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FERNANDO GALVÁN

UNIVERSIDAD DE ALCALÁ

# *Sobre el profesorado universitario de Filología Inglesa hace cuarenta años: recuerdos, curiosidades, reflexiones*



Aunque carecemos de un estudio global de los setenta años de Estudios Ingleses en la Universidad española (1952-2022), sí que disponemos de algunos estudios parciales, con abundante documentación, que nos ofrecen información sobre el devenir de nuestra disciplina durante más de medio siglo. El primero de ellos puede parecer muy antiguo, pues es de hace cuarenta años, pero ilustra bien el estado de la profesión en la época. Me refiero al libro editado por Julio César Santoyo y Pedro Guardia, *Treinta años de Filología Inglesa en la Universidad Española (1952-1981)* (1982), que contiene datos muy interesantes sobre esos primeros treinta años. Más recientemente, Tomás Monterrey ha hecho también diversos acercamientos, muy documentados (Monterrey 2000, 2003a, 2003b y 2022), sobre la época anterior y posterior a 1952, el año en que se implantaron los primeros estudios universitarios en Salamanca, seguidos inmediatamente por los de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid (curso 1953-1954) y los de la Universidad de Barcelona (curso 1954-1955) (Santoyo y Guardia, 5-8). El propósito de este artículo, sin embargo, es más modesto, pues su objetivo no es otro que compartir con los lectores ciertos recuerdos, curiosidades y reflexiones sobre nuestro profesorado y su contexto administrativo y académico, en torno a la fecha en que se publicó precisamente el libro de Santoyo y Guardia. Vayan estas páginas en sincero homenaje a ellos y a toda esa generación de anglistas de la época que, en buena medida, han hecho posible, con su dedicación y esfuerzo, que los Estudios Ingleses, o la Filología Inglesa, en España se encuentre en la situación—a mi juicio tan favorable—en la que está ahora.

Los inicios—como suele ocurrir—fueron muy difíciles, y lentos, pues el hecho cierto es que treinta años después del comienzo, a pesar de que los estudios estaban implantados en un buen número de universidades en todo el territorio nacional, el cuerpo de profesores estables—lo que hoy llamamos “permanentes,” y entonces eran funcionarios numerarios—era ínfimo, y ello a pesar de que las generaciones de estudiantes no habían cesado de crecer desde finales de los años cincuenta en adelante, y no solo en las universidades sino también en los Institutos de Enseñanza Media. Cuando leemos el libro de Santoyo y Guardia constatamos que apenas había unas tres decenas de profesorado permanente a principios de los años ochenta, que constituían la que podríamos llamar primera generación de anglistas españoles.

Téngase en cuenta, por ejemplo, que los primeros Catedráticos de Universidad, ambos en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, fueron Emilio Lorenzo Criado (en 1958) y Esteban Pujals Fontrodona (en 1961). Es más, unos diez años después, en 1970, solo había cuatro Catedráticos más: Patricia Shaw (en la Universidad de Barcelona, en 1966), Doireann MacDermott (en la de Zaragoza, en 1967), María Jesús Pérez Martín (en la de Valladolid, en 1970) y Javier Coy Ferrer (en la de La Laguna, en 1970). En otras categorías inferiores del escalafón funcional apenas había algún Profesor Adjunto (el equivalente del Profesor Titular actual), como Asunción Alba Pelayo, que había obtenido una plaza en 1966; o algún Profesor Agregado, una categoría que ya no existe, y que era la antesala, como explicaré después, del puesto de Catedrático numerario: la propia Asunción Alba, en 1969, se convirtió en Profesora Agregada numeraria en Valladolid.

1970 es una fecha relevante en la historia de la educación en España, pues es el año en el que se promulga la Ley General de Educación, también conocida como “Ley Villar Palasí,” por el nombre del Ministro de Educación de la época. Como su implementación fue necesariamente paulatina y se prolongó durante una década, debido a los numerosos cambios de estructura y de organización escolar, así como a las importantes inversiones presupuestarias que implicaba (la introducción de la enseñanza obligatoria hasta los 14 años, el ciclo de Educación Preescolar, el de Enseñanza General Básica de ocho años dividida en dos etapas, el del Bachillerato de tres años, el de la Formación Profesional, etc.), su desarrollo pleno vino a coincidir con la muerte de Franco y el inicio de la transición democrática. En cuanto a la Universidad, la ley trataba de responder a las necesidades imperiosas de una institución que durante la segunda mitad de los años sesenta había vivido importantes conflictos internos de todo orden, tanto en España como en el resto del mundo. Muchas de esas demandas (como las derivadas de un escasísimo profesorado para atender el aumento de estudiantes y la creación de nuevas universidades) no pudieron ser abordadas en la década de los setenta y hubo que esperar a mitad de los años ochenta, cuando el primer gobierno socialista (que salió de las elecciones de octubre de 1982) puso en marcha la Ley de Reforma Universitaria (LRU) en 1983.

Yo comencé mis estudios universitarios de Filología Inglesa en la Universidad de La Laguna en octubre de 1974. Era una Licenciatura de cinco años, y en los tres primeros el plan de estudios incluía materias comunes con otras Licenciaturas (Hispanicas, Románicas, Francesa, Clásicas). Aunque en el primer año rondábamos los cien alumnos, los que cursamos y llegamos finalmente a “graduarnos” en la Licenciatura en Filología Inglesa éramos, en realidad, un grupo que no alcanzaba la cifra de veinte estudiantes. Tuvimos la suerte de recibir una atención personalizada y una dedicación profesional y entusiasta de nuestros profesores, varios de ellos no españoles. Pero, aunque los estudiantes no fuéramos lógicamente conscientes de ello, lo cierto es que durante esos cinco años de carrera solo hubo en la Licenciatura dos profesores numerarios (o permanentes) de inglés: una Catedrática, Asunción Alba Pelayo, incorporada en 1973, y un Profesor Agregado (luego Catedrático), Pedro Jesús Marcos Pérez, en 1975. El resto eran profesores interinos o contratados. Y cuando ambos se trasladaron en 1980 a la Universidad de Alicante el Departamento quedó sin ningún profesor numerario, hasta que dos años después, a finales de 1982, Bernd Dietz y yo obtuvimos sendas plazas de Profesor Adjunto.

La situación que acabo de describir no era muy distinta en esos años en los restantes departamentos de Inglés de las universidades españolas, al menos en lo que se refiere a la situación del profesorado y de los planes de estudio. Como decía más arriba, en 1970 apenas había seis Catedráticos numerarios en toda la universidad española; en los años siguientes, hasta más o menos la época en que yo me convertí en estudiante universitario y me licencié (1974-1979), el número se había incrementado, pero no de manera sustancial. Como recogen Santoyo y Guardia (12), en 1975 había diez cátedras de Lengua y Literatura Inglesas cubiertas. Además de las citadas antes, se trataba de las que obtuvieron en esos cinco años (1970-1975) Asunción Alba Pelayo en La Laguna (1973), Cándido Pérez Gállego en Zaragoza (1973), Rafael Fente Gómez en Granada (Profesor Agregado allí desde 1974 y Catedrático desde enero de 1976), y Francisco García Tortosa en Santiago (Profesor Agregado y luego Catedrático allí entre 1973 y 1976) y Sevilla (a partir de marzo de 1976). En esos cinco años, además, se habían producido varios cambios de destino, de forma que Patricia Shaw pasó a ocupar, en 1971, la cátedra de Oviedo; Doireann MacDermott, al año siguiente, la de Barcelona; Javier Coy la de Salamanca (en 1971). También obtienen pocos años después la cátedra (en la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela) dos Profesores Agregados, Pedro Jesús Marcos (1976) y Antonio Garnica Silva (1978), si bien ambos se trasladan pronto a las Universidades de La Laguna y Sevilla respectivamente. En 1974 había accedido asimismo a una Agregación en la Universidad de Oviedo el malogrado José Benito Álvarez-Buylla, que, aunque había solicitado su acceso a una plaza de Catedrático en la misma universidad, falleció en febrero de 1981 antes de obtenerla.

Interesa referirse, aunque sea brevemente, a esta figura del Profesor Agregado, que existía antes de la Ley General de Educación (1970), pues aparece ya en la Ley 83/1965 de 17 de julio (*BOE* de 21 de julio) (Monterrey 2022, 11, nota 6), y que desapareció de la estructura de cuerpos docentes universitarios con la Ley de Reforma Universitaria (LRU) de 1983. Hasta entonces había tres niveles de profesores numerarios para Facultades universitarias denominados Catedráticos Numerarios, Profesores Agregados y Profesores Adjuntos de Universidad, que se redujeron a dos en la LRU: Catedráticos y Titulares de Universidad. En las Escuelas Universitarias eran dos los cuerpos de profesorado funcionario: Catedráticos y Profesores Agregados de Escuelas Universitarias. En la Ley General de Educación de 1970, y en su desarrollo normativo posterior (Orden de 12 de marzo de 1974, *BOE* de 13 de abril, 7605-7607, que en ciertos aspectos reproduce el anterior “Reglamento de Concursos-Oposiciones a plazas de Profesores Agregados de Universidad”, *BOE* de 2 de julio de 1966, 8356-8358), se perfiló la figura del Profesor Agregado numerario. Los artículos 116-118 de esa Ley de 1970 recogían la definición de los tres cuerpos, indicando que el acceso al Cuerpo de Catedráticos Numerarios se realizaría mediante “concurso de méritos” entre Profesores Agregados de Universidad; y solo si esas plazas quedasen vacantes, se proveerían a través de concurso-oposición entre doctores con experiencia docente e investigadora acreditada y que hubiesen seguido los cursos correspondientes en los Institutos de Ciencias de la Educación (ICE). Es decir, los Profesores Agregados—que debían superar un concurso-oposición nacional consistente en seis ejercicios—eran realmente Catedráticos “in pectore” una vez conseguían la Agregación, pues acto seguido (en algunos casos en muy poco tiempo) se presentaban a un “concurso de méritos” para aspirar a ocupar alguna de las cátedras vacantes que se convocaban. Tal concurso de méritos consistía en remitir información sobre el historial académico del solicitante y un proyecto de desarrollo de las enseñanzas asignadas a la correspondiente cátedra. En el caso de Filología Inglesa, como mostraré a continuación, varios profesores obtuvieron plazas de Profesores Agregados en ciertas universidades y luego concursaron para la cátedra en otras, donde la mayoría desempeñaron el resto de su carrera académica hasta la jubilación.

Para acceder al Cuerpo de Profesores Agregados, el artículo 117 de la Ley General de Educación (1970) señalaba que un 50% de las plazas que se convocaban a concurso-oposición estaba reservado a Profesores Adjuntos y, en algunas materias, a Catedráticos de Bachillerato y de Escuelas Universitarias; y el otro 50% se destinaba a aspirantes que fueran doctores y hubiesen seguido los correspondientes cursos en los Institutos de Ciencias de la Educación. Por ello, algunos de los profesores de Filología Inglesa que en estos años accedieron a Agregaciones o Cátedras de Universidad habían sido anteriormente Catedráticos de Bachillerato (un cuerpo docente muy prestigiado en la época), como Patricia Shaw, Doireann MacDermott, Fernando Serrano Valverde, Pedro Jesús Marcos, etc. Análogamente, varios de los Profesores Agregados y Catedráticos que obtuvieron sus plazas en la década de los setenta habían obtenido pocos años antes plazas de Profesores Adjuntos, como es el caso de Asunción Alba (1966), Pilar Hidalgo Andreu (1977), Ramón López Ortega (1977), Francisco Fernández Fernández (1977), Rafael Monroy Casas (1977), etc.

Entre 1976 y 1981 once profesores obtuvieron plaza de Profesor Agregado: en 1976 Julio César Santoyo Mediavilla (en Zaragoza); en 1977 Juan Manuel de la Cruz Fernández (en Salamanca); en 1978 Pilar Hidalgo (en Córdoba), Fernando Serrano (en Granada), Pedro Guardia Massó (en la Autónoma de Barcelona), y Manuel Ángel Conejero Tomás (en Murcia); en 1979 Ramón López Ortega (en Extremadura), Aquilino Sánchez Pérez (en la Autónoma de Barcelona, aunque al año siguiente obtuvo también la de Málaga) y Aránzazu Usandizaga Sáinz (en Zaragoza); en 1980 Francisco Fernández (en la Complutense de Madrid); y en 1981 Rafael Monroy (en Zaragoza). Muchos de ellos accedieron muy pronto a la cátedra universitaria en otras universidades: J.C. Santoyo en León; Juan M. de la Cruz y Pilar Hidalgo en Málaga; Pedro Guardia en Barcelona (central); M.A. Conejero en Valencia; Aquilino Sánchez en Murcia; Aránzazu Usandizaga en la Autónoma de Barcelona; Francisco Fernández en Valencia; y Rafael Monroy en Murcia. Solo Fernando Serrano y Ramón López Ortega se mantuvieron en las de Granada y Extremadura respectivamente.

Este era un fenómeno muy común en la época, el de la movilidad del profesorado, y era muy habitual que, para acceder a una Agregación, y luego a la Cátedra universitaria mediante concurso de méritos, hubiera que presentarse a plazas de otras universidades distintas de las de formación o donde ya los solicitantes fueran Adjuntos o profesorado contratado. También las plazas de Catedrático Numerario salían primero a concurso de acceso (traslado) para que los que tuvieran ya tal condición pudieran acceder a otras universidades, si así lo deseaban. Si quedaban vacantes, entonces se convocaban a concurso de méritos entre los Profesores Agregados. Como casi todo en la vida, esta circunstancia tenía sus ventajas y sus inconvenientes; con independencia de las situaciones personales, es cierto que para algunos departamentos y universidades este sistema favoreció y fortaleció el avance de la disciplina, contribuyendo a la renovación de ideas, proyectos y grupos. Pero también era una realidad que, a veces, los Agregados o Catedráticos que llegaban desde fuera a una determinada universidad lo hacían solo para promocionar en sus carreras académicas personales y que, en cuanto podían, se volvían a sus lugares de origen o pasaban a otras universidades. En ciertos casos apenas estaban unos meses o un solo curso, y no es extraño que fueran denominados en algunas universidades como “aves de paso,” pues en poco contribuían al desarrollo de los estudios y la investigación.

Además de los casos ya mencionados de Agregados o Catedráticos que previamente fueron Profesores Adjuntos, entre 1975 y 1981 había solo una docena de Profesores Adjuntos numerarios de Inglés (curiosamente, un número inferior al total de Catedráticos y Agregados, que prácticamente duplicaban esa cifra), repartidos de forma muy desigual entre las distintas universidades. Frente a varias que no tenían ningún profesor numerario de esta categoría, destacaba la de Granada con cuatro Adjuntos numerarios: Blanca López Román, Luis Quereda Rodríguez-Navarro, Tomás Ramos Orea y Manuel Villar Raso. En la Complutense había tres: Leopoldo Durán Justo, Angela Downing y Enrique Bernárdez Sanchís (si bien este último era Adjunto, desde 1979, en la disciplina de “Lingüística Germánica”); y tan solo un Profesor Adjunto numerario en Alicante (Leopoldo Mateo Álvaro), en Málaga (Enrique Lavín Camacho), en Salamanca (Gudelia Rodríguez Sánchez), en Santiago (Manuel Míguez Ben), en Sevilla (Pilar Marín Madrazo) y en Zaragoza (Carmen Olivares Rivera). Contrastaba con este exiguo número el de plazas de Profesores Adjuntos dotadas y vacantes, u ocupadas interinamente. En el conjunto de universidades españolas había entonces (1981) alrededor de medio centenar de plazas de esta categoría, pendientes de su convocatoria y posterior provisión (véase la información—incompleta—de la situación entonces de los diversos departamentos, en Santoyo y Guardia, 179-233).

Como desconozco la situación del profesorado de Inglés en las Escuelas Universitarias de Formación del Profesorado de EGB (conocidas hasta 1971 como “Escuelas Normales de Magisterio”) y en las Escuelas de Traductores e Intérpretes, me limito aquí a remitir a los lectores al citado libro de Santoyo y Guardia (234-242), que ofrece un breve panorama sobre estos centros y los nombres y categorías académicas de sus responsables entonces. Valga, en todo caso, como síntesis, reproducir un corto y significativo párrafo de esa obra en la que los autores comentan sobre la precariedad de la que se partía en cuanto a las dotaciones cubiertas de profesorado numerario, muy similar a la situación en las Facultades universitarias:

A principios de 1969, se convocaron las primeras oposiciones para cubrir las cincuenta y tres cátedras de Inglés recientemente dotadas en las Escuelas de Magisterio, que dos años más tarde se convertirían en Escuelas Universitarias de Formación del Profesorado de EGB. Sólo siete cátedras pudieron cubrirse en aquella ocasión. (11)

En todo caso, y como venía diciendo, fue en el año 1981 cuando el Ministerio (entonces de Universidades e Investigación, aunque poco después volvería a ser de Educación y Ciencia) inició una política de convocatoria masiva de plazas de Profesores Adjuntos de Universidad, con el fin de paliar las carencias de profesorado numerario y las demandas crecientes de las universidades. No es que no se hubiesen convocado plazas de Profesores Adjuntos con anterioridad a esa fecha; por supuesto que las hubo, y antes se ha hecho mención a algunos Agregados y Catedráticos que previamente habían adquirido la condición de Adjuntos por oposición, pero generalmente se trataba de convocatorias reducidas a una o dos plazas. La excepción más notable a esta afirmación es probablemente la convocatoria de ocho plazas del Cuerpo de Profesores Adjuntos en la disciplina de “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas” publicada en el *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (BOE) de 11 de septiembre de 1976, cuya relación de aprobados se publicó en el BOE de 14 de diciembre de 1977 (27300). En aquella ocasión los profesores que accedieron a la condición de Adjuntos fueron, por este orden (de mayor a menor puntuación): Angela Downing, Francisco Fernández, Rafael Monroy, Leopoldo Mateo, Pilar Marín, Ramón López Ortega, Pilar Hidalgo y Tomás Ramos. Pero fue a partir de 1981, y hasta la promulgación de la Ley de Reforma Universitaria (LRU) en 1983, cuando realmente se propició el acceso a tales plazas de una “bolsa” importante de doctores en Filología Inglesa que desempeñaban su docencia e investigación en calidad de interinos o de contratados en prácticamente todos los departamentos de Inglés del país. Ya lo decían Santoyo y Guardia en 1982 muy elocuentemente:

Algunas Universidades, como la del País Vasco o la Autónoma de Madrid, carecen de Departamentos de Inglés. En algunos de los establecidos sigue vacía la cátedra o cátedras de que disponen, o bien están vacías todas las plazas dotadas, cualquiera que sea su naturaleza. Un gran número de Adjuntías se hallan vacantes, ocupadas interinamente con harta frecuencia por un profesorado que merecería sin duda ser ya numerario. De las cuatro Adjuntías de que en estos momentos dispone, por ejemplo, el Departamento de Inglés de la Universidad de Zaragoza, sólo una está ocupada por la Dra. Olivares; las tres restantes están vacías. Otro tanto ocurre con las cuatro Agregaciones del Departamento. La situación es casi idéntica en bastantes Universidades más. Son varios los Departamentos que no cuentan en esta fecha sino con un único profesor numerario, sea éste catedrático o adjunto: en Santiago de Compostela hay un solo adjunto, Valladolid dispone de un solo catedrático y otro tanto ocurre en Oviedo; en Córdoba todo el profesorado es interino. (15)

Mediante una Orden del Ministerio de Universidades e Investigación de 18 de febrero de 1981 (publicada en el *BOE* de 6 de abril, 7426) se puso en marcha la operación de cubrir un buen número de vacantes de Profesores Adjuntos. Se trataba de una convocatoria a concurso-oposición, turno libre, de plazas de Profesores Adjuntos para Facultades de Filosofía y Letras (hubo otras naturalmente para otras Facultades, que no nos interesan aquí), en la que se incluían plazas de casi todas las disciplinas en un número importante: catorce para “Historia del Arte,” doce para “Geografía” y diez para “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas” (el mismo número también para “Lengua y Literatura Francesas” y para “Literatura Española”), entre otras.

Unos meses después, el *BOE* de 31 de agosto de 1981 (19982-19983) publicó la Resolución de 10 de julio de 1981, de la Dirección General de Ordenación Académica y Profesorado del Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (en ese intervalo ya había vuelto a recuperarse la tradicional denominación del Ministerio) por la que se hacía pública la lista provisional de aspirantes admitidos y excluidos al concurso-oposición anterior para la disciplina de “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas.” Hay que advertir que entonces aún no existía el concepto de “área de conocimiento” (desarrollado a partir de la LRU de 1983, mediante el Real Decreto 1888/1984, *BOE* de 26 de octubre, 31066-31067 para el área de Filología Inglesa), y que las plazas tenían diversas denominaciones según “disciplinas.” De hecho, en otros números posteriores del *BOE* durante ese mismo año se convocaron a concurso-oposición plazas denominadas “Lengua Inglesa,” “Literatura inglesa,” o “Anglística,” pues tales denominaciones recibían en distintas universidades españolas. Conviene destacar también, por el elevado número de plazas convocadas, las publicadas a finales del año 1981, en concreto en el *BOE* de 31 de diciembre de 1981 (30612): seis plazas de “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas,” seis plazas de “Lengua Inglesa” y tres plazas de “Anglística” (estas tres plazas resultaron ser finalmente dos, por corrección de un error efectuada en el *BOE* de 16 de marzo de 1982). A lo largo del año se produjeron otras convocatorias, con menor número de plazas: una de “Anglística” y otra de “Literatura Inglesa,” en el *BOE* de 24 de agosto de 1981 (19417-19418).

Pero volvamos a la Resolución de la publicación de la lista provisional de admitidos del *BOE* del 31 de agosto de 1981, porque creo que da una dimensión clara del gran volumen de doctores en Filología Inglesa que estaban entonces a la espera de poder acceder a plazas de profesor numerario. Para esa convocatoria de diez plazas de “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas” (*BOE* del 6 de abril de 1981) resultaron admitidas provisionales sesenta y dos personas, un número que se elevó a sesenta y tres en la lista definitiva de admitidos publicada en el *BOE* de 23 de octubre de 1981, 24887 (Resolución de 29 de septiembre). Es muy ilustrativo repasar el listado de esos sesenta y tres nombres de doctores admitidos al concurso-oposición, turno libre, de Profesores Adjuntos, pues la gran mayoría de ellos obtendría, en el transcurso de los años y décadas siguientes, plazas de Adjunto (o Titular de Universidad—como pasó a denominarse el cuerpo tras la Ley de Reforma Universitaria de 1983), así como de Catedrático de Universidad (y algún otro de Catedrático de Escuela Universitaria) en prácticamente todas las universidades del país. Esos sesenta y tres candidatos se distribuían de forma poco paritaria, para lo que estamos acostumbrados ahora: había cuarenta y tres hombres y solo veinte mujeres, es decir, porcentajes del 68,25% y del 31,74% respectivamente.

Por orden alfabético, en ese listado figuraban personas hoy bien conocidas y que han resultado relativamente influyentes en diversos ámbitos de la profesión en los últimos cuarenta años, como las siguientes: Fernando Alonso Romero, Román Álvarez Rodríguez, Ana Antón-Pacheco Bravo, José María Bardavío Gracia, Antonio Bravo García, José María Bravo Gozalo, Josephine Bregazzi, Francisco Cabezas Coca, José Luis Caramés Lage, Guillermina Cenoz del Águila, Ángeles de la Concha Muñoz, M<sup>a</sup> José Crespo Allúe, Bernd Dietz Guerrero, Joaquín Domínguez Martínez, Federico Eguíluz de Latierro, Pilar Elena Roselló, M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Fanego Lema, José Ramón Fernández Suárez, Fernando Galván Reula, Enrique García Díez, Rosa González Casademont, José Luis González Escribano, José Luis Guijarro Morales, Francisco Gutiérrez Díez, Honesto Herrera Soler, Josep María Jaumà Musté, Antonio León Sendra, Antonio López Santos, María Lozano Mantecón, Matilde Mansilla García, Félix Martín Gutiérrez, Leocadio Martín Mingorance, José Luis Martínez-Dueñas Espejo, Catalina Montes Mozo, Betty Moore, M<sup>a</sup> Pilar Navarro Errasti, Macario Olivera Villacampa, Susana Onega Jaén, José Luis Otal Campo, Carmen Pérez Romero, Ana Pinto Muñoz, Rafael Portillo García, Ángel-Luis Pujante Álvarez-Castellanos, Antonio Rodríguez Celada, Luisa Fernanda Rodríguez Palomero,



José María Ruiz Ruiz, Ramón Sainero Sánchez, Francisco Javier Sánchez Escribano, José Miguel Santamaría López, Ricardo Sola Buil, Socorro Suárez Lafuente, Antonio Raúl de Toro Santos, M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Turell Julià, José Luis Vázquez Marruecos, Ignacio Vázquez Orta, Urbano Viñuela Angulo y Pilar Zozaya Ariztia.

Creo que la mayoría de mis lectores reconocerá en este listado de casi sesenta nombres a colegas (en algunos casos desgraciadamente ya fallecidos) que han hecho historia de la Filología Inglesa en España en los últimos cuarenta años. Un buen número de ellos han sido los líderes intelectuales de doctorandos y grupos de investigación en diversas universidades del país y han propiciado la formación de muchas decenas (posiblemente algunos cientos que no sabría precisar en estos momentos) de profesores e investigadores de alcance internacional. Como la inmensa mayoría ya no están en activo en la Universidad (creo, si no estoy equivocado, que los únicos que seguimos en servicio activo durante el curso 2022-2023 somos mi colega y amigo de Granada, José Luis Martínez-Dueñas y yo mismo), me parece de justicia reconocerle a esta generación de anglistas (la segunda de nuestra historia, tras la de los pioneros que he mencionado en las páginas anteriores) la gran contribución que han hecho al avance y pujanza de nuestros estudios en España y en el extranjero. Entonces creo que pocos soñábamos, o esperábamos razonablemente que, cuarenta años después, los Estudios Ingleses españoles alcanzaran el lugar de prestigio y reconocimiento que ocupan hoy en el ámbito internacional.

Naturalmente no me olvido de otros colegas que, por diversos motivos, entonces no llegaron a firmar la convocatoria de esas primeras diez plazas del Cuerpo de Profesores Adjuntos, y por eso no están en el listado mencionado, pero que en los años siguientes destacaron también en sus departamentos por las mismas razones expuestas. Para no abrumar a mis lectores, prefiero omitir por ahora sus nombres, pero muchos están en mi memoria porque a ellos también les debe mucho la Filología Inglesa en España.

Es interesante hacer notar las edades que tenían en 1981 estos sesenta y tres firmantes del citado concurso-oposición: cuarenta y siete de ellos, casi un 75% (el 74,6% exactamente), eran personas nacidas entre 1940 y 1950, es decir, que tenían entre 31 y 41 años y, de hecho, muchos de ellos rondaban apenas los 35 años; solo doce (un 19% del total) habían nacido antes de 1940, por lo que, en su mayoría, rondaban en 1981 los 50 años (apenas una o dos personas superaban esa edad, al haber nacido en la década de los años veinte); y únicamente cuatro de esos sesenta y tres aspirantes (es decir, el 6,34%) tenían menos de 30 años, al haber nacido a partir de 1951 (uno en 1951, dos en 1953 y uno en 1957). Si comparamos esas edades con las que suele acceder hoy el profesorado al puesto de Profesor Titular observaremos una marcada diferencia, pues es evidente que el porcentaje de menores de 40 o 41 años que obtiene ahora la plaza de Profesor Titular de Universidad es muy inferior a ese 75% señalado para el año 1981.

En la época, como puede apreciarse, todos los trámites administrativos de las plazas objeto de concurso estaban centralizados en el Ministerio (aún no se habían desarrollado muchas Comunidades Autónomas, y las competencias universitarias seguían dependiendo completamente del Ministerio de Educación), por lo que el canal de comunicación entre la Administración y los administrados era exclusivamente el *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. En él se hizo pública también la composición del Tribunal (así se llamaba entonces, en lugar de Comisión) que hubo de juzgar el concurso-oposición en turno libre de las diez plazas de “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas” del cuerpo de Profesores Adjuntos. Ese anuncio se publicó en el *BOE* del 18 de febrero de 1982 (4199-4200): el Tribunal titular estaba compuesto por Francisco Ynduráin Hernández (Catedrático de Literatura Española de la Universidad Complutense) como Presidente, los Catedráticos de Filología Inglesa Esteban Pujals Fontrodona (Complutense), Francisco García Tortosa (Sevilla) y Pedro Guardia Massó (Barcelona) y la Profesora Adjunta de Filología Inglesa Blanca López Román (Granada), como Vocales primero, segundo, tercero y cuarta respectivamente. Omito la composición del Tribunal suplente porque no tuvo que actuar, ya que el concurso-oposición se celebró con el Tribunal titular. La propia comunicación para el acto de presentación de candidatos se publicó también en el *BOE*, por Resolución de 18 de junio de 1982 de su Presidente (*BOE* de 27 de julio, 20254). Mediante dicha Resolución se convocaba a los aspirantes admitidos “para efectuar su presentación ante este Tribunal y comenzar los ejercicios, a las diez horas del día 5 de octubre próximo, en la Sala de Grados del edificio B de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad Complutense, haciendo entrega de los trabajos profesionales y de investigación, y, en todo caso, del programa de la disciplina.”

En esta convocatoria puede apreciarse que el lugar de citación fue, como solía ocurrir en casi todas las oposiciones de la época, en dependencias de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, dado el carácter centralizado del sistema de acceso ya comentado. Cuando se celebró el concurso, durante el mes de octubre, nos trasladamos a Madrid desde diversos puntos de España y allí permanecimos durante varias semanas, alrededor de cuarenta candidatos que fuimos los que finalmente concurríamos al acto de presentación. En esa cita del Presidente del Tribunal se señala asimismo la documentación que debía entregarse en el acto de presentación. Conviene, por ello, explicar el procedimiento que se seguía en este tipo de concursos, dado que era distinto del actual sistema de acceso al cuerpo de Profesores Titulares de Universidad.

Esa normativa venía regulada por la Orden del Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia de 23 de agosto de 1976 (*BOE* de 26 de agosto, 16678-16682). La Ley General de Educación de 1970, como se ha dicho más arriba, había establecido (art. 118) que el sistema de acceso al Cuerpo de Profesores Adjuntos se haría por concurso-oposición en turno libre

entre doctores con experiencia de al menos un año y que hubiesen seguido los cursos correspondientes en los Institutos de Ciencias de la Educación. Sin embargo, una de las disposiciones transitorias de dicha ley (la séptima) facilitaba la integración en el Cuerpo de Profesores Adjuntos mediante concurso restringido a profesores con el título de Doctor que “hubiesen desempeñado funciones docentes con una antelación mínima de tres años a la fecha de convocatoria del citado concurso-oposición.” Por ello la regulación de la normativa de acceso para el ingreso en este cuerpo en turno libre se retrasó unos años, hasta 1976. En la citada Orden ministerial se establecían todos los detalles de la regulación, que no merece la pena reproducir aquí *in extenso*. Baste solo con consignar algunas curiosidades.

Observamos, así, que los requisitos de tipo administrativo para presentarse a un concurso-oposición al Cuerpo de Profesores Adjuntos eran los habituales para el ingreso en la Función Pública y mucho más prolijos que los propiamente académicos: nacionalidad española, haber cumplido la edad de 18 años, no haber sido separado mediante expediente disciplinario del servicio del Estado o de la Administración Local o Institucional ni hallarse inhabilitado para el ejercicio de funciones públicas, no padecer enfermedad infecto-contagiosa ni defecto físico que inhabilite para el servicio, no estar procesado por delitos dolosos y carecer de antecedentes penales por esta clase de delitos, y, en el caso de las mujeres, haber cumplido o estar exenta del Servicio Social. En contraste, los requisitos académicos se reducían a dos: 1) haber cumplido todos los requisitos necesarios para la expedición del título de Doctor en Facultad o Escuela Técnica Superior; y 2) haber desempeñado, al menos durante un año, funciones docentes o investigadoras en Facultades, Escuelas Técnicas Superiores, Escuelas Universitarias, Institutos Nacionales de Bachillerato, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas y demás Centros equivalentes de docencia e investigación nacionales o extranjeros. Se añadía, además, una aclaración muy significativa, para garantizar que los aspirantes estaban en posesión del título de Licenciado (no el de Doctor) antes de desempeñar esas funciones docentes: “En todo caso, el periodo de servicio de las tareas docentes e investigadoras sólo se computará a estos efectos cuando se haya realizado después de haber cumplido todos los requisitos necesarios para la expedición del título de Licenciado, Ingeniero o Arquitecto en Facultad Universitaria o Escuela Técnica superior” (16678).

En el modelo de instancia, sin embargo, se recogían apartados de índole académica muy similares a los exigidos actualmente; eran, además de los datos personales, los detalles de la tesis doctoral (título, director, fecha, calificación, universidad), así como de otros títulos académicos, premios docentes o de investigación obtenidos, los nombramientos obtenidos por oposición, la experiencia docente o investigadora (con referencia a centros y fechas), las publicaciones (con los correspondientes datos bibliográficos), así como cualesquiera otros méritos que se juzgase oportuno alegar.

En la descripción de los ejercicios que componían el concurso-oposición se indicaba que, en el acto de presentación, los opositores entregarían al Tribunal “los trabajos profesionales y de investigación que aporten al concurso-oposición y, en todo caso, el programa de la disciplina.” Estas oposiciones constaban de tres ejercicios, cada uno de ellos eliminatorio. Como se verá, tanto el primero como el segundo eran similares a los existentes en la actualidad, si bien en la regulación de hace cuarenta años se establecían unos requisitos muy concretos y más restrictivos que los actuales. Voy a ir reproduciendo literalmente la normativa y explicando cómo se desarrolló en el caso concreto de la oposición a las diez plazas de “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas” en las que fui candidato:

Primer ejercicio.— Consistirá en la exposición oral por cada concursante, en un tiempo máximo de sesenta minutos, de su “curriculum vitae”, con especial referencia a su labor científica, docente o investigadora en España o en el extranjero, y del programa que presente de la disciplina, con expresa formulación de la concepción doctrinal, metodología científica y docente y fuentes de conocimiento sobre las que aquél se fundamenta. El programa deberá contener un mínimo de cincuenta lecciones. (16680)

Este primer ejercicio, como se constata, es básicamente idéntico al que existe en la actual normativa. La exposición de la defensa del currículum apenas ha variado; se le conocía (y aún lo denominan algunos) como “el autobombo.” La principal diferencia, sin embargo, es el bagaje de experiencia docente e investigadora con que podía llegarse entonces a ese ejercicio, en comparación con lo que es habitual ahora. Aunque evidentemente no todos los opositores teníamos la misma trayectoria académica, cuando se celebró la oposición (octubre de 1982), en mi caso particular, yo apenas había completado tres años de experiencia docente universitaria (los cursos 1979-80, 1980-81 y 1981-82), y aunque mi tesis doctoral se había publicado como libro (en el Servicio de Publicaciones de mi Universidad), el número de artículos científicos y de contribuciones a congresos se podían contar con los dedos de una mano. Estoy persuadido de que—si bien tenía evidentemente otros méritos—, con tan escasa experiencia docente e investigadora, hoy no me acreditaría la ANECA para poder presentarme a una oposición de Titular de Universidad. Al fin y al cabo, contaba solo con 25 años y hacía apenas tres que había finalizado mi Licenciatura, y poco más de un año desde el Doctorado...

También la segunda parte del ejercicio requería otro enfoque distinto del actual: no había que presentar un “proyecto docente e investigador,” sino un “programa” de lecciones de la disciplina en cuestión, cuya extensión mínima estaba establecida (al contrario de lo que ocurre ahora) por la norma. Cincuenta lecciones era el mínimo, una cifra que ahora no encuentro nunca en ninguna oposición al cuerpo de Profesores Titulares de Universidad. Como la disciplina

en la que opositaba era tan extensa (“Lengua y Literatura Inglesas”), se esperaba que programara unos contenidos acordes con ella, de forma que preparé un programa de 118 lecciones, que abarcaban la sincronía de la lengua inglesa (tanto fonética como gramática y léxico), la historia de la lengua inglesa, y todas las etapas de la literatura inglesa. Para que el programa no resultase desmesurado, opté por excluir conscientemente la literatura norteamericana, pues existían otras plazas en diversas universidades con la denominación de “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas (para explicar Literatura Norteamericana)” o “Lengua y Literatura inglesas (Literatura Norteamericana),” de modo que interpreté y argumenté ante el Tribunal que la disciplina “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas” a secas podía razonablemente entenderse como restringida a la lengua—en sus diversas etapas y niveles—y a la literatura de las Islas Británicas. Ese argumento debió de convencer a los miembros del Tribunal, que nada objetaron a esa elección. Sé que otros colegas presentaron programas más restrictivos que el mío, llegando incluso a programar solo una de las dos partes de la denominación “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas.” Fue un riesgo que a más de uno les costó un suspenso en el ejercicio, y no poder continuar con la oposición, ya que el Tribunal apreció un defecto sustancial en esa programación.

Como este era un concurso-oposición nacional, no se requería ajustar el programa a ningún plan de estudios concreto, lo que facilitaba sin duda la confección de unidades docentes orientadas básicamente a cubrir materia. Se trataba de mostrar un conocimiento profundo y extenso de la disciplina, más que de programar unos contenidos para su enseñanza. Durante ese primer ejercicio, en la exposición oral del programa, había que aludir, sin embargo, como dictaba la norma, a la concepción y metodología, así como a las fuentes, algo que no ha variado sustancialmente. De hecho, yo tenía previsto explicar, para cada una de mis lecciones, las actividades didácticas que realizaría con mis alumnos.

En la confección del programa había que tener en cuenta, en todo caso, que se trataba de un programa que, además de ser coherente y no mostrar carencias importantes de contenido, el opositor debía dominarlo, y ser capaz de exponer oralmente cualquiera de sus lecciones en el segundo ejercicio. El Tribunal puntuaba este ejercicio según un procedimiento que explicaré un poco después, y los que obtuvieran un mínimo (3 puntos de un máximo de 6) podían pasar al segundo ejercicio, al que quedaban convocados unos días después, tras finalizar todas las intervenciones del primer ejercicio de los opositores presentados. Pero vayamos ya al segundo ejercicio. La normativa de 1976 lo describía así:

Segundo ejercicio.— Consistirá en la exposición oral, durante sesenta minutos, como máximo, de una lección del programa de la disciplina presentado por el aspirante, elegida por el Tribunal entre tres sacadas a suerte. El opositor dispondrá de cuatro horas para preparar la exposición y utilizar los elementos de consulta necesarios. (16680)

Si bien la normativa no lo explicitaba, el Tribunal recomendaba que la exposición (en lengua inglesa) no fuese inferior a los cuarenta y cinco minutos y prohibía taxativamente que se leyera, permitiendo solo el uso de un guion, reservándose el derecho de solicitar al opositor que lo mostrara a los miembros del Tribunal para comprobar su contenido. Como puede apreciarse, la principal diferencia con el sistema actual, en el que se mantiene la exposición de un tema del programa, es que entonces se sorteaban asimismo tres temas del programa presentado, pero era el Tribunal (no el candidato) el que escogía aquel que el opositor debía exponer. Me habían explicado los más veteranos que lo habitual era que, en plazas como las de este concurso, de lengua y literatura, el Tribunal escogiera, si así lo permitía el resultado del sorteo, un tema de una sub-área o especialización diferente a la del opositor.

Así que, en mi caso, los tres temas que salieron del sorteo fueron: uno de historia de la lengua (la morfología del inglés antiguo), otro de lengua sincrónica (el estilo directo e indirecto en inglés actual), y un tercero de literatura (la novela realista del siglo XIX: George Eliot y Thomas Hardy). Por consiguiente, tras realizarse el sorteo, el Tribunal, considerando que mi trayectoria era de literatura inglesa, me asignó el tema que estimaba más alejado de mis intereses docentes e investigadores: la morfología del inglés antiguo. Y, de acuerdo con la normativa, se me condujo a una sala en la que quedé encerrado durante cuatro horas, con dos maletas llenas de mis libros y notas. Este ejercicio solía denominarse, en el argot de las oposiciones, “la encerrona.” Transcurrido ese tiempo, pasé a exponer ante el Tribunal y el público asistente el tema escogido. Entonces no había disponibles medios audiovisuales, pero sí una pizarra y tiza, de modo que durante una hora diserté, escribiendo ejemplos en el encerado, sobre los aspectos morfológicos del anglosajón. Tenía a mano un esquema (solo un folio), que mostré al Tribunal, para poder ir explicando las terminaciones y funciones de las declinaciones en nombres y adjetivos, las formas y conjugaciones verbales, etc. Acabé con una breve síntesis de las fuentes bibliográficas principales del tema y de mis ideas sobre cómo enseñar esos contenidos a estudiantes de la Licenciatura. Quien haya tenido que pasar por una experiencia similar sabe bien que, en cuatro horas, aunque parezca mucho tiempo, si no se tienen los temas bien sabidos y organizados, no se puede en realidad preparar una buena exposición oral de sesenta minutos (que había de *decirse*, no *leerse*) en la que, además, no se permitía hacer uso de herramientas audiovisuales o informáticas, contando simplemente con un guion o esquema de un folio como único apoyo documental. Por ello, la adecuada programación de la disciplina, y el dominio de la totalidad de los temas, eran imprescindibles para tener éxito en este ejercicio. No hace falta decir, por tanto, que la oposición había que “estudiarla”, escribirse los temas, aprendérselos y dominar el arte de la exposición, buscando un equilibrio entre cierta dosis de erudición y la claridad en la comunicación. A mí me llevó casi un año de preparación,

porque tenía que reunir el material necesario y hacer fichas y guiones para, una vez encerrado durante cuatro horas, poder organizar y memorizar mínimamente la exposición.

Otra diferencia con el sistema actual, como puede apreciarse de la lectura de la normativa y de lo que he descrito hasta ahora, es que no se contemplaba un “debate” entre el opositor y el Tribunal, por lo que, tras la exposición, no solía haber preguntas ni planteamiento de objeciones por parte del Tribunal, salvo en el caso de que se estimara necesaria alguna aclaración. El procedimiento para las oposiciones a Profesor Agregado era distinto en este punto, pues en los dos primeros ejercicios (de los seis que constituían el concurso-oposición) se producía “discusión” (tal era el término utilizado) tras las respectivas exposiciones, que tenía lugar no solo entre el opositor y los miembros del Tribunal, sino que también podían intervenir los co-opositores para evaluar (oralmente y por escrito) las actuaciones y manifestaciones de los otros candidatos (véase *BOE* de 13 de abril de 1974, 7606-7607, así como la normativa reguladora anterior a la Ley General de Educación, *BOE* de 2 de julio de 1966, 8356-8358).

El resultado de este segundo ejercicio—posiblemente el más duro y exigente del concurso-oposición—es que solo diez opositores aprobamos y pudimos pasar al tercero. Este último no se ha mantenido ya en el sistema actual, por lo que requiere alguna explicación adicional. La normativa era en este caso muy escueta:

Tercer ejercicio.— Tendrá carácter eminentemente práctico, pudiendo servirse el aspirante asimismo de los elementos de consulta necesarios. (16680)

En nuestras disciplinas (lengua y literatura inglesas) solía consistir en traducción directa e inversa (sin diccionario), en un dictado y transcripción fonética/fonológica, en análisis lingüístico, literario y filológico de textos actuales y antiguos. No recuerdo con precisión todos los detalles; quizá hubo algún fragmento para traducir (no puedo asegurarlo), pero sí se hizo un dictado, para lo que el Tribunal recurrió a una hablante nativa de inglés, Angela Downing, a la sazón Profesora Adjunta entonces en la Complutense. Recuerdo, sin embargo, con claridad que el texto que se nos proporcionó para redactar el comentario filológico y literario fue un soneto de Thomas Wyatt, el titulado “Whoso List to Hunt, I Know where is an Hind,” que se ofrecía en ortografía no normalizada y sin desvelar el título ni el nombre del autor. Nuestra labor consistía en realizar el comentario, analizando la lengua, la ortografía, el léxico, situando el texto en su época, en el estilo o modo poético correspondiente, interpretando lógicamente su significado y proporcionando, si fuera posible, el nombre de su autor y el título. Una vez finalizado el ejercicio escrito, cada opositor tenía luego que leerlo en voz alta ante el Tribunal y el público asistente, antes de ser evaluado. No guardo la fecha exacta de ese último ejercicio, pero debió de ser en la última semana de octubre, ya que pasamos en Madrid—los que tuvimos la suerte de llegar al final—unas tres o cuatro semanas, desde el día de la presentación (el 5 de octubre). Ese periodo coincidió casualmente con la campaña electoral a las elecciones generales que ganó con una mayoría histórica el PSOE, encabezado por Felipe González. Aunque los opositores estábamos enfrascados en nuestro concurso-oposición, tampoco podíamos ser totalmente ajenos a lo que ocurría en esas fechas, pues se da la circunstancia curiosa de que uno de los miembros del Tribunal, Francisco García Tortosa, concurría en una de las listas electorales como candidato por la provincia de Sevilla, y al final de la semana aprovechaba el lógico receso en la oposición para intervenir en la campaña electoral en su provincia.

Me parece que, al menos como curiosidad, merece la pena aludir también al modelo de calificación seguido por el Tribunal, regulado asimismo por la normativa de la citada Orden Ministerial de 23 de agosto de 1976 (*BOE* del 26 de agosto). Entiendo que, con el fin de garantizar la mayor imparcialidad y ecuanimidad en la evaluación, evitando posibles favoritismos o sesgos extremadamente positivos o negativos de algún miembro del Tribunal hacia algún aspirante, se había diseñado el sofisticado modelo que se reproduce a continuación:

#### 7.1. Sistema de calificación.

Todos los ejercicios serán eliminatorios. La calificación de los aspirantes se hará previa deliberación entre los miembros del Tribunal, cada uno de los cuales podrá adjudicar al opositor una puntuación que no exceda de seis puntos. Al término del primer ejercicio cada miembro del Tribunal deberá formular por escrito un juicio razonado acerca de cada opositor, justificando así la puntuación que le asigne.

En todos los ejercicios se calificará por separado a cada opositor, excluyéndose [d]el cómputo de puntuaciones la más alta y la más baja, sin que en ningún caso puedan ser excluidas más de una máxima y otra mínima. El cociente obtenido de las puntuaciones computadas constituirá la calificación, siendo necesario alcanzar, como mínimo, tres puntos para superar cada ejercicio.

En los dos primeros ejercicios la calificación será hecha al término de cada sesión, publicándose la relación de quienes los hubiesen superado y sus puntuaciones, relación que igualmente será hecha pública una vez concluido el tercer ejercicio.



## 7.2. Puntuación final.

La puntuación final del concurso-oposición se determinará por el coeficiente que resulte de dividir por cuatro la suma de la calificación del primer ejercicio, multiplicado por dos, y de las calificaciones de los ejercicios segundo y tercero. (16680)

No recuerdo ninguna puntuación de los tres ejercicios, pues se hacían públicas *in situ* al finalizar cada sesión, en el correspondiente tablón de anuncios. Solo conozco las puntuaciones finales de los concursantes que obtuvimos plaza, porque fueron publicadas, por Orden Ministerial de 8 de noviembre de 1982, como era normativo, en el *BOE* de 29 de noviembre de 1982, 32794 (entonces no había legislación de protección de datos). Aunque se habían convocado diez plazas, y nos habíamos presentado unos cuarenta candidatos (de entre los sesenta y tres firmantes iniciales), y diez concursantes habíamos llegado al tercer ejercicio, lamentablemente una de nuestras compañeras no superó ese tercer ejercicio, de modo que el Tribunal solo pudo aprobar a nueve, dejando una plaza vacante. El resultado fue que obtuvimos plaza, por orden de mayor a menor puntuación final, los siguientes: José Luis González Escribano, Fernando Galván Reula, María Lozano Mantecón, Bernd Dietz Guerrero, Rafael Portillo García, José María Ruiz Ruiz, Félix Martín Gutiérrez, Catalina Montes Mozo, y Socorro Suárez Lafuente. Dado el sistema de calificación, las puntuaciones estuvieron, como solía ser habitual, entre poco más de 3 y casi 5 puntos. Supongo que, sin pretenderlo—pues entonces no se hablaba aún entre nosotros de discriminación positiva ni de paridad—, el resultado final es fiel reflejo del porcentaje de hombres y mujeres que habíamos firmado el concurso-oposición: dos tercios de hombres y un tercio de mujeres.

Tras la publicación de las calificaciones en noviembre de 1982 hubo que esperar unos meses hasta que el Ministerio de Educación finalmente procedió a nuestros nombramientos, asignándonos los correspondientes números de registro personal. Eso se produjo, mediante Orden Ministerial de 14 de febrero de 1983, en el *BOE* de 28 de febrero (5713), y unos meses más tarde, tras las correspondientes gestiones en las universidades donde solicitamos cada uno la adscripción definitiva de nuestras plazas (hubo una adscripción provisional inmediatamente después de la publicación del *BOE* de 28 de febrero), se publicaron tales adscripciones. Este trámite no era siempre sencillo si uno deseaba mantenerse en la universidad en la que estaba prestando sus servicios, pues si no existía una plaza vacante del Cuerpo de Profesores Adjuntos adscrita a la correspondiente disciplina no se podía hacer. De hecho, solo dispongo de la documentación de la adscripción de seis de los nueve concursantes que obtuvimos plaza (*BOE* de 30 de septiembre de 1983, 26678-26679): Rafael Portillo, José María Ruiz, Socorro Suárez, Bernd Dietz y yo mismo fuimos adscritos a nuestras respectivas universidades de origen (Sevilla, Valladolid, Oviedo y La Laguna), mientras María Lozano, que había estado contratada en la Complutense, pasó a ser Profesora Adjunta en la UNED. En ese *BOE* de 30 de septiembre no encuentro referencia a la adscripción de Catalina Montes, Félix Martín ni José Luis González Escribano, aunque probablemente se produjo por esas fechas, o tal vez en virtud de alguna disposición transitoria de la LRU, promulgada en el *BOE* de 1 de septiembre de 1983, dada la transición entre los dos sistemas legales. En cualquier caso, los dos primeros se adscribieron a Salamanca y Complutense respectivamente. La situación de José Luis González Escribano fue distinta porque durante 1983 obtuvo una plaza de Profesor Agregado de “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas” en la Universidad de Córdoba, siendo nombrado como tal en el *BOE* de 6 de agosto de 1983 (21862), si bien en 1986 regresó a Oviedo, su universidad de origen, como Catedrático de Universidad, en virtud del correspondiente concurso de méritos (*BOE* del 22 de febrero de 1986, 7002). En definitiva, como creo que es conocido por todos, cada uno de los nueve logró, en el transcurso de unos pocos años, alcanzar la categoría de Catedrático de Universidad en la institución de procedencia o de su preferencia, que son las indicadas antes, con la excepción de María Lozano, que fue Catedrática en la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Años después, tanto Bernd Dietz como yo, siendo ya Catedráticos en La Laguna, nos trasladamos a Córdoba (1997) y Alcalá (1994) respectivamente.

Una de las consecuencias de aquella larga oposición de octubre de 1982 fue la constitución de grupos de colegas y amigos que emprendimos proyectos interuniversitarios conjuntos a partir de esa fecha. Muchos no nos conocíamos personalmente hasta esa oposición, y el hecho de compartir aquella experiencia nos motivó a seguir en contacto. Los congresos de AEDEAN, primero, y los de ESSE, después, entre otros, fueron posiblemente el principal instrumento que nos cohesionó más a lo largo de los años y varios de nosotros tuvimos responsabilidades de dirección al frente de una y otra asociación. Otro de los mecanismos lo desarrolló José Luis Caramés Lage (Profesor Titular en Oviedo unos años después), que era uno de los candidatos de aquella oposición. Él nos aglutinó a unos cuantos para constituir en 1984 lo que algo pomposamente se denominó “Instituto de Estudios Ingleses” (más conocido como “el grupo de los rampantes”, por el motivo gráfico del logo adoptado) y que no era más que una agrupación de amigos interesados en los temas de investigación en estudios ingleses, que nos reuníamos al menos una vez al año para comer y planificar actividades. El fruto primero y más importante de aquella iniciativa fue la serie de publicaciones de la editorial Cátedra de *Estudios Literarios Ingleses*, consistente en volúmenes de ensayos originales dedicados a diversos periodos de la historia literaria. El primer volumen, sobre literatura medieval (*Estudios literarios ingleses. Edad Media*), lo edité yo en 1985, y tuve la fortuna de que aportaran artículos al mismo figuras consolidadas de la profesión como Patricia Shaw, Francisco García Tortosa, Pedro Guardia o Enrique Bernárdez, y otros más jóvenes, muchos de los cuales habíamos

sido firmantes o participantes en aquel concurso-oposición de 1982, como el propio José Luis Caramés, María José Crespo, José Luis González Escribano, Teresa Fanego, José Luis Martínez-Dueñas, Rafael Portillo y Susana Onega. Aunque no habían estado en la lista de firmantes de la oposición de 1982, se sumaron a este proyecto también Santiago González Corugedo e Inés Praga Terente. En los años siguientes fueron apareciendo sendos volúmenes dedicados al Renacimiento y Barroco (editado por Susana Onega), al teatro de Shakespeare y su época (editado por Rafael Portillo) y a la Restauración (editado por Bernd Dietz).

No quiero dejar la impresión en mis lectores de que esa oposición de octubre de 1982 fuera única e irrepetible. Es de la que he hablado con detalle porque es de la que tengo datos y recuerdos precisos, al haberla vivido en primera persona. Pero como he indicado anteriormente, durante el año 1981 se convocaron otras plazas de Profesores Adjuntos en nuestras disciplinas, cuyas resoluciones fueron publicándose en el *BOE* a lo largo de 1983. Permítaseme, por tanto, que añada, como colofón a este artículo, y en reconocimiento y homenaje a algunos de mis colegas (prácticamente todos ya jubilados, y alguno desgraciadamente fallecido), los nombres de los que aprobaron los respectivos concursos y fueron nombrados Profesores Adjuntos durante 1983, y que en los años siguientes destacaron y contribuyeron al desarrollo sostenido de los Estudios Ingleses en la Universidad española.

En el *BOE* del 8 de febrero de 1983 (3438) se consignaba el nombre de Enrique García Díez, al haber aprobado el concurso-oposición a una plaza de “Anglística,” convocada en el *BOE* del 24 de agosto de 1981. En el *BOE* del 2 de abril de 1983, con corrección en el *BOE* del 20 de mayo (14092), se publicó la lista de aprobados de la oposición a seis plazas de “Lengua Inglesa” (convocada en el *BOE* de 31 de diciembre de 1981): solo se cubrieron tres plazas, que fueron adjudicadas (por orden de mayor a menor puntuación) a José Luis Otal Campo, Francisco Garrudo Carabias y Josephine Bregazzi. En el *BOE* de 13 de abril de 1983 (10083) apareció la lista de aprobados de la oposición a seis plazas de “Lengua y Literatura Inglesas” (también convocada en el *BOE* de 31 de diciembre de 1981), que fueron, por orden de mayor a menor puntuación: José Luis Martínez-Dueñas Espejo, José María Bravo Gozalo, Ángel-Luis Pujante Álvarez-Castellanos, Susana Onega Jaén, Josep María Jaumà Musté y Pilar Zozaya Ariztia. Y, finalmente, en el *BOE* del 12 de agosto de 1983 (22334-22335), se publicó asimismo la lista de aprobados de la oposición a dos plazas de “Anglística” (en lugar de las tres originalmente convocadas, por error, en el mismo *BOE* de 31 de diciembre de 1981), que obtuvieron (por orden de mayor a menor puntuación) María Teresa Turell Julià y Jesús Díaz García.

Añado una última curiosidad, que ilustra los inciertos y desconcertantes derroteros que a veces tenía aquel sistema de oposiciones que, en 1983, fue sustituido por el diseñado en la Ley de Reforma Universitaria (LRU). Si bien en el *BOE* de 24 de agosto de 1981 se había publicado la convocatoria a concurso-oposición de una plaza de Profesor Adjunto en la disciplina de “Literatura Inglesa,” y a finales de año se hizo pública la relación de admitidos (*BOE* de 16 de diciembre de 1981), sin embargo durante varios años esa oposición no llegó a celebrarse: la razón fue que, a lo largo de 1982, renunciaron sucesivamente—con meses de diferencia—el presidente titular y el presidente suplente (ambos de disciplinas ajenas a la Filología Inglesa), lo que obligó al Ministerio a designar a otras personas para ambos puestos. Fueron nombrados también profesores de otras disciplinas que, a lo largo de 1983, renunciaron asimismo, tanto el titular como el suplente. Ya en 1984—en unas fechas en las que estaba en vigor la Ley de Reforma Universitaria, y se habían convocado las Pruebas de Idoneidad para Profesores Titulares de Universidad en Filología Inglesa (*BOE* de 16 de febrero de 1984)—, el Ministerio designó, por tercera vez, nuevos presidentes titular y suplente de aquel Tribunal. Por fortuna, el presidente titular designado resultó ser Julio César Santoyo, que convocó rápidamente a los firmantes (*BOE* del 11 de abril de 1984) para celebrar el acto de presentación el 7 de mayo siguiente. No he logrado encontrar el resultado de ese concurso-oposición, si es que finalmente concurrió alguno de los firmantes de esa plaza, pues trece de los treinta y tres que habíamos firmado en 1981 ya éramos Profesores Adjuntos, y otros muchos se habían presentado a las Pruebas de Idoneidad para el cuerpo de Profesores Titulares de Universidad de la nueva LRU. Los resultados de ese proceso se harían públicos muy poco después (*BOE* del 19 de septiembre de 1984), lo que conllevaría la integración de un número cercano a cuarenta nuevos profesores en el cuerpo de Profesores Titulares de Universidad en el área de Filología Inglesa. La situación al inicio del año 1985 (con entre sesenta y setenta Profesores Titulares de Universidad) era, pues, muy distinta de la que había apenas dos años antes, a finales de 1982 (con solo una veintena de Profesores Adjuntos), unos meses después de que Santoyo y Guardia hubiesen publicado su libro sobre los primeros treinta años de los Estudios Ingleses en España.

## ***Nota de agradecimiento:***

Agradezco mucho los comentarios y sugerencias recibidos de Tomás Monterrey y de Alejandra Moreno a versiones anteriores de este artículo.



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Anniversaries  
in 2023***

The most important decisions in life are usually taken unconsciously, with a shrewd unawareness of its significance until much later. Twenty-five years ago, in April 1998, while working as a visiting lecturer at the University of Limerick, I decided to spend the Easter Holidays in the North, initiating a journey that would guide my future academic career in ways I had not envisioned. I happened to be visiting Belfast on the historical date of April 10, at the time when the British-Irish Agreement was being signed in Stormont, only a few miles away. Mere chance made me postpone the visit of the inner city, Victorian middle-class Belfast, for the next day, and my heart drove me to the sectarian, more deprived and underprivileged Catholic and Protestant areas. I walked up and down Falls Road and Shankill Road for a few hours, admired its murals and memorials with awe, took dozens of pictures and talked to whoever I came across with a friendly face. Meanwhile, tanks and police cars were patrolling the streets, and an unrelenting sound of a helicopter surveilling and monitoring the movements of the town felt oppressive. It was Good Friday, and a peace deal was about to be signed, but I did not feel unsafe because I was partly anesthetized by a daring thirst to understand and partly—though strictly—following the instructions that my Northern Irish colleague from Limerick had given me. Accompanied by a Spanish friend, we made sure we looked foreign, interacted in Spanish while we walked, carried a visible camera in our necks, and mainly showed interest, yet, above all, respect. Little I knew then that I would fall in love with the distinct kindness, hospitality and affability of the people from the province, in spite of the harsh and hostile perception held by outsiders, mostly fed by news of the Troubles spread by the international press, as if the North could be reduced to political and religious turmoil. Many more visits followed in succeeding years, in which I have collected hundreds of pictures that now bear witness to the evolution of the conflict and the changing quality of the testimonial murals, as living memories of the true concerns of its people.

Last April 2023, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, which put an end to decades of violence and disorder, was commemorated. Two previous treaties had been reached in the past: the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973, which failed to erase grievances in the unreconciled communities, was revoked a year later; and the equally unsuccessful Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, signed by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Irish *Taoiseach* Garret Fitzgerald, which resonated in its very name with the early Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Even though the latter had put an end to the War of Independence and had established the constitution of the Irish Free State, it had formalized the partition of the island. Contrarily, the challenges met by the new British-Irish agreement signed on Good Friday were manifold and extraordinarily inclusive in the way it placed rights and equal opportunities at its centre and was reached thanks to multi-party negotiations. For the first time in history, there was an underlying recognition of the distinctive identity of the Northern Irish people, neither British, nor Irish, yet at times a tense amalgamation of both. At the same time, it legitimized citizens to freely hold a British, an Irish passport, or both, if they felt that their status could be compromised. However, the unprecedented freedom that the acceptance of such liminality allowed, offering a new beginning for the relationship between Northern Ireland, Britain and the island of Ireland, has sadly faded in recent times, as a result of the challenges and pressures brought by Brexit and its implicit awakening of fallen physical and psychological borders. The threat to a peace gained in the province after decades of violence and neglect is still impending, until the Brexit trade protocol meets satisfactory negotiations between the North, the Republic, Great Britain and the European Union. The competing agendas of the different parties involved would do well listening to the requests of a post-Troubles society, whose young generations were born after the Troubles, have been brought up amidst values of communal living and peaceful understanding, yet bear the burden of a post-traumatic intergenerational memory. Going back to the historical inequality and discrimination that defined and determined the course of this divided society will never be the solution, neither will resolve the pulse between the needs and the rights to both remember and forget.

Moving back now in time and space, another pivotal moment in the history of Ireland and of its relations with the continent is marked by the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ireland's entrance into the European Union, in 1973, after a highly successful referendum held in the country the year before and the Treaty of Accession was signed. Joining the single market and the euro was a move of significant repercussions, not only as far as the trading economy and the internationalization of the country was concerned, but moreover because it brought new job opportunities and rights that improved the lives of its people, especially women. The opening of frontiers that had kept the country isolated and dependent on Britain for so long further transformed the country, which soon started to implement new legislations, including employment equality and the lifting of the Marriage Bar in 1975, allowing women to work after marriage. Throughout these decades, Ireland has both strengthened its Europeanness and benefited from it. The recognition of the Irish language as an official working language of the European Union is certainly a major achievement in its fostering Irish identity, while at the same time Ireland has become a progressive and prosperous country, seriously concerned with securing a Northern Irish protocol that might guarantee peace. It is no surprise that, to celebrate these 50 years of European membership, Ireland has issued a stamp with the stars of the EU flag and the six fundamental values of the European Union: Human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights.

Yet, going even further back in time, 2023 also commemorates the 100th anniversary of the end of what is known as the “Decade of Centenaries (2012-23),” a twelve-years span that probably comprises the most significant milestones of modern Irish history. Beginning with the introduction of the third Home Rule bill and the signing of the Ulster Covenant in 1912, followed by the Dublin lockout of 1913 and the 1916 Easter Rising as a catalyst of subsequent historical

outcomes, the granting of women's suffrage, the Civil war, the partition of Ireland, the foundation of the State, and the eventual independence—in 26 of its 32 counties—, were all events of paramount importance that determined political, social and legal changes that would transform the country. The occasion to celebrate and to remember tends to be used as an opportunity to reflect on what mainstream accounts have made of the past, in order to both integrate conflicting narratives and open the ground for new perspectives, often ignored or silenced. The multiple and plural centenary celebrations that have taken place in Ireland in the last few years are no exception, visible in how they have pursued a deeper understanding of the significance of this violent and intense period and have broadened the perceptions on the array of stories told. Upon this claim, there was a common fundamental need to displace and reassess overdue values nurtured by the nationalist blood sacrifice, the sanctification of the leaders of the 1916 Easter rising and the rhetoric of republicanism with the purpose of bringing centre stage the marginal views of history, including that of civilians and, more particularly, women. While the uprising lasted only six days, the damage caused on the town and its citizens was immense. Not only almost 500 died—among which there were teenagers and children—and over two thousand were injured, countless families were left fatherless, brotherless or homeless. One should also not forget that the insurrection took place while many casualties of soldiers who had fallen in the Front, in the Dublin regiments, were reported.

On this note, though not strictly an anniversary yet, it is important to note how revisiting the past brings new awareness and essential changes in culture. While Irish festivities have been traditionally dominated by male iconic symbols, one of the most important legacies that cultural memory and the memorialization of history has left is precisely the possibility it offers to bring to light and reinstate figures from the past. This is the case of the only female patron saint of Ireland, St. Brigid, made into a new national festivity this year 2023, on February 1st, to celebrate the immense contribution of Irish women to their cultural heritage. As a true representative of an ancient Irish culture, she is both recognized as a goddess of Celtic mythology and a Christian saint. Her legacy originates in the pagan festival of Imbolc that celebrated fertility and marked the beginning of spring with the stretching of bright evenings until almost midnight. At the same time, she was the abbess of the monastery of Kildare, who spread Christianity in the 5th century fostering religious life, very much like St Patrick, and is credited with the performance of some miracles. Aligned with the hybridity of Irish culture, she evokes pagan times, hails the artistic richness of plurality, and recognizes women's lives and achievements.

And last, but not least, 2023 marks the centenary of the most noteworthy achievement for Irish letters, the award of the first Nobel prize in literature to W. B. Yeats (1923), soon followed by the Irish George Bernard Shaw (1925) and Samuel Beckett (1969), and the Northern Irish Seamus Heaney (1995), one of the best Ambassadors of Irish culture at home and abroad. Curiously for a Catholic country, three of them were Protestants, heirs of the Anglo-Irish tradition, with Heaney as the only exception. All four have contributed to foster and disseminate Irish culture in ways that could only perhaps be equalled to the truly European and self-exiled James Joyce. As one of the most important icons of Irish literature, the 100-year celebrations to hail the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922 were met with much acclaim last year in different parts of the world. Though a small country in the middle of the Atlantic, Ireland, Éire or the Emerald Island, as it is often known, will always be a nation of rich and plural traditions and a tendency to grow and prosper in all spheres of human life.

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***Dancing  
with Death:  
Katherine  
Mansfield  
(1888-1923)***



**I don't feel in the least afraid. I feel like a little rock that the rising tide is going to cover. You won't be able to see me ... big waves ... but they'll go down again. I shall be there—winking bright.**

*(Katherine Mansfield, Journal, 166)*

When Katherine Mansfield wrote “Her First Ball” in 1922, death was awaiting her less than a year later. She knew she had little time left. In the story, Leila is a young woman attending her first ball. After dancing with several young men, she ends up in the arms of an older man, an allegory of Death who reminds her of her terrible and certain future, despite the bright dancefloors, the party lights, the music.

“long before that you'll be sitting up there on the stage, looking on, in your nice black velvet. And these pretty arms will have turned into little short fat ones, and you'll beat time with such a different kind of fan—a black ebony one [...] And your heart will ache, ache”—the fat man squeezed her closer still, as if he really was sorry for that poor heart—“because no one wants to kiss you now. And you'll say how unpleasant these polished floors are to walk on, how dangerous they are. Eh, Mademoiselle Twinkletoes?”—said the fat man softly. (CS, 342)<sup>1</sup>

Leila's enthusiasm gives way to melancholy, because she is aware that “this first ball is only the beginning of her last ball” (CS, 342). And then she wants to leave the party. Despite her youth, she has already danced with Death but, when she is about to leave, another young man asks her to dance and she agrees out of courtesy.

Very stiffly she walked into the middle; very haughtily she put her hand on his sleeve. But in one minute, in one turn, her feet glided, glided. The lights, the azaleas, the dresses, the pink faces, the velvet chairs, all became one beautiful flying wheel. And when her next partner bumped her into the fat man and he said, “Pardon,” she smiled at him more radiantly than ever. She didn't even recognise him again. (CS, 343)

Her utmost pleasure in dancing makes her forget the killjoy. Soon Leila—and Mansfield herself—will have to face death. But not today. For some more minutes, maybe hours, they will dance without thinking of Death, even if this might be their last dance.

## ***Katherine Mansfield's Dance of Death***

In Mansfield we find the motif of the *Dance of Death* (or *Danse Macabre*) from the late-medieval artistic genre, where a skeleton recruits people of different social classes who dance around a grave, a *memento mori* that reminds them of their fragile lives. In Mansfield's story “The Wrong House,” Mrs. Bean looks furtively out of the window to see where a hearse visiting the neighborhood is going to. When she is trying to work out who the grieving family is—they should have their blinds down—the car stops at her own house and the driver appears with a black notebook. Mrs. Bean almost faints, but, when they check the address, they realize that there has been a mistake. Although life goes on and the woman is relieved, there are several signs that foreshadow death: the chicken that the maid will bring for dinner and the kitchen blinds, which the maid lowers in anticipation of death. In this story and in “Her First Ball,” death lurks, but it gives the protagonists a break despite their being summoned to its dance.

From the first symptoms of her deadly illness in 1918, Mansfield's writing—mainly her stories, but also her letters, notebooks and poetry—was marked by this presence of death. Her diary entry for 19 February 1918 shows her anguish after spitting out a mouthful of “bright red blood” for the first time (*Journal*, 141). It was the unmistakable sign of consumption, a deadly disease that took away her beloved John Keats—whom she happened to be reading at the time—or Chekhov, who was the guiding master in her experimentation with the short story genre. However, Mansfield knew how to channel this terrible certainty into stories that veer into the light, thus transforming death into poetry, singing into life. Like Leila, she finally dances embracing death.

In stories where death is present throughout, Mansfield's visionary characters, like the child Kezia in “A Doll's House,” manage to see the little lamp that nobody notices, that faint light shining in the dark, illuminating us readers, glimmering above death. Likewise, the young protagonist of “Bliss,” Bertha Young, seems to have swallowed that light and feels alive:

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations from Katherine Mansfield's material use the following abbreviations parenthetically: *CS* for *Collected Stories* (1945), *Journal* for John Middleton Murry's definitive edition (1927), *Letters* for any of the 5 volumes edited by Margaret Scott and Vincent O'Sullivan (1984-2008), *Notebooks* for *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks* (2 volumes), edited by Scott (1997).



What can you do if you are thirty and, turning the corner of your street, you are overcome, suddenly, by a feeling of bliss—absolute bliss!—as though you'd suddenly swallowed a bright piece of that late afternoon sun and it burned in your bosom, sending out a little shower of sparks into every particle, into every finger and toe? (CS, 91-92)

Although Mansfield has been criticized for the biographical background in her stories, she knew how to draw on the best material—Life, a life that she lived to the limit: “Warm, eager, living life—to be rooted in life—to learn, to desire to know, to feel, to think, to act. That is what I want. And nothing less” (*Journal*, 346). This is Mansfield's greatest achievement in her seemingly trivial and minor stories. While in her life she rarely managed to control the agony for her imminent death—as we see in her obsessive emotional dependence on her second husband, John Middleton Murry, or in the anguish of dying without consolidating her literary legacy—in her pen and fiction life triumphs over death. Her only fear was to die without leaving behind a solid production. This was her reaction when she had her first hemorrhage: “Oh, yes, of course I am frightened. I don't want to find this is real consumption, perhaps its going to gallop—who knows?—and I shan't have my work written. Thats [*sic*] what matters. How unbearable it would be to die, leave ‘scraps’, ‘bits’, nothing real finished” (*Notebooks*, 125).

On 9 January 1923, after receiving a visit from Middleton Murry at the Fontainebleau sanatorium, she impatiently climbed the stairs to her bedroom. After a while, a hemorrhage in her lungs caused her death around 11pm. She was 34. In his recent article for *El País*, Antonio Muñoz Molina mentions Proust, who died two months before her at the age of 51. His was also an early death, but Proust knew that, in essence, his work had been finished. Mansfield, on the contrary, Muñoz Molina argues, “felt the anguish of what was unfinished, wasted, undone, the remorse of not having undertaken books of larger dimensions, of having limited herself to the format of the short story” (2023, n. p.).<sup>2</sup> In a letter a few days after her death, on 31 December 1922, Mansfield told her cousin Elizabeth Russell: “I am tired of my little stories like birds bred in cages” (*Letters* 5, 346), the image of her last complete story, “The Canary”.

It is true that her self-demand, the imminence of her death and her truncated literary life might have made her momentarily doubt her opting for the short story but—as I will explain later, and in disagreement with Muñoz Molina—I do believe that she opted for this literary genre and made it her own crusade, which she maintained until the very end. In my opinion, when, close to death, she wrote “The Canary” (July 1922), she had the impression of having completed her legacy and her debt to the short story. Perhaps she would have explored the novel afterwards—despite not being convinced by the genre—or she would have continued to innovate within the short story. We will never know. But, doubtless, despite her early death, she has left behind a legacy that makes her one of the masters of the short story.

Interestingly, at the age Mansfield died, Virginia Woolf had not even begun to innovate within literary modernism, and when Mansfield died at 34, Woolf, who was 40, had only published *Jacob's Room* as an experimental novel. What would have been of Woolf's literary career if she had only published *The Voyage Out*? One of Mansfield's biographers, Antony Alpers, compares the literary relationship of these two writers with Marlowe and Shakespeare, considering that both Mansfield and Marlowe stood out significantly in the literary scene despite dying so young (1980, 388-9). This is Mansfield's achievement: having slipped into the literary canon despite her own untimely death.

## ***“The Little Colonial”: The Reception of Katherine Mansfield's Life and Work***

Katherine Mansfield was always considered an outsider in the London literary scenery, especially within the Bloomsbury and Garsington groups. Her colonial origins—she was born in New Zealand—and her outgoing and unbridled character earned her widespread rejection. In her diary she wrote that she was treated as “the little Colonial walking in the London garden patch—allowed to look, perhaps, but not to linger” (*Notebooks* 1, 166). Her accent was mocked by Rupert Brooke—as seen in his letter to Edward Marsh (Hassall 1959, 226); Virginia Woolf wrote of her that she “stinks” like “a civet cat that had taken to street walking” (1977, 58); Dora Carrington called her “a female of the underworld with the language of a fishwife” (Gerzina 1995, 196), and Lytton Strachey described her as “that foul-mouthed, virulent, brazen-faced broomstick of a creature” (1968, 362). But none of these criticisms prevented her from being the center of attention and the object of curiosity in literary circles. In his autobiography, Leonard Woolf wrote of her: “By nature, I think, she was gay, cynical, amoral, ribald, witty. When we first knew her, she was extraordinarily amusing. I don't think anyone has ever made me laugh more than she did in those days” (1964, 204).

<sup>2</sup> My translation from the original Spanish: “sentía la angustia de lo inacabado, de lo malogrado, de lo que quedaría sin hacer, el remordimiento de no haber emprendido libros de mayores dimensiones, de haberse limitado al formato del cuento.”

Little wonder that in a letter to Ottoline Morrell (15 August 1917) she referred to the Bloomsbury circle as the “Bloomsberries”—“to hell with them”, she wrote (*Letters* 1, 326), and added, in another letter: “As for the Bloomsburys I never give them a thought. Do they still exist. They are rather pathetic in their way, but bad people to think about or consider—a bad influence” (*Letters* 5, 94). Regarding the Garsington group, she recognized that sometimes you could find someone interesting (*Letters* 5, 45). She always had the drive to be part of a literary group, to find “her kind of people” (*Letters* 5, 80). However, although she met them and was a continuous presence, Mansfield never belonged to any literary group and maintained her own idiosyncrasy. She was always on the margins of literary modernism.

With Virginia Woolf she developed a very special and complex relationship.<sup>3</sup> In my doctoral thesis, *La marginalidad como opción en Katherine Mansfield: posmodernismo, feminismo y relato corto*, I argue that Mansfield’s prose might have been one of the triggers of Virginia Woolf’s change of style towards modernism (2003: 10-11). Regardless of whether Mansfield was one of the forerunners of Woolf’s modernist style,<sup>4</sup> their mutual influence was very fruitful. Although Mansfield came to describe Woolf’s style as “shrubberies” (Murry, 1949, 8), both acknowledged their reciprocal influence. In one of her letters, Mansfield told Woolf: “We have got the same job, Virginia & it is really very curious & thrilling that we should both, quite apart from each other, be after so very nearly the same thing. We are you know; there’s no denying it” (*Letters* 1, 327). In turn, in a diary entry, Mansfield acknowledged her envy of Woolf as a writer (*Journal*, 158), a feeling that was reciprocal—Woolf admitted that Mansfield’s was “the only writing I have ever been jealous of” (1980, 227). After Mansfield’s death, Woolf confessed: “When I began to write, it seemed to me there was no point in writing. K won’t read it. Katherine’s my rival no longer. More generously I felt, but though I can do this better than she could, where is she, who could do what I can’t!” (1980, 226). But then Woolf fights back: “If she’d lived, she’d have written on, & people would have seen that I was the more gifted – that wd. only have become more & more apparent” (1980, 317). Woolf captured this rivalry in one of her novels, *Between the Acts*, in the figures of Isa Oliver (herself) and Mrs. Manresa (Mansfield). However, this rivalry, after Mansfield’s death, led to appreciation and nostalgia.

How was Katherine Mansfield received by both her fellow and contemporary writers? What opinion did other writers have about her? T. S. Eliot claimed that she “handled perfectly the minimum material—it is what I believe would be called feminine” (1934, 38), thus showing his condescendence for her writing, similar to the opinion of later critics who saw in her a delicate, apolitical, evasive writing anchored in the inner world and toxic romance.<sup>5</sup> Thomas Hardy admired her story “Bliss” and, particularly, “The Daughters of the Late Colonel”, suggesting that Mansfield should have written a sequel (Lawrence, 1998, 35). With D. H. Lawrence she had a close friendship—she found him “unthinkably alike” (*Letters* 3, 54). When Lawrence met her, he found her “intelligent, interesting and a potential literary object” (Jobson Darroch 2010, 1), but their friendship broke down in 1919, when Lawrence allegedly sent a letter to Mansfield, which got lost. Murry claims he said: “I loathe you. You revolt festering in your consumption [...]. You are a loathsome reptile—I hope you will die” (Alpers 1980, 310; Murry 1983, 268-9). Ottoline Morrell said of her: “[t]his material world, the world of the senses, was her playground. I sometimes felt that she did not see very deeply into the tragedy of human lives” (1984: 121). Although Morrell accuses her of superficiality, Mansfield was a master of depicting human tragedy as inseparable from trivial situations—e.g. “Miss Brill”, “The Canary” or “The Fly”. Bertrand Russell, Ottoline Morrell’s lover, had a negative first impression of Mansfield: in a 1915 letter to Morrell, he said that Mansfield and her husband seemed “idle and cynical” and associated them with a “dead and putrefying” atmosphere (1968, 60). However, he later fell in love with Mansfield’s charisma and recognized her ability to portray the dark side of people (1968, 21), which she does brilliantly with the literary and artistic circles of her story “Bliss”.

More recently, in 1956 Anglo-Irish writer Elizabeth Bowen (1956, x) admitted the need to add Mansfield to the literary canon and concluded: “We owe to her the prosperity of the ‘free’ story: she untrammelled it from conventions and, still more, gained for it a prestige till then unthought of” (1996, 73). The South African and Nobel Prize winner Nadine Gordimer, despite considering Mansfield “almost unreadable in her femininity and her breathlessness,” recognizes the influence that this writer exerted on her at the beginning of her literary career (Schwartz 1990, 81). Julio Cortázar mentions Mansfield and Sherwood Anderson as the creators of “admirable stories” that summarize the human condition (1994, 247). The Brazilian Clarice Lispector confessed that, when she came across Mansfield’s collection *Bliss and Other Stories*, she thought: “This book is me!” and bought it with her first salary as a journalist (Moser 2009, 143-4). Mention

3 For a detailed approach to this friendship, read Rodríguez Salas and Andrés Cuevas (2011), López and Rodríguez Salas (2014-15), and Rodríguez Salas (2018), the latter with a special focus on Mansfield’s relationship with coetaneous women artists.

4 This idea is championed by critics such as Antony Alpers (1980, 247, 251), Patrick Morrow (1993, 154), Patricia Moran (1996, 14), or Angela Smith (1999, 3).

5 See James Justus (1973), Cherry A. Hankin (1982), Heather Murray (1990), Sam Hynes (1996), Con Coroneos (1997), or Yukiko Kinoshita (1999), among others.

should also be made of Spanish writer Carmen Conde's unprecedented friendship with Mansfield. Conde never got to know her, but she wrote eight letters to her, published in different magazines and collected in her memoirs in 1986, where she called Mansfield "friend distanced by force of hostile mists" (2019, 23).<sup>6</sup>

## Chameleon or Myth?

Who was Katherine Mansfield? Part of her charisma resides in the impossibility of knowing the writer. Mansfield acknowledged her chameleon-like nature (*Letters* 1, 348) and, in a 1918 letter to Middleton Murry, contrasted "a pussy's nine lives" with the nearly nine hundred lives she probably had (*Letters* 2, 229). Lydia Wevers (1997: 27) offers a detailed list of more than 30 names, all of them adopted by Mansfield at some point according to different situations: Kass, Katie, K.M., Mansfield, Katherine, Julian Mark, Katherine Schonfeld, Matilda Berry, Katharina, Katiushka, Kissienska, Elizabeth Stanley, Tig, Jones, Lili Heron, Sally, Mrs Bowden, Mrs Beauchamp-Bowden, Mrs Murry, Mrs Trowell, etc. She also tells Murry: "dont lower your mask until you have another mask prepared beneath—As terrible as you like—but a mask" (*Letters* 1, 318). In 1906, being just 18, she confessed to her cousin Sylvia Payne: "Would you not like to try all sorts of lives—one is so very small—but that is the satisfaction of writing—one can impersonate so many people" (*Letters* 1, 19). To her brother-in-law, Richard Murry, she wrote: "LET'S LIVE to the very uttermost—lets live all our lives" (*Letters* 3, 196).

This attachment to life made critics warn against the danger of her fiction being overwhelmed by her own biography. And to a certain extent this is what happened due to the importance given to her letters and notebooks. New Zealand librarian Margaret Scott spent years transcribing Mansfield's complicated handwriting. Together with Vincent O'Sullivan, they published five volumes of her letters between 1984 and 2008, and Scott alone compiled two volumes of unpublished material, *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks: Complete Edition* (1997). This book revealed that Mansfield had not kept a diary as such, but wrote notebooks, including such a varied material as unfinished stories, poems, notes for novels, draft letters, shopping lists, recipes, and journal entries. Middleton Murry was in charge of ordering these notes and gave them the form of uniform diary entries—along with notes and a prologue—the result being censorship and expurgation.

Katherine Mansfield's will (14 August 1922) specified her wish that "[a]ll manuscripts notebooks papers letters I leave to John M. Murry likewise I should like him to publish as little as possible and to tear up and burn as much as possible He will understand that I desire to leave as few traces of my camping ground as possible" (1922). Indeed, in a letter to Murry of 7 August 1922, Mansfield asked him to "leave all fair—will you?" and concluded: "You know my love of tidiness" (*Letters* 5, 234-5). But Murry ignored her wish. The result was the Mansfield myth after her death, resulting from the definitive edition of her diary edited by Middleton Murry and published in 1927, a sweet and angelic version, which clashed with the image that her contemporaries had of her and which later critics dismantled, especially Claire Tomalin's biography (1987).

It is true that Katherine Mansfield had an unbridled life that was often revealed in her writing. She was born in Wellington, New Zealand, on 14 October 1888. Having had several lesbian affairs, she travelled to London for the second time when she was almost 20 years old never to come back to New Zealand. While in London, she became pregnant by Garnet Trowell—who did not correspond and whose family opposed the relationship—and married her singing teacher, George Bowden, 11 years her senior—whom she then abandoned on their wedding night. Soon after she was visited by her mother, Annie Beauchamp, who tried to rescue her from her dissolute life and took her to Bad Wörishofen in Bavaria, where she had a miscarriage; her mother would later write her out of her will. In 1911 she met John Middleton Murry, editor at the time of the magazine *Rhythm*, who would become her companion until they married in 1918. In 1915 she received the visit of her younger brother Leslie. They spent a week together in London talking about childhood memories, just before he was sent to Belgium as part of the British Expeditionary Force. Leslie died a few weeks later when a faulty grenade exploded during a military exercise. This loss would mark the direction of Mansfield's writing—New Zealand, particularly Karori, where she spent her childhood, became her lost paradise. After being diagnosed with tuberculosis in December 1917, she moved across Europe to avoid rough English winters, and in her last year of life she tried experimental treatments, such as Manoukhin's X-ray in Paris and Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man in Fontainebleau, where she died on 9 January 1923. Katherine Anne Porter (1937) warns that the autobiographical approach to Mansfield's writing may be interesting, but adds nothing to the value of her texts, which exist independently.

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6 My translation from the original Spanish: "amiga distanciada a fuerza de hostiles nieblas".

## ***Mother of the Modern Short Story***

1922 was modernist literature's *annus mirabilis*, also known as “The Year of Modernism” or “literature’s year zero”. 2022 celebrated foundational works such as T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, or Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*. But nobody thought of celebrating the centenary of the publication of Katherine Mansfield’s collection *The Garden-Party and other stories*, only a year before her career was truncated. This centenary has only been remembered by Henry Oliver in *The Critic* (17 April 2022) with his article “There’s more to 1922 than just Woolf, Joyce, and Eliot,” where he describes this story collection as “a modernist masterpiece” and criticizes the lack of visibility of Mansfield “amidst the recent eulogising about 1922”. For someone whose career was cut short and who laid the foundations of modernist short fiction, it should have been a year of celebration.

Katherine Mansfield cultivated the short story almost exclusively. That was her choice at a time when it was a dull and reviled literary genre. Although her work showed the influence of such prominent figures as Coppard, Maupassant, Chekhov or Anderson, her short fiction had her name on it. Cristian Vázquez calls her “the mother of the modern short story” (2023) and, quoting Ricardo Piglia, concludes that the modern short story, which leaves behind Poe’s or Quiroga’s surprise endings and Aristotelic plots, comes from Chekhov, Anderson, the Joyce of *Dubliners* and Mansfield.

Mansfield embarked several times on the project of writing a novel, which she never completed. Her first attempt was *Juliet*, in 1906, when she was 18, an autobiographical novel in the purest Victorian style. In August 1913, she planned the 32 chapters of what would have been her novel *Maata*, again autobiographical—the title is the name of one of her lesbian affairs at school; she only completed two chapters. In December that year, she began another novel, *Young Country*, but completed only two chapters. It was later, in 1916, when she composed a long piece of fiction, *The Aloe*, which she conceived as her first novel (*Letters* 1: 167-8, 244). However, her dissatisfaction led her to restructure and polish it to finally give it the form of a long short story, which she would title “Prelude”. In fact, she intended to turn the cycle of stories related to the Burnell family—“Prelude,” “At the Bay” or “A Doll’s House”—into a novel, whose title would have been *Karori*, the place where she grew up, but this project was not successful either.

Critics usually list two reasons to explain the absence of novels in Mansfield’s literary heritage: on the one hand, her fragile health might have prevented her from concentrating for long periods of time on a long project; on the other, her economic precariousness with Murry made it more viable to write short stories that, when published periodically, would bring her more financial benefits than a long-term novel (McLaughlin 1978, 380; Angela Smith 1999, 162). I believe that the author’s choice of the short story was not due to lack of energy or intellectual vigor, but rather to a special intuition and gift for this genre, which allowed her to predict her role as an innovator. Following her numerous reviews of novels for *The Athenaeum*, she declared that she “detested” the contemporary novel, which she considered “simply rubbish” (*Letters* 4, 68). Mansfield was aware of the general modernist literary innovation and demanded herself “new expressions new moulds for our new thoughts & feelings in this hidden country still” (*Letters* 3, 82). But she channeled her energy to explore a new prose within the short story genre, a field that offered immense possibilities.

Her legacy in fiction amounts to 88 completed and unfinished stories, compiled in five collections. Three were published in her lifetime—*In a German Pension* (1911), *Bliss and other stories* (1920), *The Garden-Party and other Stories* (1922)—and two were published posthumously: *The Doves’ Nest* (1923) and *Something Childish But Very Natural* (1924). There were also several long stories in small handmade editions—*Prelude* (1917) and *Je ne parle pas français* (1918)—and some *juvenalia*, early stories closer to Oscar Wilde’s aesthetics. The author’s *oeuvre* goes beyond 100 stories.

Mansfield also cultivated other literary genres. The year of her death, Constable published a complete collection of her poetry. However, with the exception of a few poems, her scope as a poet is considered minor, despite the importance of the poetic dimension in her writing. The same can be said of her dramatic production. At times, she wrote plays, mostly for fun and without a clear artistic intention. The most significant is *The Laurels*, which she wrote at a Christmas party in 1916, while having fun with intellectuals such as Lytton Strachey, Bertrand Russell, or Aldous Huxley. Later, her play *Toots*—initially titled *A Ship in the Harbour*, written in 1917—was also unsuccessful. She decided to apply her knowledge on the Socratic dialogue to experiment within the short story, thus writing innovative stories such as “Black Cap,” “Late at Night” or “Two Tuppenny Ones, Please,” all of which are closer to a play script than to a short story.

## ***“A Special New Prose”: Katherine Mansfield’s Writing***

In general, Mansfield’s stories are modernist following Georg Lukács’ foundational notes in his “Ideology of Modernism,” where he concludes that for modernist writers, human beings are “by nature solitary, asocial, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings” (1963, 20). This is indeed what will be found in Mansfield’s stories. They are populated by a gallery of characters, often frustrated, disenchanted, having the terrible feeling that they have wasted their lives, unable to communicate in spite of their rich inner world, which we enter through psychological introspection.



This existential loneliness haunts lovers in her stories, always victims of social appearances and gender norms, which prevent them from being natural and spontaneous. The result is a complete absence of communication. The search for human contact becomes the Holy Grail in Mansfield's fiction, where language fails as a tool of proximity and erotic knowledge. Lovers of all ages and conditions never connect and are doomed to occupy separate worlds. For this reason, the epiphanic moment often leads to a castrating silence that reveals the characters' inability to communicate, in contrast with a recurrent symbolism that suggests the lovers' long-awaited meeting, a truncated romanticism. All lovers, regardless of their age, end up being infantilized. In "Something Childish but Very Natural" (1914), the two young protagonists are aged sixteen and eighteen, so their reliance on Coleridge's poems anticipates an immature and truncated romantic experience. But in "Psychology" (1920), where the protagonists are a couple of intellectuals in their 30s, their expected maturity leads to a similar infantilism and frustrated communication.

Coming-of-age stories also populate Mansfield's writing, where young characters (often women) come of age when faced with cruel truths of life, thus losing their innocence. This is the case of Leila's symbolic dance with Death in "Her First Ball," which in the case of Laura Sheridan in "The Garden-Party" becomes a real encounter with a corpse, or the meeting of the "Little Governess" in the eponymous story with an old sexual predator.

Marginality in general—for reasons of class, gender, or age—is a recurrent idea in such stories as "The Doll's House" or "The Garden-Party," which illustrate social injustice and mistreatment of the lower classes. Then there are stories that show the victimization and marginalization of older characters, who stop being useful and fall into oblivion, such as "An Ideal Family," where the patriarch is replaced by his son with the complicity of his wife and daughters, or "Miss Brill", where an older woman leaves the house every day imagining that she is part of a play that is repeated daily, and where she has a central role, until she discovers that she is the laughingstock of the place.

In 1908 she already recognized the peculiarity of her stories, which she described as "sketch[es]" (*Journal*, 38). In 1916, she acknowledged a special quality in her prose, a mix between prose and poetry (*Journal*, 94). From Chekhov she took the suppression of the figure of the narrator. Jesús Ortega states that Mansfield's narrators do not think or exist, they are glued like a second skin to the points of view of the characters through which they perceive the story (2020, n. p.). Indeed, like modernist writers in general, Mansfield distanced herself from Victorian and Edwardian predecessors in leaving out the traditional third-person, omniscient narrator; instead, she preferred a first-person confessional narrator or, more often, a third-person narrator with a focalization on the character or free indirect style. Even in stories like "The Black Cap" or "Two Tuppenny Ones, Please," the narrator disappears almost completely so that the stories are closer to a theatrical text.

Her stories often begin *in medias res*, in the middle of the action, with no lifeguard for us readers, so that we slap our hands in the water to prevent ourselves from sinking. Like Kafka, she tried to write the stories in one sitting for many hours, not to lose tone and inspiration, which exhausted her for days. She completed the draft of "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" through "yet another sleepless night" and, instead of going to bed, she read it to Ida Baker at 3 am over a cup of tea (Baker 1985, 153). After writing "At the Bay", she was drained and disorientated for a week (*Letters* 4, 250). In a letter to Richard Murry on 17 January 1921, speaking again of Chekhov, Mansfield explained her own metaphor of the iceberg as applied to the modern short story: "there mustn't be one single word out of place or one word that could be taken out" (*Letters* 4, 165). This distillation required a sublime skill in the use of implications and omissions in seemingly trivial situations with a focus on internal conflicts often linked to the stream of consciousness of modernism.

Her stories play with intermediality. Part of Mansfield's experimentation with the short story form is using music, painting or cinematic techniques as inspirational material—Virginia Woolf would materialize this impact of the cinema in modernist writing in her famous essay published in *The Nation and Athenaeum* in 1926. There is an influence of the visual arts on Mansfield's narrative technique. In a letter dated 5 December 1921, she told Dorothy Brett that several paintings by Vincent Van Gogh had a lasting effect on her—she could even "smell" them—and concluded: "[those paintings] taught me something about writing which was queer—a kind of freedom—or rather, a shaking free" (*Letters* 4, 333). Her stories are also traversed by music. Mansfield compared "Miss Brill" to a piece of music: "I chose not only the length of every sentence, but even the sound of every sentence—I chose the rise and fall of every paragraph to fit [Miss Brill]—and to fit her on that day at that very moment. After I'd written it I read it aloud—numbers of times—just as one would *play over* a musical composition" (*Letters* 4, 165; emphasis in the original).

Mansfield's special prose is related to the death drive lurking in her writing. The sonority and obliquity of her prose suggest a ritual encounter with death. She herself linked her writing to an elegiac intention. Part of the revelation (or not) of mortality is linked to her self-perception of her narrative as being made up of "scraps" and "bits" (*Notebooks*, 125), thus suggesting verbal frailty, a delicate language, easily crumbling and linked to ellipsis and absences. Accordingly, a backbone of her stories is the famous modernist epiphany. In Mansfield, though, these existential moments do not typically lead to transcendental understanding or full knowledge, but rather to doubt, mystery, uncertainty. The ellipsis marks populate her stories, as at the end of "The Daughters of the Late Colonel": "He knew something; he had a secret.

'I know something that you don't know,' said her Buddha. Oh, what was it, what could it be? And yet she had always felt there was... something" (CS, 282). In Mansfield there is always this sense of uncertainty, very often linked with the idea of death.

## ***"A Sacred Debt": Leslie's Death in Mansfield's Writing***

Death is ubiquitous in Mansfield's fiction, especially after her brother's passing and her own medical diagnosis. As Janine Marie Utell says, "[i]t is in the everyday world that characters perform a ritual encounter with death; it is in that world that death is made present, mourned, celebrated" (2003, 22). In a letter to her father (6 March 1916), Mansfield confessed that the loss of her brother had changed the course of her life "for ever" (*Letters* 1, 252). She turned Leslie into her fictional manna: on the one hand, by immortalizing him at the crossroads of life and literature; on the other, by seeking shelter in him from her imminent death.

Mansfield's mystification of the brother might have had its origin in a profound sense of guilt. In her study of the impact of the First World War on the relationships of women writers and their brothers, Valerie Sanders concludes:

The War itself left sisters in a state of permanent moral defeat: unable to claim equality with brothers who had died for their country, they were emotionally immobilized, symbolically adrift. Jealous retaliation was no longer an option in a society where it would be unthinkable to complain of men as the favored sex. The chance to answer back was finally cancelled. (2002, 155)

This might resonate in Mansfield's reaction to her brother's death. In a letter to Mansfield on 11 March 1915, Leslie showed an exacerbated patriotic and military feeling: "Today I had a charge of about forty men in field manoeuvres and was congratulated on my work—consequently I am feeling fearfully bucked. Being in command of men is a wonderful sensation—one feels absolutely Napoleonic—and to lead a bayonet charge must be glorious" (Beauchamp 02, 1915, 30-31). Mansfield's only surviving letter to her brother (25 August 1915) reveals her role in instilling that patriotic feeling in Leslie: "It meant a tremendous lot, seeing you and being with you again and I was so frightfully proud of you" (*Letters* 1, 197), and in the same letter she confesses that she "would cry for joy" in front of the flag of her country, which she associates with childhood nostalgia. After Leslie's death, she tried to assuage her guilt with patriotic images: "I want to write about my own country till I simply exhaust my store [...] because it is 'a sacred debt' that I pay to my country because my brother and I were born there" (*Journal*, 93-94).

After the diagnosis of her consumption, she shares with Leslie the bond of death:

I am just as much dead as he is [...] I want to write down the fact that not only am I not afraid of death—I welcome the idea of death. I believe in immortality because he is not here, and I long to join him [...] To you only do I belong, just as you belong to me [...] You have me. You're in my flesh as well as in my soul. I give Jack my "surplus" love, but to you I hold and to you I give my deepest love. Jack is no more than anybody might be. (*Journal*, 85, 86, 89)

The result is an image of the brother that borders on sacralization. Hence, patriotic feeling coexists with the motif of religious communion, as seen in the poem "To L. H. B." (1916), dedicated to her brother, where she presents him as Christ: "By the remembered stream my brother stands/ Waiting for me with berries in his hands . . ./These are my body. Sister, take and eat" (1923, 55). With Leslie, Mansfield creates a complicity different from that of lovers, where the sexual impulse disappears and the purity of love flourishes in its proximity to death.

However, in her fiction this romantic mystification of the brother is channeled into a writing of the body—beyond the Eucharist body—thus confronting death without mystification, accepting its mystery, not looking for an answer in patriotism or religion, but in shared corporeity beyond language restrictions and labels. Mansfield finally seems to learn the lesson of death, as Jacques Derrida explains it: "dying can never be taken, borrowed, transferred, delivered, promised or transmitted [...] Therein resides freedom and responsibility" (1996, 44). The certainty that Mansfield sought in Leslie's mystified body gives way to heresy, secrecy, and lack of answers in her own writing, which becomes her own "religion" (*Journal*, 161). Her most powerful tool is her lyrical writing, marked by symbolism, which allows her to suggest the hidden meanings of death. Its mystery is unspeakable, but not incommunicable. The powerful symbolism of her stories escapes religious and nationalist essentialism and remains in the air, with no intention of resolving the equation: she finally faces death.

Two stories will be used to exemplify this final response to death, both of them involving two siblings with autobiographical echoes of Mansfield and Leslie. In "The Wind Blows" (1920) Mansfield projects the siblings' nostalgia for the past time in a phantasmagorical setting. On a winter's day, brother and sister, Bogey and Matilda, imagine the fantasy of being on a ship that is leaving forever. The siblings are described as if they were soul mates and their corporeality rules over language,

which loses its communication properties in a scene where the terrible and uncontrolled wind could symbolize death: “Bogey’s voice is breaking”; “The wind carries their voices—away fly the sentences like little narrow ribbons” (CS, 110). Exposure to death can only be expressed directly through corporeality, without any other meaning—as when Matilda feels the salty ocean water on her lips and feels the wind hitting her body—and through symbolism, which directs readers to death, but without further explanation or attempts to mystify it. In the story there are numerous images showing the destructive effect of the wind, the violent impact of death. There is a final picture of the huge black boat and the lights that illuminate it, “so awfully beautiful and mysterious” (CS, 110). However, beyond mystification, Mansfield retains the mystery of death: the ship with the siblings, sailing despite the headwind, is going somewhere unrevealed—ellipsis marks again. The ideal image of the ship is finally devoured by the closing repetition “[t]he wind—the wind” (CS, 110), with that ubiquitous image of death.

The other example is “The Garden-Party” (1922). A flamboyant garden party, organized by the well-off Sheridans, is interrupted by the sudden death of a poor neighbor. One of the young daughters, Laura, visits the dead man’s family with a basket of leftovers. When confronted with the corpse, the shocking vision of death is filtered (and softened) by Laura’s adolescent eyes. She seems to participate in the general mystification of family and friends that see the dead man as “a picture” (CS, 261):

There lay a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy ... happy ... All is well, said the sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content. (CS, 261)

Laura tries to understand through mystified images that alleviate this frontal clash with the reality of death. Hence, she perceives the dead person as given to a mystical dream rather than as a corpse. However, as I see it, this story offers Mansfield’s last words about death. She seems to understand that mystifying death is not the solution. Right after Laura’s existential moment, she meets her brother Laurie—their names a clear indication of their twinship. Readers expect that she will find solace and understanding in Laurie; however, despite the similarity of their identities and their closeness, they also fail in the attempt to communicate about death.

“Was it awful?”

“No,” sobbed Laura. “It was simply marvelous. But, Laurie—“She stopped, she looked at her brother. “Isn’t life,” she stammered, “isn’t life.” But what life was she couldn’t explain. No matter. He quite understood.

“Isn’t it, darling?” said Laurie. (CS, 261)

The story is full of moments of camaraderie between the two—mainly references to the corporeality of a kiss or a hug. Although here language once again fails, since Leslie was already dead when Mansfield wrote this story, it is as if words were not needed. Leslie—and her projection on Laurie—understands death because he is already dead, and Mansfield understands it because she is about to die herself. We have the feeling that sibling intimacy and understanding occurs intuitively beyond religious and patriotic images. The only thing left is trembling for death, for life, as Mansfield notes in her diary on 22 January 1916:

I want to write poetry. I feel always trembling on the brink of poetry. The almond tree, the birds, the little wood where you are, flowers you do not see, the open window out of which I lean and dream that you are against my shoulder [...] But especially I want to write a kind of long elegy to you—perhaps not in poetry. Nor perhaps in prose. Almost certainly in a kind of *special prose*. (Journal, 94; italics in the original)

## ***Conclusion: Out in the Open***

As a good visionary, and despite her insecurity about dying so young and for not having been able to complete her ambitious literary legacy, Mansfield knew that her choice of the short story was not minor, although it seemed so. In her poem “The Butterfly” (November 1918), Mansfield imagined herself embracing death, the same as the butterfly that wanted “to go out into the open” (Journal, 94). She finally looks death in the eye—that “big snail under the leaf”—and rebels against a “WICKED WICKED God” to conclude: “it is more than useless to cry out. Hanging in our little cages on the awful wall over the gulf of eternity we must sing—sing” (Letters 3, 37). As in “Her First Ball”, she dances with death again, but this time knowing that she is tightly clinging to its arms. And now, without fear, she manages to open the cage, stops being the wounded bird of her last completed poem and, singing, flies far and high.



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***Gentlemen versus  
Players Four  
Hundred Years On:  
Bardolatry,  
Enthusiasm and  
Class Prejudice  
in the Front  
Matter of the  
Shakespeare  
First Folio***

## Several Misconceptions and One Truth

In 2013, fantasist and petty-thief Raymond Scott committed suicide in the prison cell where he was serving his eight-year sentence for handling a copy stolen from Durham University Library.<sup>1</sup> In 2014, an unrecorded copy, somewhat incomplete and heavily thumbed by a seventeenth-century Jesuit schoolmaster, was found in the public library of provincial Saint-Omer, Pas de Calais. In 2016, a further brace of unrecorded copies turned up, one at Shuckburgh Hall, Warwickshire, the other on the tiny Scottish Isle of Bute. In October 2020, cash-strapped Mills College in Oakland California sold its copy for 9.98 million dollars. What would scarcely rise above the anecdotal in the case of other books hits the international headlines if the item discovered, purloined or auctioned is one of the now 235 authenticated surviving copies of the Shakespeare First Folio, or, to give it its original title, *MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARES COMEDIES, HISTORIES, & TRAGEDIES* (<sup>[n]</sup>A1+1r), whose quarter centenary is celebrated this year.<sup>2</sup> By any standards, the First Folio is not a rare book (Smith 2016a, 30-32); nor, by a long shot, is it the world's most expensive. Tucked in between the Bomberg Babylonian Talmud (early 16th c.) and *Acts Passed at a Congress of the United States of America* (1789), it ranks fourteenth in a recent list (Donofrio et al. 2023, n.p.) of the world's costliest books and is outstripped in the literary stakes by a 1477 edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The list is topped by da Vinci's "Codex Leicester" (1510), whose inflation-adjusted selling price is six times greater than the First Folio's.

Nor is the First Folio the first first folio, so to speak. The misconception still circulates according to which John Heminge and Henry Condell's 1623 collection of Shakespeare's plays was a riposte to the publication in 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, of the *Workes of Benjamin Jonson*, seen through the press by Ben Jonson himself. Another misconception has it that Jonson's compendious tome blazed a trail for the appearance of professional, rather than classical, drama in the prestige format of the folio, reserved for works of "superior merit or some permanent value" (Bowers 1964, 76; quoted in Lyons 2016, 1) like Bibles, historical chronicles, legal texts or Greek and Latin literature. In fact, Jonson had been pipped to the post by Edward Blount's publication in 1604 of William Alexander's closet dramas under the title *The Monarchick Tragedies*. Blount was one of the members of the publishing syndicate which put up the cash for the Shakespeare First Folio, in what was not, by all accounts, a particularly lucrative venture (Rasmussen 2016, 28): production costs for the estimated print-run of 750 (Blayney 1996, xxvii) may have risen to around 250 pounds, fifty times the wage of a goldsmith (Rasmussen 2016, 18), and by 1630 Blount had been obliged to sell his printing shop and share in Shakespeare's plays. Nonetheless, in 1632 the second edition of the Folio saw the light two years before that of Jonson's *Workes*. Other folio editions of English literary works preceding both Jonson's and Heminge and Condell's include Sir Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1593) and *Astrophel and Stella* (1598), published by William Ponsonby, whom Blount had served as apprentice; Thomas Heywood's *Troia Britanica* (1609), published by father and son William and Isaac Jaggard; Samuel Daniel's *Panegyricke Congratulatory* (1603), published by Blount; and Michael Drayton's *Poems*, published by John Smethwick, who had also published Jonson's *Workes*. The Jaggards and Smethwick were other members of the syndicate, men, like Blount, who knew what they were doing and thought that money could be made by bringing out Shakespeare as another large-format English author. Rather than rising to the bait of Jonson's *Workes*, the Shakespeare First Folio is better seen as one more item in a recently established and potentially profitable product line.

As for the second misconception, it is not necessarily the case that the folio format was reserved for prestige works. The decision to publish Shakespeare large-scale was probably due more to sound business sense than any attempt at literary status-building by "creating a space for Shakespeare in the luxury book market" (Taylor 2006, 69): "For stationers, Shakespeare's works were not great books; they were good business" (Hooks 2012, 127). At a selling price of fifteen shillings unbound (calfskin binding added another five shillings to the bill), according to the price inscribed in the copy bought by a certain Thomas Longe (Blayney 1991, 25-7; West 2001, 8), the First Folio cost about thirty times more than a single quarto; but quartos themselves "were neither inherently cheap to produce nor necessarily deemed inferior by early readers" (Lyons 2016, 2; Dane and Gillespie 2010, 24-45). Decisions about format were determined more by the quantity, quality and market price of paper, by practical considerations concerning volume size (Hinman 1963, I. 48) and by current practice than by any thoughts of canon-building or enhancing reputations: it was, for instance, cheaper to print Shakespeare's collected plays as a Folio (Galbraith 2010, 63-6), and in any case they would not have fitted into quarto format (Hooks 2016a, 367). What is more, as the seventeenth century progressed, Shakespeare's growing

1 My thanks are due to Jesús Tronch of the Universitat de València for reading an earlier version of the first section of this essay and providing valuable bibliographical references. All faults, naturally, are my own.

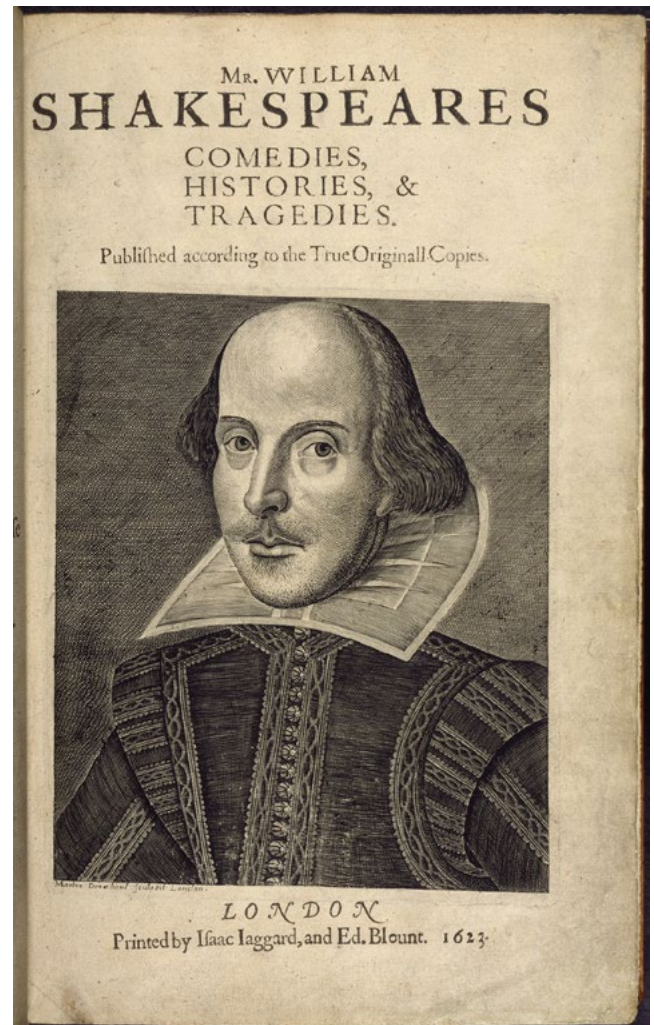
2 All references are to the front matter in Shakespeare 1623, available electronically at the Folger Library website (<https://www.folger.edu>). Original spelling, punctuation and capitalisation have been preserved except for "long" s, which has been modernised, and spacing around punctuation marks, which has been closed.



reputation as a playwright depended not on the Folio but on the continued publication of single, quarto playbooks (Hooks 2012, 141-2). Far from being the Jacobean equivalent of a coffee-table book, the Folio might more productively be compared with a telephone directory (Smith 2016a, 6).



Image 1: Sir Anthony Van Dyck, “Sir John Suckling.” 1632/1641, oil on canvas, 216.5 X130.2 cm. Copyright The Frick Collection, New York and used with permission.



Title page. First Folio. Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies. Originally published/produced in London: Isaac Iaggard and Ed. Blount, 1623. Held and digitised by the British Library (shelfmark C.39.k.15). Public domain.

Nor, like a telephone directory, is the First Folio a particularly prepossessing object. Its almost nine hundred 25x21 cm pages of printed text weigh in at approximately 2.25 kilograms, making it an unwieldy choice for outdoor reading, as Sir John Suckling in van Dyck's portrait would testify (fig. 1). Nor is it a thing of beauty. Martin Droeshout's famous title-page engraving of Shakespeare (fig. 2) betrays shoddy workmanship requiring subtle, cost-cutting modifications by the publishers themselves (Blake and Lynch 2011) at two stages in the printing process, chiefly to attach the bard's eerily self-levitating head more securely to his shoulders. Naturally enough, treating of Shakespeare, where some see evidence of “little technical merit” (Greg 1955, 451) on the part of a Droeshout—there is even scholarly controversy over whether it was Droeshout the younger or the elder, his uncle (Edmond 1991; Shuckman 1991)—“still with much to learn about engraving” (Nevinson 1967, 104), others find Protestant iconoclasm in what they tactically describe as “stark and unadorned” (Marcus 1998, 1-25). Certainly, the emblematic title page to Jonson's *Workes*, done by leading English engraver William Hole, is a far grander, more lavish affair. If the Folio's engraving, like the title's bestowal on Shakespeare of honorific “M[aste]r,” was a bid to invest Shakespeare in gentility, that gentility was shabby indeed and, to judge from the old-fashioned cut of the collar and the doublet's metal braiding, snapped up in the 1616 sales (Nevinson 1967, 103-5). Further cost-cutting may explain why the publishers terminated copyist Ralph Crane's commission after he had transcribed a bare five plays (Rasmussen 2016, 25-5).

Nor is the First Folio a perfectly composed collection. *Troilus and Cressida*, missing from the “Catalogue” or table of contents and from some early copies, was a last-minute, interleaved and therefore unpaginated addition, due to haggling

over rights of ownership; more than 500 typographical errors—admittedly, only around 80 of any substance—were corrected during the presswork (Halliday 1964, 319), in other words, as copies came off the press; the order of some of the prefatory material jiggles around from one state of the Folio to another (Greg 1955, 449-51; Pollard 1970, 137-40); and, although this was common practice at the time, there is “padding” to fill up blank pages, for example the epilogue and list of characters at the end of *2 Henry VI*, the prologue to *Troilus and Cressida* and the list of characters at the end of *Timon of Athens* (Higgins 2016, 42).

Nor, and this is another misconception, is the First Folio in any sense an authoritative or definitive edition of the plays as acted or as written by Shakespeare himself. That it is “the original acting edition of Shakespeare’s plays” and “the closest version we have to what Shakespeare actually wrote” (Moston 1994, ix; quoted in Egan 2016, 68) is a canard that still hovers in the most respected quarters. It was the premise of the editors of the 1986 Oxford Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, for whom the First Folio texts of the plays comprise the more theatrical versions (Wells 2005, xxxviii-xxxix) and take precedence over the quartos where differences are radical, as is the case, for example, of *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Troilus and Cressida* (King 2016, 132). Notwithstanding, the Oxford editors were prepared to consult quarto editions and even to print in full quarto and folio texts of *King Lear*. Critical of the conflation of quarto and Folio texts on the grounds that it disregards the integrity of both and distorts the contingent realities of the plays at different points in their histories (Bate and Rasmussen 2007, 53-5), the editors of the 2007 RSC Shakespeare had no qualms about prioritizing the Folio. It represented, they argued, the very latest versions of the plays as acted on the Jacobean stage and was lent authority by Heminge and Condell’s own preference for later playhouse manuscripts over quartos in the case of the five plays mentioned above (King 2016, 132-3; Thompson 2012, 74). As co-editor Jonathan Bate put it, “We can be confident that the First Folio of 1623 represents the first authorized ‘complete works’, the best that Shakespeare’s friends and fellow actors could do in the way of preparing a text” (n.d., 37). Yet, like their Oxford counterparts, the RSC editors drew on quartos to amend Folio misprints and included the non-Folio plays of *Pericles*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and “Hand D” of *Thomas More*. In this regard, both the Oxford and the RSC editorial teams actually followed the pioneering example of Heminge and Condell. For all their subtitle’s claim that the plays are “Published according to the True Originall Copies” (<sup>[r]</sup>A1+1r)—a claim repeated above the list of the “Principall Actors” as “Truly set forth: according to their first ORIGINALL” (<sup>[r]</sup>A5+2r)—and for all the vitriol they pour on the quartos—those “stolne, and surreptitious copies” which “abus’d [...] maimed, and deformed” Shakespeare’s texts (<sup>[r]</sup>A3r)—their procedure is to use, even simply to reprint, the quartos where necessary (Egan 2016, 72-3), their vitriol a marketing ploy.

Nor, finally, did the First Folio in any way mark Shakespeare’s triumphant entry into the literary market-place: “In the three decades between 1593 and 1623, ninety-five quarto editions of Shakespeare’s works had been published, making him the hands-down best-selling poet-playwright of the period” (Rasmussen 2016, 23). Even at the time of his death, seven years earlier, the number of editions of his works prove that “Shakespeare’s legitimate medium is not merely the theater but also, if not primarily, the book” (Kastan 2001, 11). As Lukas Erne has put it, “for the English book-buying public, Shakespeare was already the greatest English dramatist in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century” (2013, 55).

So, if the First Folio is not particularly rare, innovative, prestigious, beautiful, lavish, perfect, authoritative or name-making, it might be asked why it commands such astronomical prices at auction, and why all the bother about its four hundredth anniversary. Quite simply, the point about the First Folio is that it is the first *sumum* of Shakespeare, and as Shakespeare ascended to divinity in the eighteenth century, so Heminge and Condell’s collection of his works became the object of fetish (Hooks 2016b) and its value rocketed proportionally, or disproportionately. There are, of course, those who claim that Shakespeare’s rise to global literary supremacy was the result of factors extrinsic to any aesthetic merit intrinsic to his works, chief among them Britain’s nineteenth-century imperial hegemony. Notwithstanding, for better or for worse, it is quite frankly hard to conceive of a world without Prospero’s magic or Caliban’s subaltern dream; without Leontes’s jealousy or Hermione’s resurrection; without Rosalind’s unflagging goodness or Jacques’s winning cynicism; without Orlando’s “If music be the food of love,” Viola’s “patience on a monument smiling at grief,” or Malvolio’s cruelly contrived fall from self-deluding “greatness” to the dark brink of madness; without Timon’s splendid misanthropy, Coriolanus’s steel-tipped egolatry; and without the Ides of March, Brutus’s soul-searching and Antony’s dazzling speech on Caesar’s death. Yet were it not for the careful editorial endeavours of Shakespeare’s friends and fellow-players, Heminge and Condell, we would have no—and, yes, they are worth listing—texts of *The Tempest*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Cymbeline*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*, *All’s Well that Ends Well*, *Twelfth Night*, *1 Henry VI*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*, *Julius Caesar* or *Henry VIII*. Or *Antony and Cleopatra*. And no *Macbeth*.<sup>3</sup> We are instructed to thank Heaven for small mercies: what gratitude can repay the immense benefaction of Heminge and Condell? It might be argued that between them Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides wrote around three hundred plays,

3 Were it not for Heminge and Condell, too, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *King John* and 2 and 3 *Henry VI* would only exist in markedly different versions whose exact relationship to the respective Folio texts is still hotly debated (Egan 2016, 70).

of which only thirty-five survive intact; to which the fitting, if callous, rejoinder must be, it is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all. Thanks to Heminge and Condell, those sixteen Shakespearean plays are in our heads and hearts; the missing two hundred and sixty-odd of his Greek predecessors never were and never will be. Survival, whether biological or textual, is often a precarious business, a matter of luck and happenstance; but posterity has no pity on those who fell by the wayside and turned to dust.

This essay is in some ways written in homage to Heminge and Condell, two players editing for “the great Variety of Readers” but seeking the patronage of two gentlemen. What I want to suggest is that the First Folio’s preliminary, prefatory or front matter, to which the editors were significant contributors and which readers often and understandably skip, is pregnant with much of the future of criticism. The suggestion is advanced in two movements. In the first, I show how that matter adumbrates some of the key issues in the criticism of Shakespeare up to his definitive consecration as the God of Englishmen’s idolatry around the mid-eighteenth century, while at the same time quietly ushering in the enthusiastic mode of much of that criticism. In the second, I unpick the threads of the class prejudice which radically dislocates the preliminary matter, would soon be exacerbated by anxieties over enthusiasm and continues to underwrite attitudes regarding aesthetic entitlement. With the hindsight of four hundred years, the First Folio’s front matter emerges as a remarkably prescient yet unsettling epitome of early modern religious configurations of the class bias which would later catalyse the sequestration and sacralisation of the aesthetic. In a broad sense, then, this essay is no more than a reassertion of Terry Eagleton’s claim that “The construction of the modern notion of the aesthetic artefact is [...] inseparable from the construction of the dominant ideological forms of modern class-society” (1990, 3). Yet it may at least be of interest to show how the internal tensions of the First Folio’s front matter anticipate the open antagonisms of a culture market that would not be firmly established until the practice of bardolatry and the discourse of enthusiasm were co-opted to serve an aesthetic whose class prejudice excluded the very “great Variety of Readers” whom Heminge and Condell cajoled into buying their edition of Shakespeare’s plays.

## ***The Bardolatrous Strain***

To an extent, the First Folio’s front matter raises some of the issues which would become bones of critical contention between eighteenth-century neoclassicalists and bardolaters. The art-nature controversy is palpable. In famous words from “To the great Variety of Readers,” Heminge and Condell place Shakespeare firmly under nature’s tutelage: “Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse, that wee have scarce received from him a blot in his papers” ([<sup>1</sup>]A3r). The “child of nature” will not take his first steps with any confidence until Nicholas Rowe’s seminal 1709 edition of the plays, and the genius whom Peter Whalley called in 1748 “the universal master of Nature” (Vickers 1974-1995, 3.281) is even further away; but Jonson’s sobriquet “*sweet swan of Avon*” ([<sup>1</sup>]A4v), applied to Shakespeare in his commendatory poem “To the memory of my beloved, The Author, Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us,” together with Leonard Digges’s reference to the “Stratford Monument” ([<sup>1</sup>]A5+1r) at least point to Shakespeare’s origins in a provincial backwater. Although Jonson hints that, unlike Aristophanes, Terence and Plautus, Shakespeare was “of Nature’s familie” on account, as implied immediately afterwards, of the natural “matter” of his comedies, he is careful to hive off nature from art: “nature her selfe was proud of his designes, / And joy’d to weare the dressing of his lines [...] Yet must I not give nature all: Thy Art, / My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part” ([<sup>1</sup>]A4v). It is art which “fashion[s]” the “matter” furnished by Nature; and it is an art much closer to the mechanical skill of the blacksmith than to supernatural inspiration: “he, / Who casts to write a living line, must sweat [...] and strike the second heat / Upon the Muses anvil” ([<sup>1</sup>]A4v).

In neoclassicalists criticism, nature was the antagonist of the largely spurious canons of classical art, which owed more to sixteenth-century Italian humanists Scaliger and Castelvetro than to Aristotle’s putative parentage (Lazarus 2016, 9). According to Jonson, Shakespeare surpassed “all, that insolent Greece, or haughtie Rome” ([<sup>1</sup>]A4v) had to offer. It might even be argued that Jonson’s apparently withering line on Shakespeare’s “small Latine, and lesse Greeke” ([<sup>1</sup>]A4r) is a positive commendation of his freedom from classical formal constraints or plot sources, which is how Digges would later take—or rewire—it in his commendatory verse to John Benson’s 1640 edition of *Poems: Written by Wil. Shakespeare, Gent.*: “he doth not borrow / One phrase from Greeks, not Latins imitate, / Nor once from vulgar languages translate.” None of which is, of course, true, but that was no let to countless eighteenth-century recitals of the same point. Indeed, on this and other grounds, Digges has been hailed as “the first Shakespeare idolater” (Freehafer 1970, 75). As for those formal constraints, disingenuously overplayed by critics of the time and later scholars (Weinbrot 1993), the dogmatic French insistence on the three unities notoriously became one aesthetic hotspot in the Anglo-French culture wars of the eighteenth century, in which Shakespeare was recruited as standard-bearer of a natural, peculiarly English genius or spirit. The banner of patriotic aesthetics was unfurled too in the First Folio’s commendatory verses. Apart from drawing up a canon of English literary authors (Chaucer, Spenser, Beaumont), Jonson bids his nation to glory in their local boy done good: “Triumph, my Britaine, thou hast one to showe, / To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe” ([<sup>1</sup>]A4v); Hugh Holland exhorts “You Britaines brave” to “wring” “[t]hose hands, which you so clapt” ([<sup>1</sup>]A5r). Much as Shakespeare was an element in Jacobean nation building, so he would be crucial to Britain’s eighteenth-century programme of international self-assertion.



But of more lasting, and ultimately pernicious, effect was the eighteenth century's deification of Shakespeare as the God of its idolatry. Notwithstanding scope for scepticism regarding the Protestant feel of Droeshout's engraving, the preliminary matter infuses the First Folio with a perceptible religious spirit, as if paving the way for the bard's ultimate apotheosis and the consequent mutation of much criticism into bardolatry. My "religious spirit" is in some ways a cognate of the "monumental theme" which Greg Laoutaris has detected "writ large across the First Folio's preliminaries" (2016, 51). That theme "invest[s] the Folio with the qualities which would normally accompany the post-reformation tomb as a marker of both social status and divine grace" and lends it the gravitas more normally associated at the time with the sort of theological treatises to which Digges's "Workes" alludes: "Shake-speare, at length thy pious fellows give / Thy World thy Workes: thy Workes, by which, out-live / Thy tomb" (<sup>[r]</sup>A5+1r). Laoutaris goes on to argue that the "idealised Shakespeare [...] is a carefully crafted illusion which paradoxically relies on the conspicuous communal ascent and validation of the members of the 'Shakespeare Inc.' who, in backing the Folio, honoured their friend while adding value to their own respective business interests" (2016, 57). But while the elaboration on the theme may answer to pretensions of social and aesthetic upward-mobility, the superstitious fallout should not be overlooked. The intention may be to confer dignity on a collection of plays, but the effect is to immortalise—even to deify—Shakespeare in anticipation of the eighteenth-century critics, as well as to declare the immortalizing and therefore empowering potential of reading literature. This might in part explain the evangelising insistence of the editors on the act of reading: "Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe" (<sup>[r]</sup>A3r).

The locus classicus of bardolatry is David Garrick's Jubilee Ode of 1769 and its appellation of Shakespeare as, in Juliet's words to Romeo, "the god of our idolatry" (Vickers 1974-1995, 5.345). Garrick's "our," which pluralizes Juliet's "my," embraces all Englishmen, including Arthur Murphy, for whom, writing in 1759, Shakespeare was "a kind of established religion in poetry" (Vickers 1974-1995, 4.93). The term "bardolatry" was not coined until 1901 by George Bernard Shaw in his Preface to *Three Plays for Puritans* (xxxi). Different writers on the cult of Shakespeare have traced the practice's origins to different periods. Babcock (1931) shattered the illusion that the Romantics were the first to adore the bard and set the starting point for bardolatry at 1766; Schoenbaum (1970, 100) and Taylor (1991) concurred in situating the watershed in the later eighteenth century; Vickers traced the commencement of "the idolatry of Shakespeare" (1974-1995, 5.2) to the 1740s and 1750s; Bate (1989a, 25), followed by Hume (1997), advanced the turning point to the 1730s. In fact, the history of bardolatry can be dated even further back, at least to John Dryden's 1667 preface to *All For Love* (his reworking of *Antony and Cleopatra*), which bears the unmistakable stamp of the Longinian sublime and its notion of godlike authorship (De Jonge 2012, 276-81). The commendatory poems of the second edition of the Folio (1632) contain some faint traces of Longinus in John Milton's "wonder and astonishment," "I.M.S"'s "heavenly fire," the reader's "rapt soul" in an unsigned contribution, and Digges's recollection of "how the audience / Were ravished" at a performance of *Julius Caesar* (Shakespeare 2005, lxxiii, lxxiv).

As for the First Folio, close inspection of its front matter reveals the germs of bardolatry even earlier than that, not fully gestated, admittedly, but certainly more than a glimmer in the stripling critical tradition's eye. Shaw disparaged the practice of bardolatry and pointed out wryly how "the mutilators of Shakespear [*sic*] [...] have ever been the most fanatical of his worshippers" (1901, xxxi). Those "mutilators" were the generally conservative seventeenth and eighteenth-century adapters of Shakespeare for the stage, who made of the bard an idol wrought in their own image, knocked into neoclassical shape and blatantly moralised. Thus, for example, *King Lear* ended happily and gained a love plot between Cordelia and Edward; *Troilus and Cressida* ended in the ennobling tragedy Shakespeare refused its heroes; *Romeo and Juliet* was backdated to the Roman Republic; *Richard II* became a Sicilian usurper; *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado About Nothing* were merged into a single play; and Henry V was followed to France by a spurned mistress disguised as a page. In other words, the "mutilators" deified a Shakespeare reconstituted on the basis of their "perversion" or "atrocities" (Odell 1920, 1.31) and barely recognisable today. Yet the mutilations of Richard Lacy, William Davenant, Dryden, Nahum Tate, Colley Cibber and Garrick himself are unwisely reproved given Shakespeare's permanent, essential and welcome predisposition to adaptation, not to mention his more unfortunate availability for appropriation. Unlike his later adapters, in the First Folio those who anticipated future deification were men who knew him personally and claimed to be presenting him to the public in true and original state. As we have seen, Heminge and Condell decried the "divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors." "Maimed," cognate of Shaw's "mutilated," and a word used by both Thomas Watson and Jonson of halting metrical composition (Sell 2022, 153-55) is one element in a presiding metaphorical economy which identifies the First Folio with the Shakespearean body. The Folio's collection of the Bard's literary remains is figuratively a recomposition of his corporeal remains: "[his own writings] are now offered to your view cured and perfect of their limbs" (<sup>[r]</sup>A3r).

This body-text trope was something of a commonplace in Renaissance rhetoric, but in the context of the Folio's front matter the twist given to it by Heminge and Condell is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, its avowed delivering of Shakespeare's body trumps the similarly conventional assertion in "B.I."s verse epigraph to Droeshout's engraving that the "Booke" will provide the reader with the image of Shakespeare's "wit" which could not be inscribed on the engraver's "brasse" (<sup>[r]</sup>A1v). Thanks to the editors' "gather[ing]" of Shakespeare's "works," the reader will gain access not just to Shakespeare's mind, a selling-point Heminge and Condell reiterate—"for his wit can no more lie hid,

then it could be lost" ([<sup>1</sup>A3r])—but also to his flesh and blood. Thus, the act of reading will restore Shakespeare to life much as the editors have restored him to physical integrity. In this sense the Folio is the practical fulfilment of sonnet 18's theoretical statement of the immortalising power of reading: "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." Secondly, Heminge and Condell's variation on the body-text trope sets the conditions for editors and readers alike to be converted into Messiahs with the miraculous power to restore the dead to life. When Jonson, almost certainly the "B. I." of the verse epigraph, bids "My Shakespeare, rise" ([<sup>1</sup>A4r]), he assigns not only to his own characteristically egotistical self (Laoutaris 2016, 55) but to all readers the Christ-like role of resuscitating the playwriting Lazarus entombed in the Folio's text. Jonson's explication, "Thou [...] art alive still, while thy Booke doth live," is a sentiment in close affinity with sonnet 18's conclusion and certifies the immortalising compact between reader, text and author invoked by the other contributors of commendatory verses. "This book," enthuses Digges, "shall make thee looke / Fresh to all ages [...] ev'ry Line, each Verse / Here shall revive, redeeme thee from thy Herse" ([<sup>1</sup>A5+1r]). James Mabbe considers that "this thy printed worth, / Tels thy Spectators, that thou went'st but forth / To enter with applause" ([<sup>1</sup>A5+1r]). The Folio, in other words, augurs Shakespeare's triumphant second coming as a Christ-like actor or an actor-like Christ, a trope half-buried in Mabbe's verse which Robert Herrick and Andrew Marvell were to disinter, respectively, in "Good Friday: REX TRAGICUS, or Christ going to his cross" and "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's return from Ireland." For his part Holland unpicks the ambiguity of sonnet 18's "eternal lines" (l.12) to broadcast the good news that "though his line of life went soone about, / The life yet of his lines shall never out" ([<sup>1</sup>A5r]).

Less of an enthusiast, Jonson fights shy of pursuing immortality to its grandest conclusion of divinity. Elsewhere he owns only to having "honoured" his fellow playwright's "memory on *this* side idolatry" (1892, 23; italics added). Consistent with that anti-idolatrous caution, his commendatory poem raises Shakespeare's status to "Soule of the Age" ([<sup>1</sup>A4r]), bestows upon him an astrological apotheosis as "Starre of Poets" ("I see thee in the Hemisphere / Advanc'd, and made a Constellation there!"), but draws the line at any potentially Christological figurations, comparing him no further than with the pagan gods Apollo and Mercury ([<sup>1</sup>A4v]). The only immortality Jonson concedes to Shakespeare is the genetically engineered one of family resemblance. This rests on the conventional trope whereby the writer fathers his works, which become his metaphorical offspring: "Looke how the fathers face / Lives in his issue, even so, the race / Of Shakespeares minde, and manners brightly shines / In his well toned, and true-fild lines" ([<sup>1</sup>A4vr]). In the dedication, Heminge and Condell had already rehearsed a similar trope when claiming it their "office" "to procure his [Shakespeare's] Orphanes, Guardians" ([<sup>1</sup>A2r]), that is, the custody of the Herbert brothers. The temptation is common to take Jonson's celebrated aphorism, "He was not of an age, but for all time!" ([<sup>1</sup>A4v]), as an outburst of ur-bardolatry. Yet such claims for literary immortality, the "posteritie" ([<sup>1</sup>A5+1r]) alluded to by Digges before intoning everlasting redemption from death, were clichés far removed from confessions of bardolatrous faith in Shakespeare's divinity.

Unlike in the epistle to "the great Variety of Readers," there is no bardolatrous resurrection in the immediately preceding dedication to the patrons of the First Folio, "THE MOST NOBLE AND INCOMPARABLE PAIRE OF BRETHREN," William and Philip Herbert. Each brother is regaled with their nobiliary title and courtly office, the former "Earle of Pembroke, &c.; Lord Chamberlaine to the Kings most Excellent Majesty," the latter "Earl of Montgomery, &c; Gentleman of his Majesties Bed-Chamber"; and both "Knights of the most Noble Order of the Garter, and our singular good lords" ([<sup>1</sup>A2r]). The reader is left in no doubt that the Folio is being proffered up at the loftiest of social altars. Religiosity is once again in the air, but now the immortals are the Herberts themselves, whom the editors approach "with a kind of religious addresse" ([<sup>1</sup>A4v]) in order to present them with Shakespeare's plays in a rite of social piety. For his part, Digges writes of the editors as the playwright's "pious fellows giv[ing] / The world thy works" ([<sup>1</sup>A5r+1]). If Jonson, parsed now in sociological terms, will shortly bid Shakespeare "rise" in class status, Heminge and Condell modestly admit the "dignity" of their patrons to be "greater, then to descend to the reading of these trifles" ([<sup>1</sup>A4r]). In social terms, for the Herberts to read the First Folio would be to climb down the ladder of hierarchy much as, for Jonson, the publication of the First Folio would enable Shakespeare to climb up it; in religious terms, the editors figure the Herberts as Gods descending, Jonson Shakespeare as a mortal ascending heavenwards. But there is no immortality for the bard in the dedicatory epistle: his books will not vouchsafe him the eternal life foreseen by Jonson, Holland, Digges and Mabbe. More matter-of-fact, Heminge and Condell acknowledge that the works "out-liv[e]" their author. For the bard is "dead," his "remaines" the object of "consecration" to their noble patrons or "Gods," now transformed metaphorically into "Temples," and his only after-life that of "memory" or "reputation" ([<sup>1</sup>A2r-v]). Yet even that reputation will be secured, not by the works themselves, but "by humble offer of his playes, to your most noble patronage" ([<sup>1</sup>A2v]). Literary fame, it seems, depends on the dispensation of aristocratic grace rather than the merits of the works themselves, which rather contradicts Heminge and Condell's thoughts on the "privilege" of noble "censure" in their epistle "To the great Variety of Readers" ([<sup>1</sup>A3r]). The dedication's class-signed calibration of the scale from humanity to divinity is confirmed when the editors identify the "remains" they "consecrate" as those of "your servant Shakespeare" ([<sup>1</sup>A2v]), confined in his mortality to the lowly social status from which the Folio's remaining prefatory matter is at pains to raise him socially towards gentility—as witness the title's "Mr.," Droeshout's gentrifying portrait, and B.I.'s and Ben Jonson's "gentle Shakespeare"—and metaphysically, in a process which would culminate in eighteenth-century bardolatry, towards Godlike immortality.

## Enthusiasm

At one point the dedication's fawning, awkward rhetoric of subordinate devotion is interrupted by a lowlier idiom to vindicate the worth of even the humblest offerings: "Country hands reach foorth milke, creame, fruites, or what they have: and many Nations (we have heard) that had not gummes & incense, obtained their requests with a leavened Cake. It was no fault to approach their Gods, by what means they could: And the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples" (<sup>[n]</sup>A2v). A similar change of tone is registered in Jonson's commendatory poem, where "Bawd" and "Whore" (<sup>[n]</sup>A4r) rub shoulders with muses, Olympian gods, classical authors, Jonson's national canon of authors, and the rest. But the most startling rhetorical shift occurs between the dedication to the Herberts and the first paragraph of the epistle "To the great Variety of Readers." This sudden modulation from high to low, cult to vernacular, style comes as a surprise, jolting the reader into acute awareness of the hierarchical antagonisms underlying it. The aristocratic patronage sought in the largely precious, strained language of the dedication sits uncomfortably beside the first paragraph of the epistle and its boisterous pleas to punters to stump up their hard-earned cash. In the dedication Heminge and Condell presented themselves as the pious procurers of "Guardians" for Shakespeare's dramatic offspring. Here, evoking the trope of the strumpet press, and with Jonson's "Bawd" and "whore" awaiting at page-turn, the pimp-like editors raucously solicit the public for its money, while all flattery is doused by a seasoned contempt for the non-pecuniary returns of art. Any reader able to "spell" (<sup>[n]</sup>A3r) will do: human worth is no longer indexed to social status but to purchasing power ("capacities [...] of your purses"), more specifically, the power to match in money Shakespeare's own commodity value or "worth in print" (<sup>[n]</sup>A5+1r), as Mabbe puts it. As the most reliable measure of a book's worth is its sales figures—"buy it first. That doth best commend a Booke" (<sup>[n]</sup>A3r), the readers are cajoled to fork out come what may. "Censure" or critical approval doesn't "drive a Trade, or make the [printer's] Jacke go"; it's money, the editors' hard-headed message seems to be, that makes the world go round. Heminge and Condell themselves stood to gain little from sales of the First Folio, which they claim in the dedication to have edited "without ambition either of selfe-profit, or fame" (<sup>[n]</sup>A2r); they are selfless panders, facilitating commercial intercourse between consumers and publishers.

The vaunt of Heminge and Condell's epistle is that all readers in their "great Variety" may be empowered, perhaps as suggested in the previous section, but additionally by "buy[ing] into structures of literary 'privileges'" (Laoutaris 2016, 61). By offering prospective readers the opportunity to hold in their hands the "Original" works, Laoutaris has argued, Heminge and Condell are giving them the sort of privileged access hitherto open to patrons alone (61-2). What is an attractive take on the editorial rhetoric is sadly belied by the text itself. For Heminge and Condell are not interested in the lumpen enjoying the "privilege" to "censure" that was the prerogative of noble patrons. "[T]hese Playes," they argue, "have had their trial [of censure] alreadie, and stood out all Appeales; and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of Court, then any purchas'd Letters of commendation" (<sup>[n]</sup>A3r). As the aesthetic worth of the plays has "alreadie" been certified by aristocratic fiat in the form of the Herberts' unpaid approval, it requires no reappraisal by the paying reader. The implication here is that, unlike Shakespeare publishing which has never been "uncontaminated by the market" (Smith 2011, 204), aesthetic judgement should remain unspotted by the cash nexus and the grubby hands of punters. That implication may have been lost on Heminge and Condell, who solicit not that their "great Variety of readers" should read and, patron-like, censure, but that they should part with their shillings and pennies: "Do so, but buy it first." Laoutaris's comforting class conciliation is further undermined by the historical record of early buyers of the First Folio; beyond the "purses" of most—its selling price represented the annual wage of a London labourer (Boulton 1996, 288; quoted in Wayne 2016, 399), it tended to find its way to the shelves of the English establishment. "The earliest known owners include three earls, two bishops, a lord, an admiral, two colonels, an ambassador, a knight and a lawyer" (Rasmussen 2011, xiv-xv). Although lower ranking clergymen, both Protestant and Catholic—particularly Jesuits, whose pedagogy had a pronounced theatrical slant (Bjurström 1972; McCabe 1983), some "commoners of standing" (West 2001, I. 6) and theatre people (Mayer 2016, 105-7) also possessed copies, generally speaking, the Folio did not come into the hands of the barely literate or middle classes: the "great Variety" of its readership was confined to the upper end of the market.

The marked contrast between the self-righteous respect for social decorum in the dedication and the epistle's brazen appeal for cash is symptomatic of a book-trade nervously traversing a cusp between literary patronage and the commercial market; so, too, is the editors' oscillation between an idolatrous reverence for art and a practical eye to its commodity value. What would become the holy text of bardolatry was printed at a time when publishing's profit motive was eroding the hallowed system of patronage and therefore threatening to undermine the aristocratic sacrosanctity of art. This incipient commercialisation of the literary market presages in small the expansion under the Hanoverians of Britain's commercial empire, which supplanted the "aristocratic regime of the Stuarts" and enabled Shakespeare's rise to national and global pre-eminence (Dobson 1992, 8) on the wings of bardolatry. The irony is that, to get off the ground in the first place, the balloon of eighteenth-century Shakespeare worship relied to no inconsiderable extent on the reeking breath of common stakeholders in the cash nexus. But it also fed on the two-edged discourse of enthusiasm, which served as an ambivalent litmus test of religious, aesthetic and social acceptability. Enthusiasm (literally, having God within oneself)

posited a direct line of communication between the individual and the divine and was feared as licensing the sort of religious and political free-for-all that had caused civil war, decapitated a monarch and debilitated the doctrinal and liturgical supremacy of the established church. Yet with the exponential growth of Longinianism in the wake of Boileau's 1674 translation of the *Peri hupsous*, enthusiasm also fuelled the similarly growing fields of philosophical aesthetics and literary criticism (Irlam 1999; Morillo 2001; Mee 2005). Thus, from Dryden onwards, Shakespearean criticism was divided into two camps, one fanning the supernatural flames of inspiration and sublimity, some sparks of which flicker in the First Folio's preliminaries, the other struggling with the bellows of neoclassicism to prevent the embers of rule and decorum from quite dying out—and many fanned and bellowed at the same. Heminge and Condell and, to a greater extent, Holland, Digges and Mabbe were proto-enthusiasts; Jonson was more circumspect, wary of sacrificing sound criticism on the altar of "seeliest ignorance" or "blinde affection" ([<sup>16</sup>]A4r).

Enthusiasm was discredited by Thomas Hobbes (1996, 51, 77, 251) and John Locke, for whom it was "founded neither on Reason, nor Divine Revelation, but rising from the Conceits of a warmed or over-weening Brain" (1979, 699). Generally expressing itself in fire-brand rhetoric, particularly in the virulent texts, pamphlets and sermons of religious controversy, it was in both form and substance anathema to polite society, which prided itself, regardless of political or confessional affiliation, on moderation and restraint. Indeed, polite society may even have constituted itself as a direct response to enthusiasm's onslaught on monarchy, class, property and language (Morillo 2006, 69-75; Knights 2005, 56-7). In his *Advancement and Reformation of Poetry* (1701), John Dennis attempted an early compromise, arguing that God was ultimately at the helm of enthusiastic writing and reading; that any transport, the result of reason working on the passions, was to a temporarily restored "Paradise" and "convers[ation] with Immortal Beings" (1701, 29-30, 172); and that once transported, reason "finds its Account, in the exact perpetual Observance of Decorums" (170). Joseph Addison latched on to Dennis's thinking in the *Spectator* series "Pleasure of Imagination," as too would William Wordsworth, commencing work on *The Prelude* at century's end. But the intervening decades followed the lead of Shaftesbury, whose *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (1708) prescribed ridicule as polite society's antidote to enthusiasm. Jonathan Swift launched a pre-emptive strike in *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), while Alexander Pope in *The Dunciad* (1728) and, alongside John Gay and John Arbuthnot, in *Three Hours After Marriage* (1718), strafed Dennis with impolite severity: the critical reputation of their "Sir Tremendous Longinus" has only recently started to recover. Dennis's humiliation was part of a wider pattern in literary aesthetics which premised literariness on a tradition of civility and defined it in opposition to the immoderate rantings of enthusiasm (Hartman 1991, 177).

As Pope came to realise, for all its disreputable associations with religious and political dissent, enthusiasm was a useful concept for understanding the poetic genius of writers like Milton and Homer; the bardolaters availed themselves with alacrity. Thus, for William Guthrie, by dint of "enthusiasm" the true poet "treads the [same] sacred ground" as Shakespeare, while an anonymous essayist confesses to his "Idolatry, Enthusiasm, or what you please to call it" (Vickers, 1974-1995, 3.197, 260). John Boyle, 5th Earl of Cork and Orrery, staunch Tory and friend of Swift, Pope and Johnson, was able to quip, "We are methodists in regard to Shakespeare. We carry our enthusiasms so far that we entirely suspend our senses towards his absurdities and his blunders" (Brumoy 1759, 1. ix). Here an establishment figure aligns the bardolaters and their ready relinquishment of reason with the charismatic fifth columnists who threatened the established Church of England with schism. This discursive, tongue-in-cheek self-identification of high churchman with evangelical enthusiast is some indication of the extent to which bardolatry was a faith that could unite an otherwise confessionally disunited nation. But it was unable to heal class division; rather, the taste required to appreciate Shakespeare might serve as a differentiating factor of social status. Thus, in the epilogue to his play *The Mournful Nuptials* (1739), Thomas Cooke split society between "They who are born to taste" and are firm believers in Shakespeare and the Church of England, and "The tasteless vulgar," whose faith is in Harlequin and John Wesley (Dobson 1992, 7). A similar social cleavage underlies Heminge and Condell's instinctive deference to the Herberts' lordly capacity for aesthetic discrimination or "censure" and indifference towards the critical competences of the "great Variety," by implication disenfranchised from the temples of taste.

Enthusiasm was contagious among the mob, their irrational ecstasies a dangerous antagonist to the polite reasonableness of an increasingly bourgeois public sphere (Mee 2005, 30). One practical means of contagion was the printing press and an ever-expanding market for books amongst an increasingly literary populace. Not only did print allow "inspiration out of a more regulated environment and into the faceless and inflationary world of the crowd" (Mee 2005, 59); for Oliver Goldsmith it also amounted to "that fatal revolution whereby writing is converted to a mechanic trade" (qtd. Mee 2005, 60). As the press empowered the "great Variety" without "extensive training or cultural pedigree" (Hammond 1997, 83) to be published or to read what others published, the cultural elites became anxious that literary worth was at jeopardy (Keen, 629-31) and took fright at the invasion of their sanctuaries by Cleopatra's "mechanic slaves, / With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers" (5.2.205-6)<sup>4</sup> and *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* carpenter, joiner, bellow-maker and weaver. As

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<sup>4</sup> All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from Shakespeare 2005.



Samuel Taylor Coleridge complained, “in these times, if a man fail as a tailor, or a shoemaker, and can read and write correctly (for spelling is still of some consequence) he becomes an author” (1902, 36)—hope still for Starveling if his business goes bust and, like Heminge and Condell’s prospective readers, he meets the spelling requirement! Primarily concerned with mere monetary worth, the eighteenth-century’s enthusiastic mechanicals, like their predecessors Heminge and Condell, carried on regardless of “censure” and accelerated the elite’s flight to self-preservation in the sanctuaries of an increasingly socially stratified and mystified art, which repulsed the fine frenzies not only of pulpit zealots, popular prophets and rabble-rousers, but of the growing band of “peasant poets” with nothing more to rely on than a “native genius” (Mee 2005, 74-5) which needed not the disciplining rule of art to transfer its freely occurring thoughts and feelings unmediated onto paper. If writing was spontaneous, if like Shakespeare’s, *apud* Heminge and Condell, it was easy and therefore blotless, what was art’s worth, where its value without some Jonsonian sweating at its anvil? And where the frontier between polite civility and the oikish mob?

In this context of an embattled polite class defending its bastion of civility from the enthusiastic masses, that Shakespeare made the cut into literary acceptability begins to seem something of a miracle. Luckily for him, Britain required a religion which would unite a confessionally divided nation and a cultural icon with which, first, to combat French cultural hegemony and, second, to reinforce its own across its empire. True enough, the Folio’s front matter had made efforts to up Shakespeare’s social credentials, but the bard was still a man from the sticks with none of the education and consequent taste which could trim enthusiasm of its excesses. However, as mentioned, enthusiasm’s blood relations with the Longinian sublime—itself a peculiarly aristocratic mode of creation—logically appealed to the literary establishment. For many, therefore, enthusiasm was not ruled entirely out of court; rather, for Shaftesbury and others, it was a natural passion in need of regulation if it were not to become debased, much as for Jonson Shakespeare’s nature required tempering by art. Meantime, by switching aesthetic priorities, precocious bardolaters tipped the scales of the social hierarchy. In 1694, Charles Gildon, for example, remarked the tendency of “Greatness,” or sublimity, to be “Boundless”: “‘Tis not governed by Common Rules and Methods but Glories in a *Noble Irregularity*” (Vickers 1974-1995, 2.70. Original emphasis). Now in decline, neoclassical regulation switched class allegiance to become the preserve of the commoners, while “irregularity,” at a new social premium, was duly ennobled. By such special pleading, Shakespeare made the cut into the canon of polite letters where the allures of enthusiasm might be tolerated if administered in careful “tincture[s],” to adopt Joseph Warton’s (1756, 320) term, by individuals with a reflective cast of mind and possessed of taste. Those two qualities were cultivated through an education in the very classics which Jonson, on the more popular reading, had ironically placed beyond Shakespeare’s ken—a Shakespeare who appeared on the establishment’s curriculum as a little light refreshment between Virgil and Tacitus, on the state schools’ only from 1882 and only as a test of literacy for the very few who made it to the higher grades (Olive 2016, 1228).

Thus, Coleridge drove a wedge between unreflective fancy and reflective imagination; thus, for Wordsworth’s “Readers of superior judgement” any “spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling” only became poetry in the hands of “a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply” (Wordsworth and Coleridge 1985, [3], 157). On Heminge and Condell’s account, that ruled Shakespeare out, and Wordsworth certainly had his doubts about the bard (e.g. Bate 1989b, 71-86). Gamekeepers turned poachers, both Coleridge and Wordsworth were “part of an emergent clerisy, eager to ring fence literariness from the enthusiasm of the crowd” (Mee 2005, 77)—*procul, O procul este profani!* Thus, Leigh Hunt branded William Blake, son of a hosier and an enthusiast in religion, “an unfortunate lunatic” while, according to Benjamin Heath Malkin, his art was reduced “to the mechanical department of his profession” (both quoted in Roberts 2007, 82-3); thus, working-class John Keats was snubbed as a Cockney poet. Thus, the Victorian sage, Matthew Arnold, drove another wedge between “Hellene” and “Philistine.” Thus, Virginia Woolf explained literature to “The Common Reader” (book title) who “differs from the critic and the scholar. He is worse educated, and nature has not gifted him so generously” (1948, 11). Thus, the “great Variety” ended up disenfranchised from the very art which, in its highest expression, Heminge and Condell had offered them for a price and Digges had idolized with an enthusiasm equivalent to the “seeliest ignorance” Jonson was at pains to avoid (Freehafer 1970, 66).

On deification, it became indispensable that the bard’s sacred scriptures should disclose their meanings only to privileged curators among that “emergent clerisy.” As Dr. Johnson claimed of the Bible, the Shakespearean text could not “be understood at all by the unlearned” (Roberts 2007, 34). Since the word of God, any god, must necessarily differ from the language of ordinary human discourse, its correct interpretation was the sole province of its adepts. Bardolaters acquired a priestly cast, issuing hieratic pronouncements which only mystified the sacred scriptures and bamboozled the profane congregated to read them. Echoing Murphy’s dictum, in the 1860s an anonymous review for *J. A. Sharpe’s London Magazine* wrote:

Shakespeare-worship has long since become an established religion among us. It possesses its own elaborate hierarchy, ranging from those high-priests who profess to expound to us from within the veil of occult mysteries, down to the swingers of censers and carriers of candles in the outer courts. [...] As to the lay-element – the congregation who with orthodox ears and eyes sit under the priestly ministrations – [...] It is enough if they

can glibly repeat the creed which they have learned by rote, and swell the chorus of set responses at the proper moment. Ask them, “What they think of Shakespeare?” and they will instantly proclaim in the right enthusiastic key, “There is but one Shakespeare,” &c. State to them a heterodox opinion, and with virtuous indignation they will execrate your blasphemy. (Quoted in LaPorte 2020, 24-5)

Still today, it is too often the case that “literature professors are salaried, middle-class shamans” (Greenblatt 1988, 1) sermonising in Theory-driven technospeak or the self-congratulatory rhetoric of enlightened poetasters that is no more comprehensible to the layman than the Latin of the Vulgate probably was to Heminge and Condell. The critic, like the noble patron, is a savant, at whose feet one kneels in devout abasement before being dispensed oracular truths, which are no truths at all. Art, meanwhile, is said to yield its secrets upon “meditation” (Bloom 2010, xviii), but we are not told in what meditation consists and suspect that there is far less methodological madness in Heminge and Condell’s exhortation to “reade [...] and againe, and againe.” Thus, by 1985, Shakespeare was firmly on the curriculum but as “the sole vehicle of high-cultural ideology and establishment literary criticism” (Sinfield 1985, 153). Thus the “great Variety of Readers” are barred from the “sacred ground” of enlightenment that the contemporary enthusiasts covet as their own, arrogating critical censure for themselves, as Heminge and Condell derogated it from the readers to their aristocratic patrons, gods of taste dwelling in exclusive temples. Thus, the “great Variety of Readers” are deprived of what Heminge and Condell promised could be theirs in exchange for cash and are divested of the messianic trappings temporarily bestowed upon them in the immortalising compact between reader, text and author invoked by Heminge and Condell, Holland, Digges and Mabbe. Thus, divinity becomes the birthright of privilege, of the playgoing nobs taking their places in the stalls—or, as the epistle comments, “on the Stage at Black-Friers, or the Cock-pit”—while, small consolation, “the great Variety” ascend to the barely more affordable and invariably more cramped seating high up at the back of the auditorium, in what, by a searing social irony, is colloquially known as “the Gods”. And thus, the twofold challenge of teaching Shakespeare in the classroom across the barricades of curable ignorance and chronic class prejudice, which has no remedy.

This transformation of the temples of high culture into the ramparts of class prejudice is the predictable outcome of the insoluble tensions that already flickered electrically between the dedication and epistle of Heminge and Condell. It was facilitated by the emergent discourse of enthusiasm, just starting to find its feet in the First Folio’s commendatory poems. It finds historical proof in the supercilious response to Jonson’s publication of his *Workes*: “Pray tell me, Ben, where doth the mistery lurke, / What others call a play you call a worke” (Herbert 1640, G3v; qtd. Laoutaris 2016, 50). Here it is the artist who mystifies his art by upgrading it from “play” to “work”; later it would be the critic who mystified Heminge and Condell’s collection of Shakespeare’s works by upgrading it to the cult term of “Folio” for use by the faithful. It finds proof too in some of the misconceptions enumerated at the start of this essay, which have dogged efforts at any objective appraisal of the First Folio: the enthusiastic clerisy and gentlemen scholars would have it rare and precious, primordial and prestigious, perfectly composed, aesthetically pleasing and authoritative—and so it is generally considered to be. Beneath the hype, Heminge, a grocer by trade, and Condell, a fishmonger’s son, prioritised its cash value and signalled anxieties over the artistic worth of what their lofty patrons might scorn as “trifles” (<sup>[iv]</sup>A2r)—a word they repeat twice in obsessive epizeuxis—or at best as “some-thing.”

## ***Gentlemen Versus Players***

A little downstream from where Garrick celebrated the Shakespeare Jubilee, the freshly cut green of Stratford-upon-Avon’s county cricket ground rolls gently towards the tree-lined banks of the Avon, beyond which the brick hulks of the Royal Shakespeare Company Theatre rise in soulless counterpoint to the sacred sward of the English game, one locus of the nation’s pastoral. The ethos of cricket is often revered as quintessentially English. Much like the drama, it is a team game in which individuals can steal the limelight in well-defined roles. Much like Prince Hal’s merry band of brothers, it was the tradition for both sides to wear the same colour, non-confrontational, innocent white, until Australian media tycoon Kerry Packer came along and invented the one-day version to be played in different-coloured pyjamas beneath floodlighting, which meant a match need never be stopped on account of the bad light which is the bane of English summer afternoons. Yet the social and racial egalitarianism associated with the white jersey and flannels was always a myth: cricket, England’s game, had always been disfigured by class prejudice, England’s pet pécadillo. Nowhere was this more manifest than in the distinction between amateurs and professionals, or Gentlemen and Players. The Gentlemen, typically public-school and Oxbridge educated were paid expenses for their troubles; the Players, usually drawn from the working classes, received a regular wage in a brown paper envelope. The Players tended to make more runs and take more wickets; the Gentlemen to enjoy fatter purses. Gentlemen versus Players fixtures were played at least once annually from 1806. The Players normally won despite scandalous subterfuges devised to save aristo faces, such as shorter stumps for Gentlemen batsmen. This appalling travesty of all cricketing values came to an end on 11 September 1962, the Players winning by seven wickets. Illness had forced England’s great all-rounder, Sir Ted Dexter (Radley College and Jesus College, Cambridge) to withdraw from captaincy of the Gentlemen. Dexter travelled first-class to training with his copy of the *Telegraph*; he recalled “culture shock” on first meeting working-class bowler, Freddie Truman; he stood

unsuccessfully as Conservative candidate for Cardiff South East—remarks about the dirty curtains of the working classes and milk-bottles on their doorsteps didn't help (Dexter 2021). In retirement he contributed a column to the cricketing monthly *Wisden*. The title of the column was “Enthusiasms.”

As an undergraduate, one of my college dons was a leading scholar of Samuel Johnson. Born in Yorkshire, his tweed suits and bowtie aspired to a gentility that was not his birth-right. His Johnsonianism, as instinctive as acquired, meant the Romantics disturbed him; also, that he cherished *The Tempest*, one of Shakespeare's most regulated plays, whose tightly controlled forms reflect the manic autocracy of Prospero and pandered to Jacobean establishment taste. The last play of Shakespeare's sole composition stood at the opening end of the First Folio, a question, perhaps, of social-aesthetic etiquette. At the other end awaited *Cymbeline*, that formal and diegetic gallimaufry which provoked Johnson's notorious rant about the “unresisting imbecility” accruing on “the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life” (1968, 908). The play is the next best thing to aesthetic chaos, the avatar of political chaos which spectre-like haunts “any system of life” held dear by the conservative establishment. As Valerie Wayne (2016) has argued, framing the Folio as they do, *The Tempest* and *Cymbeline* might represent respectively Shakespeare's farewell to the stage and to his own dramatic output, of which the latter is a compendium of character-types and plot-motifs. But recalling the political imbrications of aesthetics, it is tempting, too, to succumb to Coleridgean fancy and feel across these two bookends the same electrical flicker of class prejudice that flashes between the opposite poles of Heminge and Condell's dedication and epistle, between the Herberts and “the great Variety,” between Arnoldian culture and anarchy, between Gentlemen and Players. *The Tempest* was ever on high culture's ideologised curriculum; in contrast, just as Prospero's dogs ran down the elements of disorder, so the 1921 Newbolt report routed *Cymbeline* from the classroom (Olive 2016, 1228). Yet what never failed to bring a tear to my don's eye was the song of Guiderius and Arvirargus over Imogen's presumed corpse, with its invocation of the working class's wage and a death that levels all—“sceptre, learning, physic” (*Cymbeline*, 4.2.269)—more effectively than the cash nexus or the levellest of playing fields. That the divine Shakespeare should create chimney sweep and Caliban is tolerated with a seraphic beam by the clerisy in their temples; that the chimney sweep or Caliban should use their wage to buy into Shakespeare—God forbid! Better dead than the unread read! Heminge and Condell's “great Variety” never made it to the bookstalls of St. Paul's; sadly, where bookshops still exist, the same is true four hundred years on. And that is why the advice of the grocer and the fishmonger's son—players both—to “reade [...] and againe, and againe,” is as timely and utopian as ever.

This article was written as part of ongoing work within the research project “Shakespeare's Religious Afterlives: Text, Reception and Performance” (SHAKREL), funded by the Scientific and Technical Research Board of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (ref. PID2021-123341NB-I00).





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BOOK REVIEWS

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**LAURA ÁLVAREZ TRIGO**

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# ***Representing (Post) Human Enhancement Technologies in Twenty-First Century US Fiction***

**Carmen Laguarda-Bueno**

New York: Routledge, 2023. 196 pp.

ISBN: 9781032232416

Carmen Laguarda-Bueno opens her book with the summary of a very telling final scene from the TV series *Years and Years* (2019): a woman is about to sublimate her consciousness by having it transferred into a software and, in a final moment of clarity, she concludes that whatever is going to be uploaded into the software is not what she is as a human being. This scene, as Laguarda-Bueno explains, “testifies to both the desire and aversion that transhumanism [...] inspires in the population” (1). With a critical eye, her book follows this dichotomy with a sound and methodological approach to literary analysis while remaining accessible to those who might not be overly familiar with the theoretical framework employed.

*Representing (Post)Human Enhancement Technologies in Twenty-First Century US Fiction*, published by Routledge in 2023, is part of a series entitled “Perspectives on the Non-Human in Literature and Culture,” focusing on works that analyze literary texts that deal with the environment, animals, machines, objects and non-human beings through theoretical approaches such as posthumanism, new materialism, critical animal studies and ecocriticism. Fitting with the thematic interests of the series, Laguarda-Bueno proposes a study of three contemporary novels (i.e., *Generosity: An Enhancement* (2009) by Richard Power; *The Circle* (2013) by Dave Eggers; and *Zero K* (2016) by Don DeLillo) based on a deep understanding of posthumanism and transhumanism.

The introduction emphasizes the complexity of these critical frameworks and the disparity between the concepts of posthumanism and transhumanism. As she well argues, the ample perspectives opened up by these branches of the theory are reflected in the artistic and cultural production of the last decades, which she highlights throughout her research. She begins by offering a critical and detailed review of philosophical trends and research published on both of these theoretical approaches over the last decades, calling attention to the fact that they also operate as sets of beliefs. Laguarda-

Bueno builds upon established scholarship such as the works of Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, Stefan Herbrechter and Francesca Ferrando, and carefully outlines the links between their schools of thought and the development of SF literature since the late twentieth century. Showcasing the diverse and possibly conflicting understandings within the philosophical perspective of posthumanism, she alludes to two different approaches found in literary explorations that deal with these critical discourses: those that aim their attention to “technology’s ability to alter human life,” and those that tackle the “possibilities that the posthuman paradigm opens up” for those in the margins (12). Laguarda-Bueno’s work, dealing with novels that focus on the former, examines the authors’ narrative strategies and how they fictionalize current debates around the issues of human-enhancement technologies. She lays out both the purpose and the interest of the study very clearly. The novels are analyzed with a strong focus on the literary resources and narrative strategies that the authors employ to explore transhumanist arguments and the corresponding critical posthumanist perspective.

The first chapter focuses on *Generosity: An Enhancement* (2009) by Richard Power, in which the beyond-human state (a perpetually happy existence) is attempted via biotechnology. Laguarda-Bueno contends that the literary resources employed by the author—primarily the use of metafiction—help the author reveal that the transhumanist’s view of happiness necessarily becomes an engineering problem. She builds upon previous research on the novel, such as the works of Heinz Ickstand, Antje Kley and Jan D. Kucharzewski, critically summarizing the different meanings that have been found in the novel and their implications for the nature of happiness and the nuances of the novel’s social critique. Laguarda-Bueno enlightens the reading of the novel by establishing a connection between transhumanist philosophy, bioethical discussions and the characters’ opinions on the possibility of biologically enhancing humans to suppress negative emotions. Altogether the chapter highlights how Power convinces the reader to mistrust the utopian perspective of the transhumanism approach and the possibility of increasing human happiness via biotechnology thanks to his use of metanarrative techniques.

The second chapter explores *The Circle* (2013) by Dave Eggers. Through the analysis of the style and free indirect discourse in the novel, Laguarda-Bueno reveals that the promised benefits of extreme surveillance and the use of social networks ultimately become a threat to human freedom. Considering the work of other scholars, like Timothy Galow, she lays out how their research has noted the inevitability of the technology company’s turn toward totalitarianism caused by the lack of empathy and human commitment of the characters. For her part, Laguarda-Bueno brings trans/posthumanism theory into the mix to further the understanding of the novel and emphasizes how the formal aspects contribute to creating an ironic distance from the utopian expectations that the author sets for the technology of the Circle. The chapter also explores the kind of fears that surveillance culture elicits in readers and highlights a critique of neoliberal ideology that lets companies take control and crush both individual and societal freedom. In sum, the analysis showcases the use of literary devices that affect readers’ relationships with the characters and their hopes for a positive resolution.

The final and third chapter focuses on *Zero K* (2016) by Don DeLillo. Laguarda-Bueno notes that DeLillo retorts to a narrative of trauma to explore the desire to achieve immortality by way of cryonics and thus, unfolds the ethical question implied in leaving behind all physical existence and all their responsibilities, problems and human relationships. Leaning on the work of Alexandra K. Glavanoka and Erik Cofer, who have both previously approached the analysis of this novel considering posthumanist studies as a theoretical framework, this last chapter ventures into the ethical implications of cryonics through the lens that DeLillo’s novel provides, namely, failed attempts dealing with trauma and a critique of postmodern melancholia. It highlights various narrative strategies that the author employs to discuss the issue at hand such as the readers’ identification with the narrator due to the autodiegetic narration and the use of scarce punctuation. Laguarda-Bueno shows how these literary devices contribute to creating a solid narrative of trauma that highlights the complicated ethical implications of attempting to overcome death.

This book is without a doubt a valuable addition to the contemporary study of literature through the complex lenses of posthumanist and transhumanist thought. Not only it provides its own thought-provoking and critical analysis of the formal aspects of the examined novels and how they are intertwined with the posthuman explorations of each narrative, but it also situates them within the existing scholarship on each of the authors. The choice of corpus is quite compelling. By focusing on well-known authors who are not necessarily or exclusively SF writers, Laguarda-Bueno offers an enlightening introduction to these three novels that might appeal both to those scholars who approach her book from the field of SF and post/transhumanism studies and those who do so as experts on one or more of the authors here studied.



BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Argument Structure in Flux: the Development of Impersonal Constructions in Middle and Early Modern English, with Special Reference to Verbs of Desire***

Noelia Castro-Chao

Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2021. 300 pp.

ISBN: 978-3-0343-4189-9. E-SBN: 978-3-0343-4207-0

When exploring the diachronic evolution experienced by some impersonal verbs, one discovers that most of the previous literature published mainly addresses the factors which have produced the disappearance of such a construction in two periods: Old English (henceforth OE) and Middle English (henceforth ME). In this respect, and based on Miura's (2015) words on the necessity of more extensive studies, what Castro-Chao successfully intends to achieve is the contribution to enlarging the corpus-based studies framed in the Early Modern English (henceforth EModE) period. Therefore, this time period is of utmost interest since "impersonal verbs were in the process of readjusting their argument structure to the new possibilities of the grammatical system" (12). Moreover, not only does she review a broad amount of published literature to give a precise background, which undoubtedly paves the way for her own findings, but she also delves into the semantic and syntactic properties of arguments as well as the factors affecting the loss of impersonal patterns. The main area of study involves verbs of Desire in the Early English Books Online Corpus 1.0 (henceforth EEBOCorp 1.0), which are

examined diachronically with their own syntactic patterns both in impersonal and personal constructions. The author offers a rigorous description of the studies devoted to these subjects in the first chapters, which permits the reader to connect such information with the qualitative and quantitative analysis presented in the chapters properly assigned to the investigation itself.

The introductory chapter outlines the organisation of the whole book with a concise explanation of the concepts to be seen in the following sections. The author intelligently seals the previously persistent gap in research which had failed to link specific factors to production changes in the loss of impersonal patterns in the EModE period. The reasons to undertake the present investigation are utterly motivated and the objectives which intend to be pursued are clearly formulated.

The book is divided into nine chapters, in which the first (Chapter One) and the last (Chapter Nine) accordingly conform to the introduction and the conclusion. Chapters Two, Three and Four comprise the broad theoretical background needed to comprehend the object of investigation, which is presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, each one corresponding to the three verbs under scrutiny, that is, *lust*, *thirst*, and *long* respectively. Finally, the method and tools which are used to develop the investigation are described in Chapter Five.

Chapter Two explores the “terminological maze” (17) in the use of the term “impersonal” applied to verbs and constructions according to both semantic and syntactic criteria. The author comprehensively presents a detailed account of the variability and disparity that such a term has among the scholars consulted (e.g. Allen 1995; Denison 1993; Fischer & van der Leek 1983; McCawley 1976; Möhlig-Falke 2012). Castro-Chao also reviews in a clarifying and illustrative manner the diachronic evolution that impersonal constructions experienced on the basis of the different patterns adopted by various authors (34–41). Throughout the chapter, the number of examples and explanations provided are particularly effective in bolstering the understanding of the topic, even for those who may not be familiar with or expert in the field. For instance, this can be observed, among other cases, in the final overview of the morphosyntactic patterns of impersonal constructions and their semantic functions.

Once the terminological approach has been adopted, Chapter Three is devoted to further explain the nature of verb meaning, verbal arguments and constructional meaning (43–54), which will be subsequently applied to the semantic domain of Physical Sensation and Emotion (55–60). As in previous chapters, the author acknowledges the different models involved in carrying out the semantic analysis of verbs of Desire and clearly indicates the authors that will be used as references for the study itself. The reader is conveniently guided throughout the chapter as the information is presented by following a general-to-specific pattern with appropriate instances that illustrate what is being told. For example, a general account on the three dimensions (e.g. participants profiled, semantic properties and circumstances associated) that the semantic frame of a verb has is firstly provided with the aim of being ultimately applied to more specific verbs such as “itch,” “hurt” or “like.”

Chapter Four provides a comprehensive description of the class of verbs of Desire, in which they are meticulously defined according to their semantic properties (dynamicity, control and causation) and syntactic patterns of the arguments (66–78), which enable them to be classified depending on their transitivity. In pursuit of full comprehension and accurate description of terms, it also offers a historical account of the origins of some Desire verbs, their development and acquisition of sense based on the period and their subsequent classification. In addition, this chapter also includes the criteria followed for the choice of verbs under analysis along with the existence of caveats that the author adequately highlights, and the approach accordingly adopted in the study subjected to the topics being thoroughly explained.

Once the background information has been fully covered, Chapter Five relates to the description of the corpus (79–82), specification of data collection and retrieval (83–90) and the designing of the database (91–100). Limitations and shortcomings (e.g. texts written in verse or repeated editions) when collecting data are acknowledged and, consequently, solved. A detailed account of the EEBOCorp 1.0 is provided along with the justification for the division in four fifty-year subperiods with a similar number of words. The author clearly explains the procedure which was followed in order to exclude verse texts as well as the software tool used to retrieve concordance hits. Moreover, this chapter contains a discussion on the variables analysed for the present study with the objective of shedding light on the aspects which have been examined in previous chapters.

Case studies are analysed and discussed in the following three chapters. The author combines the interpretation of data in a quantitative and qualitative manner, always based on the information contained in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the Middle English Dictionary (MDE) and previous literature commented in other chapters in order to support her findings in the EModE period. The reader can easily expect what to find in each chapter as the structure is properly provided at the beginning. These chapters concentrate on very specific topics which are closely connected to the extensive literature covered. Additionally, the insertion of a section with concluding remarks compiling the most relevant findings enables the reader to concisely recapitulate all the carefully analysed information.

Chapter Six firstly offers a comprehensive historical account of the origin and development of the verb *lust* with the different complementation patterns recorded in the OED, MDE and the literature reviewed. Castro-Chao fully contributes to the understanding of the topic by instantiating at all times (e.g. impersonal and personal patterns), referring back to other chapters and clarifying the results obtained with an accurate and detailed qualitative analysis (101-109). Indeed, this overview helps support the comprehension of her own findings in EModE period, which are presented in the subsequent section in the chapter (109-130). This clearly fulfills the expectations of the reader since it contributes to picturing the diachronic evolution of the verb across the different subperiods, where it can be mostly found according to the subject domain, its semantic specialisation, morphosyntactic properties of impersonal patterns and personal patterns. For the sake of clarity, four subsections are included to analyse and discuss the morphosyntactic properties of the following personal patterns: (i) formal realisation of clausal complements (117-23); (ii) zero complements (123-27); (iii) prepositional patterns (127-29) and (iv) patterns with Noun Phrase (henceforth NP) complements (129-130). As stated previously, the recapitulation of the information plus the conclusions given by the author in the last subsection of the chapter truly foster the contribution of this study to the results heretofore obtained in OE and ME.

The verb *thirst* is the focus of examination in Chapter Seven. Although the organisation of this is similar to both Chapter Six and Eight, the information contained tends to differ in the approach to the historical origin and development (135-139). In this case, comprehensive and detailed information based on the semantic properties of verbs under the domain of Physical Sensation and Emotion is diligently presented in order to distinguish well-defined boundaries in the two main senses of *thirst*. Moreover, the author also provides an accurate and alluring qualitative analysis as to the diachronic comparison of this verb with prepositions from ME to EModE (152), which also includes idiomatic collocations restricted to a particular discourse and collocation patterns in a specific syntactic slot such as subject. In her desire for proposal and discussion, Castro-Chao includes her own label (156-160) and an extensive justification for move-attention constructions in contrast to intransitive motion constructions. As in all personal patterns with this verb, her analysis and suggestions with references to the semantic properties of participants (162) contribute to a deeper, and certainly better, understanding of the two-fold concepts Desirer/Desired and Initiator/Endpoint highlighted in Chapters Three and Four. It is worth mentioning the analysis carried out for patterns with clausal complements such as those with an NP + *to*-infinitive clause (169) specifically focused on their syntactic properties and compared with another example in MED. In the last section of the Chapter in which the author encapsulates concluding remarks, she also indicates a possible gap which is left unaddressed for further investigation.

Chapter Eight focuses on the verb of Desire *long*. As in the other two previous chapters, a very detailed explanation is given at the beginning in order to illustrate the origin of *long* with the senses and subsenses which will be considered for the present study and the complementation patterns attested with impersonal and personal constructions. In this chapter, although the occurrences are not as frequent as other patterns specifically mentioned by the author, special attention should be devoted to the discussion of patterns with adverbial complements realised by “*therefore*”, which, as stated by the author, for practical purposes, are included in subsection 8.3.1.1. Similarly, the discussion on conjunctions *till/until* (subsection 8.3.1.2) in patterns with clausal complements renders another interesting example of shifting from the domain of adverbial subordination to the domain of complementation. As this is the last verb analysed, comparisons with *lust* and *thirst* are added so as to display the contrastive diachronic development which they have experienced in EModE.

Chapter Nine encompasses the main findings with their corresponding discussions and concluding remarks. The study accomplished in this book certainly complements and completes the picture offered by the OED, MED and previous works based on OE and ME. In spite of the fact that the author widely expounds the topics described in the book and distinctly gives pertinent explanations, she admits that there is scope for improvement by acquainting the reader with possible further investigations which could strengthen the results obtained in this research. This book is definitely an excellent source for researchers and students who may be interested in expanding their knowledge on the historical development which English has undergone at different levels and stages in the fields of Historical and Corpus Linguistics.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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***Discursos e Identidades  
en la Ficción Romántica  
/ Discourses and  
Identities in Romance  
Fiction. Visiones  
Anglófonas de Madeira y  
Canarias / Anglophone  
Visions from Madeira  
and the Canaries***

María Isabel González-Cruz (ed.)

Málaga: Vernon Press, 2022. 403 pp.

ISBN: 1648890881

Romance novels have been traditionally not taken seriously by society and scholars who believe the genre to be superficial and a backward step for feminism that reinforces gender roles. Targeted to an English and Spanish-speaking audience, this book compiles a number of chapters by various authors, for instance Inmaculada Pérez-Casal and Aline Bazenga, who analyze and demonstrate how meaningful this literature is. In this case specifically, how different cultures, races and gender roles are represented via the characters' discourse. This book—resulting from the research project *Discourse, gender and identity in a corpus of romance fiction novels*

*set in the Canaries and other Atlantic islands*— goes into detail about how the Canary Islands and Madeira are represented from a non-local point of view. With examples from a wide variety of novels, these chapters in Spanish and English are able to reach an audience who might share the goal of reconciling romance novels to academia.

The book is organized into an introduction, eight chapters and a final section with pedagogical questions aimed to be used in the classroom to confirm that the central ideas have been understood. The chapters can be divided into three sections, chapters 1 and 8 give a general view of romance novels, chapters 2 and 3 focus on the representation of Madeira in the genre and, finally, from Chapter 4 to 7, the articles revolve around the Canary Islands. On a last note, there is a section with figures that allow the readers to understand the connection of these Atlantic islands and a final index that facilitates them to find specific keywords.

The book begins with an introduction where the author presents the project that prompted the articles. González-Cruz clearly highlights how the romance genre has been underrated due to its popularity and mainly targeting women. Furthermore, she deals with the definition of the terms “discourse” and “identity” in order to enlighten readers on how these can be identified in romance novels, for instance with code-switching or the contrasting of the Spanish or Portuguese cultures and the British culture. González-Cruz also tackles the issue of the British perception of Madeira and the Canary Islands as touristic, idealized and untouched destinations which stems from their Imperialistic roots. The introduction concludes with a detailed explanation of the content of each chapter, the pedagogical section and the figures that conform to the book.

Chapters 1 and 8 deal with a general sense of the romance genre, which allows the reader to first, grasp an idea of what can be expected in the book and, later, understand how it can be included in academic research. Under the title “Popular romance novels: past, present and future,” Chapter 1 gives an overview of romance novels and how their perception has changed throughout history. Not only that but Pérez-Casal also approaches the belief that romance perpetuates sexist and misogynistic ideologies. According to the author, these novels “foster political demands for equality, particularly relating to gender, sexuality and race.” Since the Renaissance, this genre has been more female-centered; this along with stereotypically having a happy ending causes contempt among the higher spheres of academia. Nevertheless, Pérez-Casal has rightly outlined more inclusive trends in the present, as more diversity is being included referring to the race, gender roles and sexuality of the characters.

Chapter 8, in addition, aims to open the possibilities of investigating the genre to scholars. In “Interdisciplinarity in Romance Fiction,” María Isabel González-Cruz approaches different theories that could deepen in romance novels, such as sociology, discourse and environmental awareness, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, metalinguistics, orthography and applied linguistics. These various disciplines already pay attention to other literary genres but have neglected romance fiction; therefore, it would be extremely enriching for scholars to analyze it. The author comprehensively lays out examples to support the idea that Romance fiction is a little-explored genre with limitless potential. The audience may regard this chapter as an important step toward the inclusion of romance in the academic field.

This section of the book serves as an explanatory comment where views of the treatment of the romance genre throughout history are brought up. Moreover, readers who aim to integrate romance fiction into the academic field would find this an extremely valuable work as they could cover ground on not only the past and present of romance novels but also their future and how they represent different realities of the world. Both chapters are very informative and tackle all the aforementioned points, resulting in a highly revealing piece for those who are not familiar with academia.

The second section is dedicated to the portrayal of Madeira and Portuguese culture in romance and starts with Chapter 2: “Imperfect paradise: Madeira in the novels of Margaret Rome, Katrina Britt, and Sally Wentworth,” written by María del Mar Pérez-Gil. This illuminating chapter assesses the title of “paradisiacal destination” that Madeira receives and its origin in the British imperialist culture. The author compares how the island has been depicted in three novels published by Mill & Boon between 1976 and 1994. In the given novels, the female British character goes to Madeira and, through descriptions and dialogue, insinuates her superiority over the Portuguese in various matters, such as infrastructure and morality. With great lucidity and balance of judgment, Pérez-Gil reveals that Madeira is seen as a less-civilized place inhabited by savaged people who should thank the British for creating the businesses that brought economic growth and new ideals to the island.

Similar ideas are brought forward by Aline Bazenga in Chapter 3, “The sociocultural and linguistic landscape of Madeira: Anglocentric visions in a sample of six romance novels.” In it, the author compares how six different novels dated from, again, 1976 to 1994 represent an idealized image of Madeira while at the same time, there is still an appreciation of the prestige of British culture compared to the Portuguese. With numerous instances, Bazenga supports that the narrators of the novels present the island and describe it as a travel book would do. Not only that, but also it is the place where the characters can free themselves and be tempted to try things they would not do in their home countries, reinforcing the idea that it is a wild location with fewer rules than Britain.



Although these two chapters provide an extensive number of interesting examples, this can be at times problematic as readers may feel at a loss among so many titles of romance novels without being familiar with the texts. Nevertheless, the articles shed light on the discussion of the British sense of superiority and imperialist viewpoints of the novels treated, which gives the reader an enriching overview of the way discourse can affect, for better or worse, the audience's perception of Madeira.

Regarding the third section of the book, it points out how discourse and identities depict the Canary Islands and the Spanish culture. Chapter 4, "Canarian culture and identity and their representation in the novels of the FFI2014-53962-P corpus," written by María Jesús Vera-Cazorla, covers extensively the connection between culture and identity. The author concentrates on ten different symbols that represent Canarian people and that affect their principles and lifestyle, among which language, geographical accidents and plants can be found. Vera-Cazorla succeeds in showing her critical thinking with a valuable analysis of the symbols and the British superiority complex that was also seen in the novels located in Madeira, as previously mentioned. Special emphasis was given to the lack of knowledge and research the authors demonstrate at times by including other symbols that do not belong to the Canary Islands, for instance, castanets, or even Spain, referring to *escudos*, Portugal's former currency, instead of *pesetas*.

In the fifth chapter, María del Pilar González-de la Rosa backs up the opinion that romance fiction is a product for the masses, yet it tackles relevant issues such as gender roles. Under the name, "Female voices and feminist discourse in Harlequin/Mills & Boon romances," she revises the evolution of both male and female characters and concludes that idyllic locations like the Canary Islands allow the authors to show the contrast between gender roles in different cultures. González-de la Rosa points out that romance novels "urge us to continually analyze women's identity politics through female experience, sexuality, gender roles, and relationships." She brilliantly addresses how characters are ahead of their time, for example, women living and becoming aware of their sexuality and men having more feminine behavior.

Chapter 6, "Transatlantic definitions of Whiteness in Louise Bergstrom's Gothic romances in the Canary Islands" by María Teresa Ramos-García, works with two novels by Louise Bergstrom that take place in the Canary Islands. Ramos-García explains the plots of both novels, deal with the concept of whiteness and, even analyzes how Bergstrom approaches people of other ethnicities in other of her novels. Moreover, she focuses on the feeling of white supremacy that the novels hold. By means of highlighting their Scandinavian roots, the characters are depicted as more desirable than those who are not Caucasian. She shows multiple examples where Spanish characters are of such irrelevancy that the author does not give any detailed descriptions about them. Finally, the author concentrates on a novel that takes place in Africa and Bergstrom's oppressive and abusive portrayal of black characters; however, this analysis seems excessively abbreviated for such a provoking topic, perhaps as it is unrelated to the Canary Islands.

Finally, this section ends with Chapter 7 called "Language Ideologies, landscape and narrative voice in *The Wind off the Small Islands*" written by Susana de los Heros. Firstly, the plot of Mary Stewart's novel is presented to analyze how the Canary Islands, and therefore Spanish culture, are othered by the narrator. According to De los Heros, the characters of the novel hold a negative view and reinforce their feeling of British supremacy. She undoubtedly shows their hegemonic behavior with well-thought examples of the narrative voice portraying the Canary Islands as a hostile location that little by little charms its visitants. In addition, De los Heros stresses the low use of Hispanicisms to convincingly explain that the Canarian characters are given British ancestors to demeanor Spanish people and culture.

The authors of this third section revolve around how the Canary Islands have been represented in romance novels with numerous examples that allow the readers to better understand the points made. Yet, at times, the chapters went off-topic and did not consider more principal and related topics. Nevertheless, as in the other sections of the book, the comprehensible style of the authors might allow readers who are not familiarized with academic pieces to understand them.

As a way of conclusion, the book ends with a chapter dedicated to pedagogical questions which can be used in the classroom and may help readers monitor whether they have understood the main concepts of the articles that compound it. Not only this, but it also allows scholars to open their horizons and include romance fiction in their academic research. These practical sets of questions were written by the same author of the chapter; therefore, it would have been highly recommendable to place them right after their corresponding chapter. Nevertheless, their purpose is not lost and the section will be of great usefulness to those who need practical questions to acquire further knowledge.

This compilation of chapters gives rise to the problem of the disregard for romance literature in the academic field. Over and above that, being in both English and Spanish, the book opens up to an even wider audience, who regardless of their native language can benefit from the refreshing and undaunted comments of the authors. This along with the straightforward and concrete examples particularly allow the readership to include romance fiction in their research should they wish to do so. Despite some small weaknesses, the book is an enormous contribution to the field of discourse analysis and the study of the representation of different cultures and peoples.

## BOOK REVIEWS

ISABEL CARRERA SUÁREZ

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*Briggflatts*

**Basil Bunting. Edited, translated, and annotated by  
Emiliano Fernández Prado and Faustino Álvarez  
Álvarez**

Gijón/Xixón: Impronta, 2021. 136 pp.  
ISBN: 978-84-123719-5-6

**T**his annotated bilingual edition of Basil Bunting's classic is a rare gem, a textual compound meticulously crafted, discussed and revised, over an extended period of time, by two accomplished writers whose combined expertise—in Spanish and English philology—results in a perfect authorial team. Individually, they have published creative writing, been editors of lauded poets (Emiliano Fernández posthumously edited the work of Basilio Fernández López, Spanish National Prize for Poetry 1992) and literary translators (Faustino Álvarez of Shakespeare's sonnets and Dylan Thomas into *asturiano*, the language of his own poetry and 2022 novel, *Flora*). In addition, they have both been involved in cultural and linguistic activism throughout their lives, aside from teaching in secondary education. Such broad experience and commitment to language and literature transpires through the pages of this book, which offers a 'facing page' English/Spanish edition of Bunting's long poem *Briggflatts* (1966), but also a small treatise on the poet and his world. The volume includes thoroughly researched information on the historical editions of the poem, on Bunting's annotations, on historical and linguistic references, together with a biographical chronology. All sources are documented and critically assessed, and this wealth of material means that readers wishing to further their knowledge or intrigued by details may easily fulfil their desire.

Although Bunting's readership has inevitably dwindled since the peak of his fame in the 1970s, he remains a crucial figure of twentieth-century British poetry, a singular writer whose work emerged within the transnational poetic scene of late Modernism, in dialogue and personal contact with figures such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukovsky and W. B. Yeats. He later inspired *beat poets*, including Allen Ginsberg, who embraced his powerful return to orality as a key poetic feature. Bunting might have remained an obscure companion, however, had he not published *Briggflatts* in 1966. By then he was in his mid-sixties and had returned to his native Northumberland, after an eventful life marred by financial shortage. Reduced to routine journalistic jobs for survival, "too old for the job and bored out of his mind," as fellow northerner Mark Knopfler would aptly put it ("Basil" 2015), Bunting was awakened from creative slumber by the visit of a young poet, Tom Pickard, whose admiration and camaraderie triggered his return to writing and the composition of his masterpiece, *Briggflatts*. This intricate long poem, first read in 1965 at Newcastle's iconic Morden Tower, is conceived as a sonata and structured into five parts, four corresponding to the seasons and the stages of human life, and a middle part dealing with Alexander the Great and futile human aspirations. The subtitle of the poem, "An Autobiography," is both accurate and misleading, as it signals the presence of the author's geographies and vital landmarks while suggesting a form that is too limited for the wide-ranging historical, spiritual and linguistic journey that the poem offers. Although personally skeptical about the function of conventional autobiographies, Basil Bunting led a life that was the stuff of the genre and has in fact inspired one, written by Richard Burton (2014), which pays homage to *Briggflatts* by taking it as its structuring principle. Bunting's extraordinary life is hard to summarise: a quiet Northumbrian childhood and Quaker education, with holidays in the Cumbrian village of Briggflatts—the site of a Quaker Meeting House and home to his first love, Peggy Greenbank, to whom the poem is dedicated—did not

anticipate the life to come: imprisonment for his pacifist stance in the First World War; bohemian interludes in London, Paris, Italy, the US, Canada, and the Canaries, forging his literary and world relations; his decision to join the RAF and role as a British intelligence officer in the Second World War; his later years as a diplomat in Persia, attempts on his life, two marriages, five children, a constant struggle to survive financially, conditioning his return to Newcastle; and finally, suddenly, the unexpected turn of literary fame, leading to his consideration, in his biographer's terms, as "Britain's Greatest Modernist Poet" (Burton 2014). Bunting's atypical "autobiography," *Briggflatts*, distils these events into a poetic meditation on human life and the cosmos, through a celebration of Northumbrian culture and historical roots.

Translating and annotating *Briggflatts* is no mean feat. The poem travels vastly in time and space, incorporates a broad range of Northumbrian myths and history, speaks in a distinct northern variety of English with a precision and rhythm which are allegedly the result of paring down some twenty-one thousand lines to the seven hundred finally published. At first sight taking the appearance of free verse, the carefully designed structure and rhythms of each movement/section, with its medieval-inspired alliteration and internal rhyme, the subtle manipulation of syntax and the sheer force of the images and multiple allusions, all contribute to making the task of the translators a highly complex one. Emiliano Fernández and Faustino Álvarez deal methodically and effectively with the many choices involved in translation, further complicated by the difficulties of transposing the poem's terse, northern English rhythms into a Romance language which can rarely mimic the sound of the original. Led by Bunting's dictum that "Briggflatts is a poem: it needs no explanation. The sound of the words spoken aloud is itself the meaning" (Bunting, 1989 n.p.; this edition, in Spanish, 82), the translators aim to create a poem that reverberates with the force and vitality of the source while becoming its own coherent poetic sound. They do, however, include explanatory notes, sometimes clarifying translators' decisions, others discussing Bunting's allusions and wording. Their Spanish recreation of *Briggflatts* bears some trace of the translators' own "northernness," their origins in a region which, like Bunting's Northumbria, is the mountainous, mining, historical counterpart of a different, overriding South, whose shared language is used locally with notorious variations. Bunting emphasized and defended his own Northumbrian speech (the pronunciation of *scones*, the many everyday terms whose northern version is preferred, the powerful sound of his Northumbrian accent in his readings). It is therefore fitting that Emiliano Fernández and Faustino Álvarez at times search for equivalent concepts and words in their northern Spanish geography—the use of *brañas* for *fells* is a case in point—a practice which confers to the translated poem a touch of that slight estrangement that Bunting's language supposes for readers accustomed to standard southern English. Key selections, such as *lución* for *slowworm* are justified in these, appropriately placed at the end to avoid interruptions in reading. These also illuminate references which may escape a non-specialised reader, from the spiritual and artistic significance of Lindisfarne and its gospels to the spaces and events related to Bunting's life, which punctuate the poem and constitute its skeleton. Throughout, the translators seek to strike a balance between their respect for their source—allusions, poetic form and sonic emphasis—and their own creative freedom, a poise that allows the translation to be read seamlessly, with the resonance, variation and force that Bunting defended. While there is no way to transpose the compact sound of the name *Bloodaxe* (now also the name of an iconic poetry publisher in Northumberland) the choice made to translate it into the lengthy *Hacha Sanguinaria* gains a revelatory semantic power, coherent with the poet's treatment of the myth, which the original English name has lost through familiarity. Other instances, however, are able to capture the compact beat of the original lines: "Calor y martillo/dan forma a una barra/Rueda y agua/trazan un filo" (41).

As Bunting would argue, the poem must speak for itself, most particularly if read out loud. His translators have approached this goal by aiming for the distinctive rhythms in each movement of the poem, even when departing necessarily from the stress and length of original lines. Clearly conversant with previous research on the author and the text, as well as previous translations, they stretch their own creation further, producing a poem that successfully conveys the leading ideas and forms of the original and reads fluidly and poetically as an independent text. Its brave pairing page by page with Bunting's English version does not detract from the translation, but may in fact enhance both, through linguistic interplay. Hopefully this translation will attract new readers to a unique work and its celebration of locality from a global, transcendent perspective, a homage to the power of poetic language to stir emotions and thought, to ask, as the final coda does, questions of the unknown (76).

After the pleasure of reading this text, a labour of love produced with such scholarly care, one cannot but reflect on the loss to literary studies brought about by the pressure—particularly on younger scholars—to produce only articles for doubtful "quality"-quantified journals, a misdirected practice which rules out a publication such as this: co-authored, creative and the product of transdisciplinary, multi-source and time-consuming research. It is a sad reality that certain types of enquiry now occur only on the margins of the academy, excluded by the mandate of fast, incessant, quantifiable 'production'. Perhaps it is time to reclaim a few specific principles of literary research and to stand by their value. This book is testimony to what dedication, close reading, deep thought—slow science—can bring to translation, to literary scholarship and to readership. I can only end this review by heartily recommending the volume, to be read with time in our hands, the hands that will also enjoy the tactile pleasure of a beautiful edition by a small publishing house, a gesture perfectly in line with Bunting's own support for such courageous and essential literary ventures.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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**ESTER DÍAZ MORILLO**

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# *After Sylvia: Poems and Essays in Celebration of Sylvia Plath*

**Sarah Corbett and Ian Humphreys (eds.)**Rugby: Nine Arches Press, 2022. 142 pp.  
ISBN: 9781913487565

The year 2022 marked the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sylvia Plath's birth. To celebrate the life and work of one of the greatest poets of the 20th century, this wide-ranging volume, edited by Sarah Corbett and Ian Humphreys, offers a captivating collection of poems and essays which address Plath's legacy up to the present day. For that purpose, the sixty writings which conform this book, most of them commissioned, take inspiration from Plath, and focus on five very Plathian themes: rebirth, womanhood, magic, mothers and fathers, and nature. These themes frame the five key chapters in the volume, each comprised of eleven poems and an essay. In that manner, *After Sylvia* attempts to combine both the scholarly side of Plath's studies, but also a more artistic aspect by incorporating well-established and new poetic voices strongly influenced by Plath.

This edited volume is, therefore, a timely tribute "to one of the most important voices of twentieth-century English language poetry" (11), where Plath's poetic vision is firmly underscored. Through the scholarly essays and the compelling poems written from people from diverse backgrounds, one thing becomes clear for the reader: Sylvia Plath remains one of the strongest poetic influences, even for the younger generations, as Nina Billard Samardi, the youngest contributor at only 10 years old, demonstrates. The poems mostly aim at echoing Plath's refusal to overlook uncomfortable matters. As Humphreys points out in his introduction to the present volume, love is the "catalyst" for the book (12). In that sense, Sarah Corbett states the honour, but also anxiety, of writing *after* Plath. As she argues, "once encountered, and fallen in love with, Plath's writing never leaves us" (14). It is in and through Plath's writings, she argues, that we may find our own voice to speak our truth, however uncomfortable.

The first section covers the theme of rebirth. It opens with Emily Berry's poem entitled "Last Poem," a reflection on lost mothers and yet finding the impulse to live and write. Full of nostalgia as well are Tom Weir's "Walking with Annie," and Mary Jean Chan's "The Painter," a very visual golden shovel after Plath's "Mushrooms," which contemplates learning new things about others, and the turning of the seasons. Polly Atkin contributes "Not Dying," echoing Plath's imagery and especially reminiscent of "Lady Lazarus," where the poet talks about the difference between not dying and living. Romalyn Ante includes a stunning poem entitled "Pilgrimage to Mindanao," where nature and colours combine to provide readers with a synaesthetic experience of rebirth. Continuing with complicated relationships with male figures, Shivancee Ramlochan's "All the Men Who Will Not Save You" lashes out at men with a fiery anger that evokes Plath's

verses, mirroring a “Lady Lazarus” rebirth promising to “come back here blazing, gelled in the saddle / ready to raze it down, ready to buck wild and bloody and fight” (29).

After observing Plath’s clothes displayed at a Bonham’s auction, Gail Crowther closes this first section with a thought-provoking essay entitled “The Possession(s) of Sylvia Plath.” Crowther questions how we deal with the “objects of the dead” and what they mean for us. These belongings occupy a different place from Plath’s writings, as they relate to the exteriority, to “a life once lived” (36). Crowther reflects about what these objects tell us about Plath as a woman, and the conflicting relationship between clothes and women. As Crowther beautifully puts it, when we see Plath’s clothes, “we encounter her joy,” while they “radiate her absent body [...] her love of life and hope for the future” (38).

Womanhood is the backbone of the next section, where we constantly stumble upon flower imagery, sometimes comparing the female body to flowers. In that line, Rebecca Goss writes “When it feels hot, that rage against me” about the transition from girlhood to womanhood. Next, “O Brigid, O Exalted One, Listen to my Plea as I Celebrate You” by Victoria Kennefick appeals to the saint Brigid of Kildare asking for the protection of an expected baby intermingling imagery of fire and water. Sarah Corbett writes “Prick,” a poem reminiscent of Plath’s “Cut,” which reflects on our inclination towards experimenting with hurt by echoing the Bikini atomic tests and the famous photograph of Kim Phuk, the “Napalm girl.” “Snap” is the poem contributed by Merrie Joy Williams, which echoes Plath’s denunciations of compliancy throughout her poetry. Williams writes her poem for “little black girls” who had to learn womanhood as it were “an endurance test” (48), just as Karen McCarthy Woolf’s poem “Ariel” offers a strong and ruthless portrayal of discrimination.

Another outstanding contribution is “Ashes and Dust” by Ruth Fainlight, poet and friend of Sylvia Plath. Fainlight provides a poignant reflection on Plath’s life and the influence of the male figures in her life. For her part, Jane Commance writes “She said I needed to do the work of anger,” after Plath’s poem “The Munich Mannequins.” This piece of work focuses on all that a woman must silence, the anger not expressed which corrode the roots, until one does “the work of anger, of joy” (56). Heather Clark closes this section with an enlightening essay entitled “‘Prisoner & Jailor, / Perfectly parabled’: The October Poems’ Art of Escape,” where compliance becomes again a key word. Clark traces Plath’s strong will to escape society’s expectations, which suffocated women’s professional ambitions. It is especially in her *Ariel*’s poems where we can see Plath’s rejection of constraints and the exposure of the oppression and imprisonment of women. Plath’s metaphorical language in the poems examined by Clark lets us see the poet’s critique of the feminine standards and traditional roles. Plath gives voice to the voiceless women throughout history “while the jailor looks on, powerless to stop her” (64), attesting to the everlasting relevance of Plath’s verses.

The following section focuses on magic, and it opens with “Swarm,” by Pascale Petit, a concrete poem which pays tributes to Plath’s bee poems and depicts the feelings and life-force of an outsider. Jonah Corren’s “Scavengers” is a poem which takes its cue from Plath’s understanding of nature and the grotesque, as well as our fascination towards death and destruction. In a grotesque striptease reminiscent of “Lady Lazarus,” we read about the spectacle of a disintegrating deer. For its part, Peter Wallis’s “What does it mean?” beautifully reflects on the blooming of flowers and the passage of time. “Not fallen angel, but in a state of falling” by Rosie Garland is a vigorous claim for human potency, where the power of poetry is underscored. The force of poetry is highlighted again in the following poem, “Volcanoes,” by Samatar Elmi, where poets are depicted as fearless creatures.

To end this section about magic, Dorka Tamás writes an engaging essay entitled “The Witch and the Magician: Maternal and Paternal Magic in Plath’s writings,” where she discusses the fascination Plath felt for magic. Tamás turns to analyse the allusions to witches, associated with “evil” maternal figures, and the magus, the father figure with “good” powers rooted in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, which greatly influenced Plath’s creative imagination. Through different examples examined, Tamás discusses Plath’s employment of fairy tales in her poetry and how they express “her ambiguous maternal relationship” where evil magic stands for a maternal presence which is perceived as inescapable (81). For its part, intellectual knowledge in the father figure is associated by Plath with paternal power and domination over nature, as seen as well in the father-beekeeper figure.

Following the line of this essay, mother and fathers are the themes of the next section. Moniza Alvi is in charge of opening with the poem “The Weighing,” which reflects on dual heritage and identity. “A Sudden Mother (Staying on the postnatal ward during Covid-19)” by Mari Ellis Dunning is a poignant recollection about the difficulties of becoming a mother during the pandemic, with an imagery reminiscent of Plath’s “Morning Song.” The next poem, “mother as wet nurse” by Penelope Shuttle, also reflects on motherhood, but on the secret dialogue between mother and baby during breastfeeding. For her part, Julie Irigaray delightfully recollects her childhood dreams in “Women of Aquitaine,” where the mother figure becomes a support in her becoming “more than a queen, a poet maybe - / something not expected of me” (93), a line which summarises the core of this volume.

Tiffany Atkinson reflects on Plath’s life in England as an ambitious woman in the sixties in her poem “Small flame for Sylvia,” comparing her to her own mother’s life. Degna Stone closes with the illuminating essay “Lines That Jar,” where



the author chooses to confront an uncomfortable yet relevant matter: Plath's use of racist language. In this essay, Stone carefully drafts an overview of discriminatory terms in Plath's writings and how they create "a violence [...] which nonetheless has a physical impact" (101). We cannot and should not simply dismiss them as "product of her time," but rather challenge them and engage in a conversation with Plath's works to see what these writings say "about our own time and how things have (or haven't) changed" (104). Yet this does not necessarily lead, Stone argues, to complete rejection, for poetry still has the power to bring comfort.

The last chapter of this volume is devoted to nature, with poems awash with a violent imagery of vitality. "Welcome to Donetsk" brings us to confront our current reality, for here Anastasia Taylor-Lind depicts the long-standing conflict in Ukraine and how in the middle of chaos, nature may still thrive. In "Rot, rot, rot," Daniel Fraser describes a painting by Emil Nolde, paying special attention to the colours and the symbolism of poppies. Red is also the colour which highlights Sarah Wimbush's "Little Red" poem, which offers a minute observation of mites. David Borrott plays tribute to the importance of sea imagery in Plath's poetry in "On the verge," depicting "that ledge / between sleeping and wakefulness, where opposites conjoin."

The last poem of the volume is by Nina Billard Samardi, first-prize winner of the After Sylvia Poetry Challenge on Young Poets Network in 2022. This impressive poem is an homage to Plath's natural imagery, revelling in the figure of a crow. Devina Shah closes the book with the essay "Symbol, Canvas and Portal: Nature in the Plathian Universe," where the author examines Plath's use of the natural world in her poetry. In *Crossing the Water*, Plath explores "nature both as a theme and as a springboard for experimentation with voice, mood, and allegory" (123). Shah reflects on the urge to read Plath as an environmentalist, especially in her *Ariel* poems, where there is a shift from the natural symbolism in line with Romanticism of her previous poetry. Plath's latter poems are more subjective, depicting the poet's anxiety and self-construction, as well as an oblivion which is seen "as a kind of freedom" (125).

In conclusion, *After Sylvia* is an invaluable contribution to Plathian studies, as it distances itself from the misconception of Plath as a doomed young genius, choosing to emphasise instead the complexity of her work from an unusual and kaleidoscopic perspective. Readers encounter themes frequently featured in Plath's works, underscoring their timelessness, and how we can read and understand Plath in the 21st century by shedding light on meaning and references. Furthermore, it is impressive to see in this volume the work of young talented poets and scholars, and how Plath is resonant for the current younger generations. She still speaks to her audience, no matter the age, circumstances, or backgrounds. This book succeeds in honouring Plath's legacy and is a truthful testament to the fact that Plath *still* matters.

BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Trauma, Memory and Silence of the Irish Woman in Contemporary Literature. Wounds of the Body and the Soul***

Madalina Armie and Veronica Membrive (eds.)

New York: Routledge, 2023. 203 pp.

ISBN: 9781032409641

**T**his volume, whose focus is on Irish women, exposes awkward realities, dismantles stereotypes, and mirrors reality in a precise way. Its editors, Madalina Armie and Veronica Membrive offer a lengthy and insightful introduction to their work while providing an answer to the question of whether the Irish are different from any other nation. The editors claim that “what makes Irish history different, both in the Republic and Northern Ireland, is how previous systems of power and oppression worked and still work in relation to this triad -trauma, memory, silence – and womanhood” (7). In their introduction, Armie and Membrive, highlight the need to confront and correct history as to be able to step further towards equality and healing. Furthermore, they claim their volume to be distinct from previous studies due to its analysis of the way trauma manifests itself through the wounds inflicted on the body, mind, and soul of Irish women. Yet, something else makes this volume unique. Apart from the eleven pieces of ground-breaking research compiled in the first section of their work, the editors offer the reader works by the acclaimed Irish writers: Catherine Dunne, Mia Gallagher and Lia Mills. Last but not least, the foreword written by Irish novelist and short story writer, Evelyn Conlon, whose approach to the history of Irish women’s struggle provides the reader with a first-person stance on the issue, is also worth of mention.

The first section of this volume has been organised thematically and, what's more, a certain sense of continuity is provided by the fact that the editors attempt to follow the years in which the works revisited were published or the period in which the stories are set. In the first chapter, "Trauma, Reproduction and Breeding in Catherine Brophy's *Dark Paradise*," Jessica Aliaga-Lavrijsen revisits Brophy's work, which portrays, always from a feminist perspective, numerous types of violence against women, such as enforced sterilization or state-controlled breeding. In fact, Aliaga-Lavrijsen makes a point of defining the genre of science-fiction as fundamentally male-oriented and, strongly prejudiced against women, "Brophy's uniqueness relies in the deep feminist concern in its exploration of different aspects of human reproduction and breeding – something quite uncommon in the genre of SF, which has been traditionally quite more male-oriented or even misogynistic" (33). Indeed, the author reminds us that Irish women writers still need to tackle some distinct feminist issues before narratives of recovery can really start to thrive.

In Chapter 2, "Different kinds of Love. Silenced Women in Leland Bardwell's Short Fiction," Burcu Gülüm Tekin describes the female trauma triggered by the silencing and concealment of violent episodes through a study of the female characters in Bardwell's three short stories, "The Dove of Peace," "Euston" and "Out-Patients." Gülüm Tekin states that silence persists not only in the domestic sphere but also outside the home. Thus, proving the community's silence, constructed upon religious and national morals to be a reflection of society's disregard for women's suffering. According to the author, "The collection holds a mirror to the unspoken truths, painful taboos and neglected silences of Ireland's past such as sexual abuse, incest and domestic violence. [...] this chapter aims to analyse silence as a main traumatic response of the female characters." (44)

Chapters 3 and 12 deal with the Magdalene Laundries and orphanages. In chapter three, "Trauma after a Life of Torture in Irish Magdalene Laundries. Magdalene Survivor's Testimonies and Patricia Burke-Brogan's *Stained Glass at Samhain*," Cantueso and Romero offer us an analysis of the legacy of the Victorian mentality in relation to the feminine body and the perception of sin and sanctity in the Republic. Issues such as accountability, restoration, forgetfulness, and silence are analysed in this chapter using Trauma Studies as theoretical lenses. No longer hidden, the authors claim everyone is accounted as responsible for the traumatic experiences endured at the Magdalene Laundries by thousands of Irish women who did not follow the norms. The chapter highlights the fact that sharing the trauma with others is a precondition for the restitution of the victim and that an important part of the healing process lies in the community's recognition. Thus, Katherine O'Donnell and Patricia Burke-Brogan are offered as examples of that part of society willing to help the victims by offering the testimonies of survivors or by speaking on behalf of those women. According to the authors, "As this play demonstrates, the erasure of thousands of women's identities, voices and bodies along the course of Irish history is an undeniable reality that has been possible thanks to the concealing attitude of the perpetrators of this crime as well as to the inaction of society. Yet, the theatre has contributed to the spread of this concealed reality and the restitution and healing of these victims" (61). Bearing in mind that from 1998, when the first Magdalene survivor spoke up- to 2021 these victims have not achieved much, we should join the authors in their request to never forget and to learn from the mistakes of the past.

Chapter 4, "Shattering the Moulds of Tradition. The Role of Women in the Transgenerational Transmission of Trauma in Rachel Seiffert's *The Walk Home*," explores the construction of female identity within the context of Irish trauma. Romo-Mayor focuses on the female protagonists of the novel, Brenda and Lindsey, to analyse their shared status as trauma victims, the ways in which they cope with the burdens of their troubled pasts and the repercussion of their actions on younger generations.

In chapter 5, "Representations of Trauma, Memory and the Silencing of Irish Women. Storytelling in Emer Martin's *The Cruelty Men*," Melania Terrazas studies the resilience of women at home, suffering from machismo, domestic violence and sexual aggression following Storr's "sacred flaw approach." According to Terrazas, in *The Cruelty Men* Martin condemns Irish women's subjection to pain and trauma as well as their lack of freedom to choose and to be themselves in the past. Ultimately, Terrazas situates Martin's novel as a means to go beyond forgetting by remembering, "*The Cruelty Men* constitutes an extraordinary exercise of imaginative writing through various resilient female storytellers, whose experience of trauma and social exclusion reveal truth and reclaim a restitution of Ireland's roots, myth, memory, culture and the end of the silencing of Irish women" (86).

Chapter 6, "Exposition of a Half-Formed System. Trauma and Other Matters in Eimear McBride's *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing*," draws on the theory of the split subject to offer us an innovative perspective on McBride's novel. This chapter seeks to articulate that to state that rape drives the protagonist to committing suicide is to deprive the narrator of her ability to act. Furthermore, Schürmann brings criticism back to the text itself by bringing back the narrator-(br) Other relation to its position as the novel's founding and animating conflict.

In chapter 7, "Damaged Women. Trauma, Shame and Silence in Sally Rooney's *Conversations with Friends* and *Normal People*," Muro studies the clashes between the old and new generations. In the selected novels, while Frances and Marianne are characterised by the traumas experienced in their childhood, their respective mothers depict shame. The

chapter discusses the current literature on the affects of trauma and shame, notably in relation to silence, and the way those are portrayed in Rooney's novels.

Chapter 8, "Conditions of Homecoming. Self-Care and Anticipation in Louise O'Neill's *Only Ever Yours* and *The Surface Breaks*" discusses the anxieties surrounding technology and modes of communication. Fanning states that O'Neill employs anticipation and narrative pace to display how enforced internalising and damaging modes of self-care together with being obliged to inhabit restraining and distressing worlds invalidate girls and prevent them from experiencing a homecoming. Furthermore, *Only Ever Yours* and *The Surface Breaks* play with the possibility of hope and imagine alternatives and parallels to contemporary Ireland.

In chapter 9, "Confronting Female Unspeakable Truths in Ireland. Donald Ryan's *Strange Flowers*," Asier Altuna-García de Salazar analyses the representation of lesbianism in terms of trauma in *Strange Flowers*. This contribution is of the utmost interest since it differs from others by exploring the difficulties of coming out for Irish women from the perspective of a male author. According to Altuna-García de Salazar, the novel responds to the current interest in embracing female *Others'* stories that portray plurality and tolerance after so many years of trauma and imposed silence.

Chapter 10, "Emma Donoghue's *Hood* and the Aesthetics of Existential Claustrophobia. From Traumatic Self-Retreat to Uncloseted Grief," also discusses lesbianism and womanhood. *Hood* is revisited in this chapter as a trauma narrative that revolves around a sense of claustrophobia, restricting its chronology to a single week and unfolding the hermetic psychology of a current Penelope who has lost her girlfriend in a car accident after a trip to Greece. Cantillo-Lucuara employs Heideggerian concepts to shed light on the way trauma and mourning are represented in *Hood* within an underlying aesthetics of Joycean temporality, emotional ostracism, and empirical claustrophobia.

Chapter 11, "Don't Tell Them. The Strategy of Silence in Anna Burns' *Milkman*," ends this first part of the volume. In this chapter, Gaviña-Costero demonstrates that the protagonist's stubbornness and muteness act as a metaphor for the occlusion and silencing of past traumatic episodes and undermine any possibility for the healing of either individual or collective trauma, "The narrator maintains a stubborn silence and a chosen amnesia about her own situation, emulating Northern Irish society after the Troubles" (159). Yet, according to Gaviña-Costero, the novel encourages this society to speak openly about its wounds, while approaching the question of the repression of women in times of unlimited violence.

While it is true that research on memory, trauma and silence of the Irish woman in contemporary literature is a current issue and much is being written about it, this volume includes eleven original approaches that will shed new light on the question and give the reader some food for thought. As if this were not enough, the editors have managed to collect works from some of the best Irish writers in the second part of this volume that grants it their final and personal touch. First, Catherine Dunne offers five extracts from her forthcoming novel, *A Good Enough Mother*. In these extracts, we appreciate the bonds of motherhood and the way the powers exercised by the Church and the State have affected the readings of the protagonists' experiences. Secondly, Mia Gallagher's forthcoming *Kindergirl* explores polemical themes such as missing children, sexual transgressions, emigration, Irish phobia, discrimination, violence and fear by paying attention to the rich landscapes of fairy tales. Finally, Lia Mills revisits her short story "Flight" which grasps the intricate connections between choice and sexual agency for a young woman in a patriarchal, misogynist and violent world.

*Trauma, Memory and Silence of the Irish Woman in Contemporary Literature. Wounds of the Body and the Soul*, is certainly a significant scholarly accomplishment. Luscious in both approach and breadth, the volume provides experimented academics and amateurs alike with innovative and insightful approaches to contemporary research memory, trauma and silence of the Irish woman in contemporary literature.

BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***The Routledge Companion to Gender and Science Fiction***

**Lisa Yaszek, Sonja Fritzsche, Keren Omry and Wendy Gay Pearson (eds.)**Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2023. 411 pp.  
ISBN: 9780367537012

In the last few decades, there has been a growing body of academic work that examines science fiction, fantasy and speculative fiction in regards to gender, sexuality and queerness, as these genres are often described as a fertile spaces from where to interrogate the construction of identity. Some examples of academic texts that focus on the potential of science fiction to (re)imagine the world from feminist and queer perspectives might be, for instance, Wendy Gay Pearson, Veronica Hollinger and Joan Gordon's *Queer Universes: Sexualities in Science Fiction* (2008), Francesca T. Barbini's *Gender Identity and Sexuality in Current Fantasy and Science Fiction* (2017) or Alexis Lothian's *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility* (2019). *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Science Fiction*, edited by Lisa Yaszek, Sonja Fritzsche, Keren Omry and Wendy Gay Pearson draws from these texts and shares their interest on the emancipatory and critical qualities of science fiction and speculative fiction while offering a necessary and thorough overview of "the relations of gender and genre in SF (...) as explored in speculative art by women and LGBTQ+ artists" (8). The volume analyzes different science fiction works from all around the globe, including novels, short stories, cinema, television pieces, manga and anime..., and masterfully interrogates their connection with both patriarchal and feminist imaginaries, centering the question of whether speculative fiction may allow us to draw maps towards more inclusive and just futures. In order to answer this question, the book is divided into five sections—"What," "How," "Who," "Where" and "When"—that complement one another and that allow readers to establish clear connections between different science fiction texts and works.

The first section of the book, "What: Gender and Genre" serves to introduce the volume, as it provides context for current scholarship on gender, sexuality and science fiction; clearly states the aim of the book to explore speculative works in relation to explains the reasoning behind the internal organization of the text. At the beginning of this section, Lisa Yaszek offers a detailed overview of the relationship between science fiction anthologies, gender and speculative communities, arguing that gender and genre are closely linked together. In her chapter, she argues that the form of the anthology was crucial to legitimize and expand the science fiction genre, and explores how this form has historically been used to create spaces that were welcoming and inclusive for women and queer authors. Yaszek then connects the history of the anthology with current hostile dynamics that take place in science fiction spaces and that disproportionately affect women and queer and racialized authors. This section also includes an author roundtable where Ida Yoshinaga explores

speculative storytelling as a means of understanding queerness and queer embodiment alongside writers Joyce Chng, Jaymee Goh, Andrea Hairston, Lehua Parker, and Bogi Takács—all of them authors that are described as having made “gender and sexuality a playground for imagining radically authentic society” (11). Yoshinaga’s roundtable dynamic serves to provide a nuanced conversation between contemporary authors that highlights the need to include notions of ethnicity and national belonging when discussing queer representation in science fiction and fantasy.

The second section, “How: Theoretical Approaches,” is comprised of thirteen different chapters that offer a wide variety of theoretical and methodological approaches from which to explore science fiction and its relationship with gender. Some of these examples may include, for instance, Jonathan Alexander and Sherryl Vint’s, as well as Anna Bedford’s use of ecocriticism and Anthropocene studies to explore the representation of race, climate change, and reproductive justice in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*—both the novel and its TV adaptation. Another common thread that is quite prevalent is that of some chapters exploring collectivity as feminist praxis and as a useful strategy for understanding science fiction—this would include Smin Smith’s brilliant commentary on feminist science fiction art and the Beyond Gender Research Collective’s use of collective close reading to “generate ways of being together which, in turn, repotentialize texts” (42). The last identifiable common discussion in this section is a critical examination of the construction of gender in speculative narratives, which would arguably include Sara Martín’s work on 21<sup>st</sup> century masculinities, Anna Kurowicka’s work on the connections between asexuality and non-binary identities and Terra Gasque’s chapter on trans\* representation in the Matrix films. We also find some chapters that offer other theoretical approaches to understanding and decoding science fiction, such as animal studies and disability studies, which serve not only to widen the scope of the volume, but also to establish a fruitful dialogue between different academic disciplines.

The third section, “Who: Subjectivities,” includes twelve chapters from different authors, including a brief introduction by editor Wendy Gay Pearson. Pearson explores notions of identity, gender and belonging in the context of science fiction, and reminds readers that “White cisgender heterosexual middle-class men have always had their selfhood recognized, while recognition of the subjectivity of Others has been spotty at best” (120). This theme of gendered subjectivities is examined all throughout the section from an intersectional perspective, with chapters’ themes ranging from utopian narratives and queer temporalities to explorations of “Black women’s sexual desires and pleasures” (197). We also see the relationship between technology, language and gender being central to at least three chapters—those of Jacob Barry, Misha Grifka Wander and Agnieszka Podruczna—that include discussions of the figure of the cyborg, othered corporalities and Artificial Intelligence. Finally, I want to also positively comment on the international nature of the texts discussed in this section—for instance, Carol Anne Costabile-Heming offers criticism on speculative short stories from the German Democratic Republic, Debaditya Mukhopadhyay relies on science fiction to comment on the public perception of women’s rights in India, and Frederike Schneider-Vielsäcker examines gender roles and the naturalization of the gender binary in Chinese science fiction. The diversity of texts and theoretical approaches present in these chapters results in a nuanced and rich examination of identity, which furthers the commitment of the volume to critically engage with gender and sexuality in speculative contexts.

Part four, “Where: Media and Transmedialities,” includes thirteen chapters centered around alternative forms of speculative media such as video games, fashion, online fandom spaces... As Keren Omry argues at the beginning of the section, part four aims to interrogate “the subversive potential that technology affords to destabilize the power structures and to mediate new voices, new frameworks, new stakes of expression” (207). This concern is present all throughout the section, but it perhaps most obvious in the work of Paweł Frelik, Jaime Oliveros García and Alejandro López Lizana. The three authors explore science fiction videogames as sites of meaning-making and meaning-negotiation; they discuss the gaming industry as a hostile space for women and non-binary people that nevertheless serves to explore the connections between gender, genre and form. As a result, their pieces create a larger conversation about the nuances of multimodal texts in science fiction. This “Media and Transmedialities” section also emphasizes the necessity to include film and television when discussing science fiction, and specifically, when discussing the potential of science fiction to interrogate queerness and queer ways of being and becoming. The particular movies and TV shows that are analyzed here seem to center queer embodiment, otherness and monstrosity, which are ideas that seem to be at the core of this section, and arguably, at the core of the whole volume. Both Dagmar Van Engen’s and Candice Wilson and Tobias Wilson-Bates’ book chapters continue this exploration of monstrosity and the speculative, but this time in relation to the sexualization of women in Japanese shojo anime and manga, as well as in internet culture as a whole. Finally, I also want to highlight the inclusion of book chapters that critically engage with both music and fashion—such as Erik Steinskog chapter entitled “A Young, Black, Queer Woman in Metropolis Janelle Monáe and Sci-Fi Queerness” and Rebecca J. Holden’s “Subverting, Re-Fashioning, or Re-Inscribing the Power of the Male Gaze Feminism, Fashion, and Cyberpunk Style”—as these formats tend to be at the periphery of science fiction studies.

The last section, “When: Transtemporalities,” has a clear intention of “bring[ing] together related concepts of gender in SF across historical time periods” and of “look[ing] to how they intersect with categories of race, sex, sexuality, ability, class, and nationality” (219). It is comprised of thirteen chapters that explore science fiction narratives from different perspectives and different points in time, such as M. Giulia Fabi’s work on ‘early Black feminist SF’ or Szilvia Gellai’s



exploration of space ‘between pulp era and new wave’. There are also several chapters that discuss the potential of science fiction and speculative fiction to imagine hopeful worlds and brighter futures for women and queer people—for instance, we find Laura Collier and Kathryn Prince’s work on Becky Chamber’s *Wayfarers* saga, E Mariah Spencer’s chapter on Margaret Cavendish’s utopian novel *The Blazing World* or Katharina Scheerer analysis of anti-utopian early German science fiction. Although all contributions in this particular section help us to establish new connections between the fields of science fiction and queer temporalities, there is a particular chapter that I want to mention. Kam Meakin’s “Restorative Nostalgia and Historical Amnesia in *The Handmaid’s Tale* Protests” is not only brilliant in of itself, but it serves to render visible the connections between all five sections by alluding to the two chapters that analyzed Atwood’s work in *How: Theoretical Approaches*, thus providing a sense of coherence and unity throughout the whole volume.

All in all, *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Science Fiction* is an incredibly valuable resource both for science fiction scholars that may want to know more about the connections between genre and gender and also for those who are interested in queer and feminist studies but might be less familiar with science fiction and speculative fiction. The volume is clear and well-organized, and provides a vast range of both theoretical approaches and texts to understand the feminist potential of science fiction and to question its relationship with gendered dynamics of power. Overall, Yaszek, Frieztzsche, Omry and Gay Pearson’s edited volume is incredibly enriching contribution to the feminist scholarship on gender and science fiction.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Town and Gown Prostitution: Cambridge's Architecture of Containment of Sexual Deviance***

María Isabel Romero Ruiz

Peter Lang, 2022. xi + 172 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-78997-789-9 (print); 978-1-78997-790-5 (ePDF); 978-1-78997-791-2 (ePub)

This is a most informative, thoroughly documented and well-written book that undoubtedly contributes to filling a gap as regards the study of prostitution and the different institutions that were established, mainly by the middle classes in the Victorian era in Britain, in order to keep it and its concomitant spread of vice and crime under control. During this period, prostitution was considered to be a wide-scale problem, and the number of women engaged in this kind of activities became staggeringly high. To give but one example, police reports in London reported approximately 8,600 prostitutes, but it was suggested that the true number of them might have been closer to 80,000 (Rogers 2009). In some cases, prostitution was a supplementary activity but, in many others, it was the only available avenue of employment for certain women, and thus a necessary evil. Prostitution was on the whole regarded as a social danger that had to be regulated at all costs: not only did it contaminate, both morally and physically, the “decent” members of the population, but it also contravened the main standards of true womanhood and Victorian morality. Actually, as Romero Ruiz argues, “it was women and not men that were considered to carry with them the seeds of immorality, being their bodies seen as vessels of contagion” (2022, 22). Several factors might lead to prostitution, but poverty was, without doubt, the main one. As Deborah Logan states (1998, 29), during the Victorian Age the life of the working-class woman was considered to be a breeding ground for “fallenness.” The poor economic status of working-class families often forced women to work in dangerous places among men, and these close associations often resulted in problems including inappropriate knowledge, exposure to elements unfit for women and traumatic events such as rape (Nolland 2004, 68).

Although some studies about these issues have already been carried out, namely, Paul McHugh's *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform* (1980), Frances Finnegan's *Poverty and Prostitution: A Study of Victorian Prostitutes in York* (1979) and *Do Penance or Perish: A Study of Magdalene Asylums in Ireland* (1991), Linda Mahood's *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the Nineteenth Century* (1990) and, most recently, James Smith's *Ireland's Magdalene Laundries and the Nations' Architecture of Containment* (2008), none of them has focused on such an important and idiosyncratic place as Cambridge, a city divided into town and gown, that is, into two jurisdictions that co-existed, but not without tensions, and played a crucial role in many social and political concerns, including the containment of prostitution. Interestingly, Judith Butler's (2006) ideas about precarity, the body and its social dimension, together with those of Michel Foucault on discipline and the birth of prisons (1979) and the history of sexuality (1990), are occasionally used to aptly support the author's main arguments and conclusions.

The book consists of an introduction, four chapters and an afterword. The Introduction offers a very clear outline of the origins of the city of Cambridge, particularly its University, and of its further development and evolution. It relies on both archival resources and recent scholarship to prove that the social and historical context of the city played a fundamental role in the production and consolidation of the double standard of morality, and by extension in the articulation of the double spheres (men/public vs. women/private), among other things because the city and its ever-growing undergraduate population attracted women from all over the country. In particular, this Introduction delves into the tensions between university Proctors and the borough police force when it came to dealing with prostitution, and gives detailed information about the location of brothels and lodging houses and the average age of prostitutes.

The first chapter, entitled "Suppressing Vice: Cambridge University Spinning House," focuses on the study of a number of archival materials related to the Spinning House, Cambridge University Prison for "fallen women." This institution was first set up to give shelter to the poor of the city, to be then transformed into the place where university Proctors and their "bulldogs" confined women who had been found supposedly involved in prostitution activities. Once convicted by the Chancellor's Court, these women were taken to the Spinning House for a short span of time and became subjected to a harsh disciplinary regime that included medical inspection, a very poor diet, a number of heavy tasks and no instruction whatsoever in return. The rules of regulations of 1849 and 1854, together with the *Committal Books* (1823-94), are of special interest to bring to light the extreme vulnerability and suffering that these women had to cope with. This being said, it is also true that some of them rebelled against this system. In order to give some evidence of this, two case studies are included: that of Elizabeth Howe and those of Beatrice Cooper and Daisy Hopkins, all of whom eventually died in custody.

The second chapter, titled "Fallen Women's Makeshift Economy: The Cambridge Poor-Law Union Workhouse," deals with the role and function of the workhouse, supposedly in charge of giving shelter and assistance to the poor, when it came to fighting against prostitution. It is first of all noted that the distinction between "prostitute" and "fallen woman" was by no means clear, with all the negative consequences that this entailed, social stigma undoubtedly being one of the worst. In Romero Ruiz's words (2022, 53), prostitutes, cohabitees, women in casual relations and mothers of illegitimate children were all regarded as "loose women," and thus classified under the same category. Again, a number of archival materials are used to describe the most important aspects related to this institution, such as the way in which sexes were segregated, the roles the different officers play in the workhouse, the rules that organized the inmates' lives, how sickness, disability, pregnancy, illegitimacy and the abandonment of wives and mothers were tackled, how venereal diseases were contained, and how casual wards were run. Once again, precarity and vulnerability are the key words to describe the condition of these "fallen women."

In the third chapter, titled "Prostitutes' Crimes and Petty Offences: The Cambridge Gaols," special attention is paid to analyse in depth the different sorts of prisons that could be found at the time. In general terms, as Romero Ruiz explains (2022, 83), "the system was organised around country gaols, Bridewells—also known as houses of correction—and hulks." In addition to this, other important related issues, such as transportation, corporeal and capital punishment, prison diet, prison acts and reforms and, last but not least, the overall functioning of the court system, are also analysed. For this, the use of several archives has become quintessential to make it clear that many women prisoners happened to be prostitutes who had in turn committed petty crimes on account of their extreme poverty. They were usually sentenced to short periods of hard labour, in addition to being fined. Sadly, prison was, for most of them, part of their makeshift economy and an inevitable part of their lives.

The last chapter, entitled "Domesticating 'the Fallen': The Cambridge Female Refuge," offers detailed information about many aspects of this institution, whose main concern was the "rescue" and reform of prostitutes and "fallen women." To quote Romero Ruiz (2022, 101), the main way in which the Cambridge Female Refuge strove to achieve this aim was by "isolating them and instructing them religiously [...] in places of confinement." Again, it must be noted that the collaboration between the University and the city made of Cambridge (and by extension Oxford) a very special case, different from the rest of the country. As was argued before, Church and middle-class ideology undoubtedly conditioned the practice and conception of "rescue" work, whereby working-class women were often liable to be classified and

accused of being engaged in prostitution activities. A number of tables and case studies are again included in order to give valuable data that will help understand the way in which this institution worked, above all as a form of social containment and control.

To conclude, this book strives to demonstrate that it was ideology and class divisions that mainly dictated the manner in which all of these institutions worked, while also explaining the close collaboration and occasional tensions between town and gown in Victorian Cambridge. For the first time, a thorough but also reader-friendly analysis of Cambridge's architecture of containment is offered, which will no doubt help readers interested in delving into the ideological and socio-economic fabric of the Victorian Age, and more particularly the hardships undergone by women belonging to its less privileged classes, to better understand their ordeal in such a convoluted and fascinating period. The book is written in such a clear and didactic way, and contains such an amount of tables and data, all of them scrupulously organized, that it can turn out quite useful to a wide spectrum of readers, from widely knowledgeable academics of the period, both in the field of literature as well as cultural studies and history, to undergraduate and postgraduate students and individuals totally unaware of the subject.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# *Spatialities in Italian American Women's Literature: Beyond the Mean Streets*

Eva Pelayo Sañudo

London: Routledge, 2021. 164 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-032-00224-8

**S***patialities in Italian American Women's Literature: Beyond the Mean Streets* (2021) explores the possibilities of the family saga as a tool for literary analysis, focusing on the writings produced by Italian American women. Pelayo Sañudo's contention that, for Italian American women, this genre is a form which "distinctly allows them to establish cultural, gender and literary traditions" (i) certainly posits a thought-provoking assertion. To conduct her analysis, the author considers the narratives by such writers as Julia Savarese, Marion Benasutti, Tina De Rosa or Helen Barolini, intending to engage "with spaces of cultural and gendered identity, particularly those of the 'mean street' in Italian American fiction" (i). Although there are other works which focus on the relationship between Italian American literature and space, such as Michael Buonanno's *Remembering Italian America Memory, Migration, Identity* (2021), Pelayo Sañudo's focus is unparalleled in its approach as it combines an examination of genre and specific spatial narrative depictions based on a solid theoretical framework. The author's exploration of Italian American women's narrative urban fictions from a feminist perspective certainly achieves the purported aim of exploring "the extent to which [this fiction] gathers such feminist theoretical reflections that expose the constraints faced by embodied citizens" (38). All these reasons make *Spatialities in Italian American Women's Literature: Beyond the Mean Streets* (2021) a highly recommended read for scholars interested in the field of Italian American literature, feminist reconceptualization of urban spaces or the general field of American literature.

*Spatialities in Italian American Women's Literature: Beyond the Mean Streets* (2021) is divided into four parts: Chapter 1 "Icons of ethnicity: Identity and representation of Italian Americans," Chapter 2 "The Italian American counter-*flâneuse*: the right to the city and embodied streets in Julia Savarese's *The Weak and the Strong* (1952) and Marion Benasutti's *No Steady Job for Papa* (1966)," Chapter 3 "Genealogies of place: Spatial belonging in Helen Barolini's *Umbertina* (1979) and Tina De Rosa's *The Paper Fish* (1980)" and Chapter 4 "Gendering the urban pioneers: Pictorial and emotional geographies in Melania Mazzucco's *Vita* (2003) and Laurie Fabiano's *Elizabeth Street* (2006)." Each chapter is subsequently subdivided into different sections which follow a similar pattern—first, Pelayo Sañudo conducts a further analysis of the theoretical framework to be deployed, thus reinforcing those aspects covered in the first chapter of the book. Then, the author proceeds to analyse the selected works using both those theoretical approximations covered in the first chapter and the perspectives incorporated in each individual chapter. The result is a thorough, ground-breaking analysis, firmly

substantiated in the theoretical approach and rendered in elegantly articulated prose, thus facilitating the assimilation of the concepts the author peruses.

Opening Pelayo Sañudo's book, Chapter 1 "Icons of ethnicity: Identity and representation of Italian Americans" establishes the theoretical framework which will distinguish the analysis conducted in the remaining chapters. "Icons of ethnicity" is conveniently subdivided into three sections, each of which explores the main tenets embodying the analysis Pelayo Sañudo unfolds in the subsequent chapters. Thus, "Controlling images and mean streets: the cultural space of Italian American Women" attests to the Chapter's overall aim of surveying "the nature of ethnicity, discussing in particular how certain representations of Italian Americans have become iconic" (1). To illustrate this assertion, the author discusses how the Mafia image has remained intrinsically associated to the Italian American community despite the widespread portrayal of Italian Americans as an ethnic community which has succeeded in achieving the American Dream of integration. Most tellingly, Pelayo Sañudo highlights the imprint of gendered stereotypes in shaping "the collective imaginary about this community [...] through the use and creation of distinctive masculine and negative optics" (7). The author stresses how Italian American women have been depicted as submissive and attached to the domestic sphere. This gendered portrayal, Pelayo Sañudo contends, is epitomised in the image of the Madonna, which was "particularly promoted as an ideal of suburban, middle-class wifery" (9). Such reductive and gendered depictions lead the author to insist on the need to reassess common ethnic and gender conceptions about the family and community life as "ahistorical and cultural constructs" (10).

The second section, "Family narratives as a negotiation space: the ethnic bildungsroman and the family saga," addresses the popularity of personal and family sagas in the Italian American community. Such narratives, the author contends, have allowed Italian American women to "reconcile Old- and New-world values and to negotiate the tensions between attention to community and attention to the self" (19). The section explores the complex relationship between Italian American women and writing, as illustrated by the paradox of the family being both an impediment to and a source for writing (21) or the fact that writing itself is perceived as a gendered action at the heart of the Italian American community (20). Pelayo Sañudo dexterously argues for the necessity to critically consider these oft-neglected sagas, as they provide "the framework to analyze not only female production, but also larger issues of the Italian American experience" (27). Despite the acknowledged difficulty in defining the construct of the family saga, the author underscores the interpretative value of these works as they constitute "generational or genealogical models for the affirmation of ethnicity, particularly within Italian American literary criticism" (31).

The final section of the chapter, "Intersecting perspectives on gender, ethnicity and space," provides the third tenet upon which subsequent chapters are based—the street as the main spatial focus of discussion and analysis. Pelayo Sañudo argues that a reconsideration of the gendered space of the Italian American community is necessary as this has traditionally been portrayed as predominantly male, excluding the female "from public material and discursive realms, from street imaginary or participation" (33). For Pelayo Sañudo, this misrepresentation of the street as a predominantly male and brutal space is in need of counterbalance by closer attention to women in urban research and their "role in shaping and claiming space" (38).

Chapter 2 "The Italian American counter-*flâneuse*: the right to the city and embodied streets in Julia Savarese's *The Weak and the Strong* (1952) and Marion Benasutti's *No Steady Job for Papa* (1966)" explores the central role of space to explain social difference. Resourcefully combining the concept of the "counter-*flâneur/flâneuse*" and feminist theory, the author explores how these two works are distinctively spatialised. In the section "Walking the embodied streets: reading intersectionality through the counter-*flâneuse*," Pelayo Sañudo demystifies the conceptualisation of male dynasties by exploring the figure of the counter-*flâneuse* as opposed to Michel de Certeau's (1990) conceptualisation of the pedestrian. The following section, "Unsettling gendered spaces: the myth of male dynasties," considers how Savarese and Benasutti's fictions unsettle the established concept of the patriarchal saga as established by such iconic Italian American works as Mario Puzzo's *The Godfather* (1969). Both works, Pelayo Sañudo insightfully argues, resort to the portrayal of male characters as defective breadwinners while their female counterparts are always there to "shoulder the provision for family" (57). These works depict male characters unable to hold long-term jobs and on a constant move to seek sustenance for their families. In contrast, it is the female's unacknowledged employment which keeps the family entity pieced together. By effecting this reversal of roles, Pelayo Sañudo sustains, these fictions "show the fallacy of what traditionally counts as waged work, which is not always male" and reinstates "the value of both domestic and kinship work" (66-7). The subsequent section, "Rethinking mobilities from the perspective of embodied spatiality," explores how Savarese and Benasutti's works depict the issue of embodied spaces and the "uneasy relation of women and the streets" (67). After analysing how Savarese and Benasutti characterise their Italian American protagonists—both male and female—in response to their narrative locations, Pelayo Sañudo argues that the figure of the Italian American counter *flâneuse* "contributes to the deconstruction of oppressive and dominant urban configurations" (77). This figure, the author adds, exposes the fallacy of the *flâneur*, deployed to convey as universal what is, indeed, a male, white and middle-class stance.



Chapter 3 “Genealogies of place: Spatial belonging in Helen Barolini’s *Umbertina* (1979) and Tina De Rosa’s *The Paper Fish* (1980)” studies the literary deployment of the family saga in two of the most praised Italian American works. The introductory section, “We are only third generation: identity politics and the drive for genealogy,” contextualises the social and cultural background of these *oeuvres*. Pelayo Sañudo underscores how these were produced at a time in which gender and ethnic reaffirmation was conveyed via a search for roots. The subsequent section, “Local identity: place-making and cultural change,” further explores the poetics and politics of place and how place-making informs the recreation of ethnic identity. For Pelayo Sañudo, return trips to the homeland, as epitomised in *Umbertina* (1979), or the move to the suburbs, as represented in *Paper Fish* (1980), allow for a combination of memory and imagination which elucidates “Italian American identity and [permits] to analyze the importance of spatial belonging in the culture as well as in the literary imagination” (97). The following section, “Spatial displacement and its contradictions: gendering and racializing place,” focuses the analysis on Italian American urban mobility as manifested in Barolini and De Rosa’s fictions. According to Pelayo Sañudo, both works portray the need of place-making to “preserve ethnic identity” (101), a need which is manifested in these authors’ narrative resort to nostalgia, memory and narration. The closing section in this chapter, “Elegies and genealogies of place: inscribing identity through generational and spatial discourse,” investigates the sense of loss derived from the forced or voluntary move to the suburbs experienced by the Italian American community. After examining the deployment of location and the narrative interest of the characters in “tracing the family’s genealogy” (109), Pelayo Sañudo maintains that, in these works, place becomes “akin to a cultural ancestor” (112), proving how space is linked to the recreation of ethnic identity.

The closing chapter, “Gendering the urban pioneers: Pictorial and emotional geographies in Melania Mazzucco’s *Vita* (2003) and Laurie Fabiano’s *Elizabeth Street* (2006)” considers how Mazzucco and Fabiano resort to history and research and the family saga to portray the often-neglected figure of the immigrant heroine. The opening section, “Picturing the legend: putting women in historical and urban spaces,” reflects on the adequacy of the family saga to conduct feminist revisionism. Based on the works’ reconsideration of biases in history, the framing of the narrative through female protagonists, the alternation of perspectives, the usage of pictures to further the narrative plot, or the deployment of the “narrator-historian,” Pelayo Sañudo concludes that both Mazzucco and Fabiano manage to retrieve “the place of female pioneers in historical and urban spaces” (132). The following section, “Gendering the city: toward a located politics of difference,” provides the framework Pelayo Sañudo uses to explore how Mazzucco and Fabiano challenge the notion of “abstract citizen.” To do so, Pelayo Sañudo conducts an exploration of the way these authors portray the body and emotions of their characters. This research nurtures the closing section, “Bodies and boundaries: embodiment, emotion and agency,” where Pelayo Sañudo analyses at length how Mazzucco and Fabiano employ their characters and settings to address the spatial codification of difference. After considering the authors’ usage of body imagery in relation to the urban spaces their characters occupy and in the context of capitalist exploitation, Pelayo Sañudo argues that both novels constitute a reaction against the “(re)production of gender and racial difference based on spatial design and discourse” (156).

Reading *Spatialities in Italian American Women’s Literature: Beyond the Mean Streets* (2021) constitutes a thorough academic experience. Pelayo Sañudo manages to create a well-wrought scholarly narrative, sustained by conscientious research and enthusiastically delivered in elegant and accessible prose. Although the book will be of special interest for specialists in the field of Italian American literature, Pelayo Sañudo’s work would also prove beneficial for those scholars attracted by feminist reconsiderations of urban spaces and their literary depictions. In brief, *Spatialities in Italian American Women’s Literature: Beyond the Mean Streets* (2021) constitutes an innovative academic study, highly recommendable for its intellectual rigour and its insightful approach to the analysis of Italian American literature.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Traducción Literaria y Género: Estrategias y Prácticas de Visibilización***

Patricia Álvarez Sánchez (ed.)

Granada: Comares, 2022. 140 pp.

ISBN: 978-84-1369-481-8

**E**l volumen *Traducción literaria y género: estrategias y prácticas de visibilización* contribuye a la interdisciplinariedad que combina traductología y estudios de género, actualmente en auge en distintas latitudes del mundo académico (véanse por ejemplo los trabajos de Lee 2023; Pinto y Atalaya 2023; o Villanueva-Jordán y Martínez Pleguezuelos 2023). Se propone visibilizar tanto el campo de estudio como a las traductoras literarias, confirmando “que este interés se extiende a lo largo del tiempo y el espacio” (4). Su índice refleja que este es un ámbito de investigación eminentemente femenino. Quienes firman sus capítulos cuentan con una trayectoria investigadora en traducción literaria, que en algunos casos combinan con su faceta autoral o traductora. Siguiendo las tendencias más recientes en los estudios de traducción, ejemplifican, como anuncia el título, distintas “estrategias y prácticas de visibilización gracias a la traducción feminista” (10).

Patricia Álvarez inaugura la obra con un estado de la cuestión en su capítulo 1 “Autoras, traductoras, sus textos y espacios,” ubicándola en un ámbito de investigación resultado tanto del “cultural turn” (Bassnett y Lefevere, 1990) como de la importancia cobrada por los feminismos en los estudios de traducción. Ejemplifica la necesidad de la traductología feminista ante las censuras recientes, demostrando “que las teorías desarrolladas no se están, en líneas generales, poniendo en práctica en las traducciones literarias” (3).

Tras la introducción de la editora, Tamara Andrés analiza en el capítulo 2, “La importación de textos poéticos al gallego a finales del siglo xx: una panorámica en clave femenina,” la traducción de poesía a la lengua gallega desde la entrada en vigor de la *Lei de normalización lingüística* hasta 2001. Presenta a las traductoras literarias pioneras y los tres formatos que publicaban poesía a finales del siglo pasado: poemarios, antologías y publicaciones periódicas; cuantificando a las traductoras e identificando la autoría femenina importada. Pese a que tanto la autoría como la traducción de la poesía vertida al gallego a finales del siglo xx eran mayoritariamente masculinas, destaca el papel de las traductoras como canal de entrada para poéticas femeninas que, gracias a la lengua gallega, trajeron a España obras inéditas en las letras hispánicas.

Pilar Castillo Bernal, María Luisa Rodríguez Muñoz y Soledad Díaz Alarcón se ocupan de la literatura de migrantes en el tercer capítulo, titulado “Hacia un modelo traductológico de la literatura intercultural femenina en Europa.” Se

proponen sistematizar los rasgos de este género minoritario y complejo, que sin duda “exige del lector una cierta apertura” (37). La colectividad minoritaria y el conflicto identitario de la mujer migrante se expresan mediante la disrupción sintáctica, las producciones fonéticas, la introducción de otras lenguas, los culturemas exóticos o el léxico coloquial con intencionalidad racista. Mediante sus ejemplos de traducciones ya publicadas y sus propuestas para novelas inéditas en el mercado español, contribuyen a la difusión de la obra de autoras turcoalemanas, francoargelinas y británicas de ascendencia jamaicana.

En el capítulo 4, “La traducción de la reescritura femenina: *Alisoun Sings*,” Sofia Lacasta Millera apuesta por un enfoque performativo de la disciplina traductológica, subrayando la creatividad que requiere la traducción de textos como *Alisoun Sings* (2019), donde Bergvall manifiesta el poder de la práctica literaria libre para dar voz al silencio de los personajes femeninos. Mezclando autora y personaje principal, lenguaje escrito y voces orales, diferentes idiomas y sociolectos y el inglés del siglo xiv con el de la era de internet, busca la reacción proactiva de quien lee y, por ende, de quien asume el reto de traducir esta obra de juegos intra e interlingüísticos.

El quinto capítulo, “La capacidad de visibilidad de la traductora invisible: mujeres y traducción en el caso de la Jane Eyre portuguesa del siglo XIX,” Ana Teresa Marques dos Santos rescata del olvido histórico la primera versión—anónima—de Jane Eyre en portugués europeo, que data de finales de la década 1870. Para ello, sigue las pistas biográficas y estilísticas ocultas tras la invisibilidad a la que Francisca de Assis Martins Wood había sido relegada por sus ideas feministas. En un contexto en que las portuguesas necesitaban el permiso de un hombre para publicar, esta traductora supo aprovechar la invisibilidad de la traducción para cuestionar la imagen predominante de la mujer, desafiando el prejuicio que tachaba a las cultas de pedantes.

Juan Pedro Martín Villarreal completa la imagen poliédrica de la autora—y traductora—que se escondía tras George Elliot en el capítulo 6, “Estrategias de visibilización literaria en la traducción de poesía escrita por mujeres: el caso de Mary Ann Evans (1819-1880) y su traducción española.” Analiza su obra lírica que, a diferencia de su novelística, no ha recibido interés por dejar “ver con más claridad la mujer que se esconde tras el sobrenombre” (66). Además de evidenciar el enorme esfuerzo que conlleva traducir poesía escrita en el siglo xix, muestra el potencial de las editoriales independientes para recuperar voces silenciadas, diversificando y ampliando un canon tradicionalmente dominado, como el mercado editorial, por intereses patriarcales.

En el capítulo 7, “Traducir para nombrar(se): las dificultades de traducción de la novela gráfica *queer* en Italia,” Ángelo Néstore aborda la traducción de “un artefacto literario feminista, *queer* y contra-hegemónico” que “se ve afectada a nivel ideológico” (75) en un contexto sin referencias autóctonas, donde tanto la novela gráfica como la Teoría Queer se encuentran en un estadio prematuro respecto a otros países. Con múltiples e interesantes ejemplos, ofrece un recorrido histórico por los personajes homosexuales en el cómic italiano. Demuestra que ante la censura real que sigue existiendo en torno a la homosexualidad en la producción artístico-literaria en Italia, el cómic *queer* de autoría italiana ha encontrado canales alternativos (fanzine, autopublicación, web cómic, apoyo editorial en el extranjero) para llegar a su nutrido público.

En el capítulo 8, “En los confines de la vida y de la traducción. A propósito de la autobiografía de Elisávet Mutsán-Martinengu,” Ioanna Nicolaidou señala las exigencias de traducir autobiografías femeninas temporal y culturalmente distantes, así como el potencial de la traducción para “contextualizar el pasado en el presente y el presente en el pasado” (Hemmat, 2009, 163). Nos acerca a la primera autora—y traductora—que escribió de modo autobiográfico en la Grecia moderna, donde la educación, la autorrepresentación y la esfera pública eran privilegios masculinos. La escritura le permitió responder al poder anulador en su deseo de ser reconocida. Y la traducción, acceder desde su enclaustramiento doméstico a unos valores ilustrados a los que su entorno se oponía. Aunque entrecortada por la censura patriarcal, aún es posible oír su voz.

En el noveno capítulo, “La Literatura Infantil y Juvenil que visibiliza a las mujeres: el ejemplo de la narrativa ilustrada española y su traducción al italiano,” Raffaella Tonin destaca que quienes trabajan con la LIJ, tanto en el mercado editorial como en el ámbito académico, son mujeres. Así, la traducción de esta rama literaria no solo visibiliza su creatividad y experticia, incluyendo por ejemplo los nombres de las traductoras en las contraportadas de los álbumes infantiles, sino que constituye un vehículo de modelos literarios, aportando al sistema de llegada una visión innovadora, igualitaria e inclusiva, a menudo promovida por pequeñas editoriales independientes dirigidas también por mujeres. Todo ello contribuye a que se vaya reduciendo la invisibilidad que tradicionalmente han compartido las mujeres, la infancia y la traducción.

M.<sup>a</sup> Carmen África Vidal Claramonte revisa el concepto de espacio, muy relacionado con el poder, en el capítulo 10, “Los espacios de las mujeres: la cocina y la comida como lugares de traducción.” Propone entender aquellos lugares a los que las mujeres han sido relegadas, como su propio cuerpo, “la cocina o la comida como espacios textuales femeninos” estrechamente relacionados con la identidad, donde se traducen o reescriben “los espacios del patriarcado” (127). La

transmisión de recetas se considera una producción literaria que une a las mujeres y la comida, “un sistema semiótico a través del cual es posible traducir sentimientos y emociones” (124), así como la pertenencia a una cultura y sociedad.

Cierra la obra el capítulo a cargo de Sicong Yu, “La (in)visibilidad de las traductoras castellano-chino en el mundo literario: una mirada al mercado editorial mediante un estudio empírico en la última década (2010-2020),” analizando la presencia de las traductoras en los paratextos y galardones de 19 novelas españolas traducidas y publicadas en China. A la marginación patriarcal se añaden en este caso dos agravantes: la supremacía de la cultura en lengua inglesa y el carácter analítico de la lengua china que dificulta “conocer el sexo de la persona” (132) que traduce. Del análisis de los paratextos, concluye que “ellas se enfrentan con más obstáculos para ser visibles y conocidas entre los lectores” (134). Aunque hay más traductoras que traductores de castellano en China, y aunque comparten un mismo nivel de cualificación, ellas reciben menos galardones.

Sin duda, el volumen cumple su propósito, pues nos permite “escuchar una historia plural en la que diversas voces se sienten representadas” (39) a través de una nutrida variedad de ejemplos procedentes de distintos contextos geográficos, históricos, socioculturales y lingüísticos. Esta gran diversidad de lenguas, épocas y formatos analizados no es óbice para que los puntos en común entre los distintos capítulos doten de cierta homogeneidad a la obra, la cual puede leerse como una celebración de las vidas y obras de quienes han sabido encontrar efugios a las discriminaciones patriarcales y como un homenaje al acto de la traducción literaria como vía para acceder a la cultura; escapar del exilio intelectual; desarrollar la más atenta de las lecturas; construir la propia identidad; mantener vivas historias de otras épocas, culturas y lugares; reestructurar el canon literario; ejercer poder desde la invisibilidad, e incluso lograr la visibilidad o publicación inicialmente denegada en la patria.

Los once capítulos que componen la obra a menudo sugieren tanto futuras áreas de investigación como aspectos de interés para el mercado editorial, indicando qué temas específicos no se han explorado o qué textos permanecen inéditos. Se trata, en definitiva, de una aportación rigurosa y necesaria, completa y rica en ejemplos de obras literarias y, sobre todo, de prácticas traductoras y editoriales que merecen ser conocidas en pro de una sociedad más igualitaria.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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IRENE MARTÍNEZ MISA

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# ***Yo soy porque nosotras somos: Identidad y comunidad en las auto/biografías de autoras en inglés***

Belén Martín-Lucas

Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2022. 190 pp.  
ISBN: 978-84-1340-495-0

**E**l libro que se reseñará a continuación es *Yo soy porque nosotras somos: Identidad y comunidad en las auto/biografías<sup>1</sup> de autoras en inglés* de Belén Martín-Lucas, catedrática de Filología Inglesa en la Universidad de Vigo. Su experiencia en feminismos postcoloniales e investigación en literatura de autoras transcanadienses, además de su participación en y/o dirección de distintos proyectos, han sido clave para la elaboración de este libro. Cabe destacar que *Yo soy porque nosotras somos* surge a raíz de su investigación más reciente: “Cuerpos en tránsito: diferencia e indiferencia.”

Dicho proyecto, financiado por el Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación y el Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional, estudia las respuestas tanto afectivas como políticas a la diferencia, sea esta sexual, racial, cultural o étnica

A lo largo de la historia, las mujeres han sido, de una forma u otra, sistemáticamente silenciadas y sus voces relegadas al ámbito de lo privado. Sus experiencias carecían de interés ante los ojos de la sociedad patriarcal, de manera que la única que visión que se tenía en cuenta y se adoptaba como universal y verdadera era la del hombre. Sin embargo, esto no ha impedido que algunas mujeres consiguieran sacar a la luz sus propias vivencias en forma de auto/biografías, un hecho particularmente notable ya que éste había sido un género profundamente androcéntrico. Así, en *Yo soy porque nosotras somos*, Martín-Lucas analiza las diferentes construcciones del “yo” de diferentes autoras, que a su vez rompen con la imagen de mujer impuesta por el patriarcado. Dado que los textos seleccionados pertenecen no solo a períodos históricos distintos, sino también a espacios geográficos diferentes, Martín-Lucas demuestra que el ser mujer no es una experiencia igual para todas, ésta varía según el contexto histórico y sociocultural de cada una.

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<sup>1</sup> “Auto/biografía” es una palabra híbrida acuñada por Liz Stanley en 1992 que funciona como paraguas para abarcar diversas formas narrativas. Martín-Lucas lo utiliza para referirse a distintas escrituras del “yo,” tanto ficcionales como basadas en vivencias reales.

*Yo soy porque nosotras somos* está dividido en cinco capítulos precedidos por una introducción y seguidos por un breve epílogo. Partiendo de las teorías acerca de la autoridad de la voz femenina en la escritura, la autorrepresentación de las mujeres o los escritos desde grupos minoritarios de Nieves Ibeas Vuelta, Sidonie Smith y Nellie Y. McKay, Martín-Lucas da comienzo a su libro. Desde un primer momento, pone de manifiesto lo importante que es para las autoras el poder escribir de forma auto/biográfica, a pesar de que esto pueda generar un conflicto con las representaciones previas de mujeres, sobre todo “si tenemos en cuenta otros factores además del sexo, como la raza o clase social” (Martín-Lucas 11). Este conflicto se debe a la ruptura con la imagen estándar de la mujer (normalmente blanca y heterosexual) creada bajo la lente patriarcal. No obstante, la auto/biografía supone para las mujeres una forma de autoconocimiento y construcción del yo individual. Esta “definición de la identidad propia” (Martín-Lucas 11) nace a partir de las relaciones de las autoras con otras mujeres. Las distintas comunidades de mujeres, sean estas familiares, nacionales o étnicas, son un elemento clave en la autodefinición de las escritoras y suponen, a su vez, comunidades de apoyo y supervivencia hacia la violencia interseccional que sufren. Así, a lo largo del volumen se recalca la importancia de las relaciones entre mujeres a la hora de reconstruir no solo sus identidades individuales en sociedades patriarcales, sino también literarias.

El primer capítulo, titulado “Pioneras visionarias: Margery Kempe y Margaret Cavendish,” lleva al público lector al Reino Unido de los siglos XV y XVII siguiendo las voces de unas escritoras visionarias. Kempe y Cavendish se presentaban al mundo de forma transgresora ya que rompían con la imagen esperada de una mujer de dichos siglos; sus escritos reflejan a una mujer más empoderada de lo que cabría esperar en su contexto histórico. Ambas escritoras fueron pioneras en el mundo literario: *El Libro de Margery Kempe*, escrito alrededor de 1436, está considerado la primera autobiografía en lengua inglesa y los dos libros de Cavendish, *Una relación verdadera de mi nacimiento, crianza y vida* (1656) y *El mundo resplandeciente* (1666), son la primera autobiografía secular y la primera obra de ciencia ficción escritos en inglés respectivamente. Tanto Kempe como Cavendish estaban muy adelantadas a su época, hecho que se evidencia en los temas tratados: la sexualidad femenina, dejar en un segundo plano la maternidad o incluso querer reclamar la autoría de sus propios textos, algo impensable en aquellos tiempos. En esta primera parte Martín-Lucas analiza los testimonios de Kempe y Cavendish a través de sus libros y, aunque haya dos siglos de diferencia entre ellas, demuestra que comparten el mismo objetivo: definir su propia individualidad y ser recordadas en los siglos venideros.

“Memoria y literatura: Los ciclos de cuentos auto/biográficos de Margaret Laurence y Alice Munro” es el título de la segunda sección. Del medievo inglés pasamos al Canadá de mediados del siglo XX con las colecciones de cuentos *Un pájaro en la casa* (1970) de Laurence y *La vida de las mujeres* (1971) de Munro. Martín-Lucas destaca la complejidad de los relatos de las autoras canadienses ya que permiten “jugar así con un doble efecto narrativo: el impacto epifánico de una resolución del cuento [...] y el análisis profundo y exhaustivo de su personalidad, propio de la novela o la autobiografía” (57). De esta forma, a través de cuentos que narran el desarrollo de la protagonista desde su niñez a la edad adulta, tanto Laurence como Munro reconstruyen su propia identidad femenina. Es también de vital importancia mencionar el concepto de *Bildungsroman* ya que, como indica Mary Anne Ferguson, éste varía dependiendo del género de la protagonista. Las heroínas no construyen su identidad a partir de intrépidas aventuras, sino que, teniendo en cuenta sus limitaciones debidas al patriarcado, su evolución se produce al enfrentarse a dichas restricciones. Por consiguiente, Martín-Lucas señala que a través de la experimentación con sus auto/biografías, tanto Laurence como Munro, evidencian las estructuras patriarcales arraigadas en géneros tradicionales y, a su vez, los transforman en formas más flexibles e inclusivas.

En el tercer capítulo, titulado “Cantar la experiencia afroamericana: Billie Holiday (*Lady Sings the Blues*) y Maya Angelou (*Yo sé por qué canta el pájaro enjaulado*)” nos encontramos con la intersección del racismo, el sexismo y el clasismo. En esta sección, Martín-Lucas demuestra lo importante que es para las mujeres afroamericanas tener una forma de expresarse ya que supone “una herramienta fundamental para articular su experiencia y romper el intrincado engranaje de [las] estructuras de dominación que las someten” (93). Tanto Holiday como Angelou, hacen uso de sus auto/biografías para exponer la profunda discriminación machista, racista y clasista a la que estuvieron sometidas desde muy pequeñas. Es por esto que el concepto de “interseccionalidad,” acuñado por Kimberlé Crenshaw, está muy presente a lo largo de este capítulo. En relación con esto, Martín-Lucas también evidencia la encrucijada de las autoras a la hora de denunciar los abusos por parte de los hombres de su comunidad: por un lado, son víctimas del racismo al igual que ellas; por otro, no dejan de ser hombres que gozan de la superioridad otorgada por el sistema patriarcal. Por último, no podemos olvidar la importancia de las relaciones con las mujeres de su comunidad. A pesar de no ser siempre positivas, estas relaciones marcan sumamente a Holiday y a Angelou en su identificación y aceptación como mujeres negras, además de dar voz a todas aquellas mujeres y niñas que han sufrido o sufren las discriminaciones ya mencionadas.

La siguiente sección, “Yo soy, nosotras somos: Identidades colectivas en la escritura auto/biográfica de autoras nativas en Norteamérica,” nos ofrece de nuevo un análisis desde un enfoque interseccional. En este caso, Martín-Lucas analiza los libros *Mestiza* (1973) de Maria Campbell y *Lakota Woman* (1990) de Mary Crow Dog, que destacan por su gran componente dialógico. Este dialogismo surge a raíz del mestizaje de ambas autoras: Maria Campbell es blanca y cree, y Mary Crow Dog es blanca y sioux. Por lo tanto, dicho mestizaje las sitúa entre dos culturas históricamente enemigas, de manera que, al no pertenecer plenamente a ninguna de ellas, sufren discriminación por parte de ambas. Asimismo,



nos recuerda Martín-Lucas, no solo son mestizas en lo que a la etnia se refiere, sino que también se sitúan entre dos sociedades opuestas: una es igualitaria y la otra patriarcal. La comunidad indígena está basada en la compartición y equidad, mientras que la sociedad colonizadora y euroamericana, profundamente capitalista, sitúa a la mujer en una posición de inferioridad y sumisión al hombre. Estas características, recogidas en sus libros, dan lugar a auto/biografías que, al igual que sus autoras, no encajan completamente ni con la literatura tradicional indígena ni con la tradición europea. Finalmente, Campbell y Crow Dog describen el abuso extremo que sufren tanto mujeres y niñas debido al contexto colonial en el que viven. Aun así, expone Martín-Lucas, se aferran a sus raíces indígenas, gracias a las cuales consiguen conectar y crear vínculos con las mujeres de sus respectivas comunidades, a la vez que reconstruyen su propia identidad.

Por último, el quinto capítulo, “La auto/biografía documental,” se centra en la obra de Sheila Gilhooly y Yasmin Ladha. Gilhooly, con su obra *Still Sane* (1985), combina imágenes con textos y deja atrás la auto/biografía dialógica vista anteriormente para dar paso a un coro de voces. Martín-Lucas considera que la obra de Gilhooly tiene a tres objetivos: denunciar el abuso hacia las mujeres, haciendo hincapié en las lesbianas; promover una imagen de fuerza y unión entre las mujeres y cuestionar el arte dentro de una sociedad heteropatriarcal. Por su parte, en su auto/biografía *Women Dancing on Rooftops* (1997) Ladha denuncia los crímenes que sufren las niñas y mujeres en un contexto de conflicto bélico, centrándose en los campos de refugiadas/os y la región de Cachemira. Al igual que con Gilhooly, Martín-Lucas destaca el uso de voces femeninas diferentes, recogiendo testimonios distintos, para escribir esta auto/biografía y poder conseguir así un texto lo más verosímil posible.

A lo largo *Yo soy porque nosotras somos*, y a través del análisis de textos que experimentan con la escritura del “yo,” Martín-Lucas insiste en la importancia que tiene para las mujeres encontrar su propia individualidad e identidad. Desde Kempe hasta Ladha, las escritoras, a partir de sus relaciones con mujeres, son capaces no solo de autodefinirse, sino también de dar voz a aquellas que no la tienen hablando de forma pública de problemas hasta ese momento ignorados. El público lector podrá ver cómo todas estas mujeres, en la búsqueda de su autodefinición, rompen con la imagen generalizada e impuesta por un patriarcado misógino, blanco y heterosexual.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Romantic Escapes: Post-Millennial Trends in Contemporary Popular Romance Fiction***

Irene Pérez-Fernández and Carmen Pérez Riu (eds.)

Bern: Peter Lang, 2021. 324pp. Critical Perspectives on English and American Literature, Communication and Culture, Peter Lang Series (24). ISBN: 978 3 0343 4212 4

Despite the contemptuous preconceptions and critical voices that have conventionally surrounded romance fiction, this volume, edited by scholars Irene Pérez-Fernández and Carmen Pérez Riu for Peter Lang and published in 2021, not only gives evidence of the current popularity and unquestionable success of the genre, but also of its capacity to address political discourses and trigger academic debate, judging from the profusion of scholarly studies on romance fiction that have been published in the last decades.

As the editors of this book concede, in a first wave of romance criticism, feminist theorists like Kate Millet and Germaine Greer were mostly critical of romance fiction on account of the belief that the genre contributed to perpetuating patriarchal values and women's oppression. Subsequently, in a second wave of scholarly attention, seminal volumes like Tania Modleski's *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (1982) and Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (1984) rather looked into the textual features of popular romance fiction and debated whether the discourses prevailing in the genre could be considered as empowering or demeaning from a gender perspective. This volume, *Romantic Escapes: Post-Millennial Trends in Contemporary Popular Romance Fiction*, arises in the wake of a third wave of romance criticism as a phase in which the multifaceted and ambivalent discourses underlying contemporary romance fiction have prompted a variety of critical studies and approaches to the genre from numerous disciplines. By means of acknowledging, but also, transcending influential studies, like Pamela Regis's definition of romance fiction as "the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more heroines" (2003, 19) and her contention that the genre should include eight narrative events to be categorised as such, academic studies pertaining

to the third wave of romance criticism tend to differ from a prescriptive methodology to adopt, instead, a discursive and versatile approach in resemblance with the distinguishing features characterising contemporary romance fiction, such as its transformative potential, its political commitment and inclusion of cultural diversity, its hybridisation with other genres, and its adaptation to new demands and consuming practices in the digital era.

*Romantic Escapes* engages in dialogue with preceding critical volumes pertaining to the third wave of romance criticism, such as *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Romance Fiction* (2020), edited by Jayashree Kamblé, Eric Murphy Selinger and Hsu-Ming Teo, which revisits classics of the genre, displaying a variety of methodological approaches and focusing on a selection of themes and subgenres illustrative of contemporary romance fiction. In comparison with this immediate predecessor, *Romantic Escapes* widens the scope of analysis to embrace a great variety of geographic locations and cultures identified in contemporary romance novels prior to the publication of the wide-ranging volume *The Routledge Companion to Romantic Love* (2022), edited by Ann Brooks. Besides, *Romantic Escapes* underscores the evolving consuming habits of audiences in the digital era, it gives insight into political discourses in romance fiction suggested in previous studies and it also explores the disruption of generic conventions even to the extent of contemplating the genres of feminist romance and antiromance.

According to the editors of the volume, *Romantic Escapes* has been envisioned with the overall aim to “enlarge the vibrant scholar exchange of the third wave” of romance criticism (2021, 16). Far from considering romance fiction as undeserving critical attention and only worth of praise for its escapist dimension, the editors declare their will to defend that romance novels stimulate “reflection on social and political issues,” they “meet the challenges of the digital era” and they also “allow readers to immerse themselves in debates ranging from ecology to feminism” (2021, 17). This book is also informed by the contention that contemporary romance novels “bend the traditional formulae of the romance and blend the genre with other popular forms” (2021, 18). The twelve essays compiled in this volume consist of contributions from scholars pertaining to different academic disciplines and cultural backgrounds, and are presented in four sections addressing the intertextualities existing between contemporary romance novels and classics of the genre, the interaction between romance fiction and capitalist practices, the changing consideration of exotic locations from romanticised settings to discursive spaces, and the adaptation of generic conventions to give voice to political discourses concerning women’s situation.

This volume begins with a section that examines the intertextual links existing between contemporary romance novels and preceding exponents, and the ways in which formulaic and ideological traits from popular romance are retained and reconfigured in current romance fiction.

In the first chapter of this section, Joseph Crawford argues that, as legacy of the medieval romance tradition, heroes in post-millennial romance are portrayed as more desirable when they are associated with the ideals of the old world, whereas heroines are often cast as independent women who are representative of values related to the new world. As Crawford claims, romance novels like Diana Gabaldon’s *Outlander* (1991), Karen Marie Moning’s *Kiss of the Highlander* (2001) and Olivia Gates’s *The Desert Lord’s Baby* (2008) arise as compensatory fantasies of reconciliation between past and present in which liberated women are reinscribed in past structures from which they were banished, while chivalric heroes and their patriarchal precepts are neutralised through the assumption that, as figures from the past, they are doomed to vanish.

With a particular focus on intertextuality, Deborah Philips contends that, although E.L. James’s novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011) came into being in a fan fiction site, its marketing techniques appealing to new readers cannot be considered as entirely innovative, since romance fiction has always aimed to please its readership’s demands. Besides, despite its apparent use of new tropes, like the inclusion of alternative erotic practices, James’s novel remains mostly grounded in formulaic conventions, given its intertextualities with fairy tales, nineteenth-century literary classics and contemporary gothic romances for young adults. Philips concludes that, even if the hero’s surrender to the heroine’s love may appear to incite female empowerment, James’s novel mostly displays traditional portrayals of masculinity and femininity, and explicitly yields to the domination of man over woman.

To conclude this section, Elina Valovirta focuses on the contemporary subgenre of royal romance, which is distributed in digital format and depicts the courtship of a prince and a female commoner, hence establishing self-referential connections with actual royal couples, particularly within the British monarchy. Valovirta centres her analysis on three royal romance novels—Rachel Hauck’s *Once upon a Prince* (2013), Heather Morgan and Jessica Cock’s *The Royal We* (2015) and Madison Faye’s *King Sized: Royally Screwed Book 1* (2018)—which underscore the pulse between the ordinariness of a commoner heroine and the extraordinary qualities surrounding royalty. Furthermore, this analysis reveals that royal romance fiction conforms to the prevailing characterisation of romance fiction as a commodified genre, as the consistent and strategic use of paratexts in these novels also displays.

Given the ongoing success of a genre that appeals to emotions in the wake of affective capitalism, in the second section of this volume, attention is drawn towards the global market complexities surrounding romance fiction. As the genre adapts

to new social realities, marketing strategies highlight feminist aspects in contemporary romance novels in order to attract readers, while new patterns of consumerism are taking shape in digital communities made up of romance fiction readers.

At the beginning of this section, Carolina Fernández Rodríguez attests that romantic love and capitalism become entangled in romance fiction through the notions of the romanticization of commodities, since certain products acquire a romantic aura, and the commodification of romance, as romantic love finds correlation in economic practices. By means of looking into Nora Roberts's Inn Boonsboro trilogy, Fernández Rodríguez delves in the paradox of romantic love as both an irrational force and an emotion that is fashioned by market forces, and the recurrent use of metaphors that characterise love as both organic and contractual. The entanglement between romance fiction and capitalism is mostly exemplified by Roberts's lucrative empire based on the synergy established between the fictional resorts that she creates in her novels and their actual equivalents, which she owns in real life.

As regards the connection between romance and marketing strategies, in the following chapter, Inmaculada Pérez Casal focuses on author Lisa Kleypas and her Ravenels series of historical romance novels, which make use of feminist claims as a marketing stratagem, hence illustrating the concept of marketplace feminism. Although romance fiction has conventionally been regarded as a conservative genre, Pérez Casal draws on the prevalent contention that romance and feminism are becoming increasingly intertwined as is shown in Kleypas's historical romances addressing issues such as female sexuality and gender equality. Pérez Casal concludes that Kleypas's feminist commitment not only responds to a marketing strategy, insofar as it also substantiates the notion that historical romance can embrace feminism.

In the context of fandom studies, Carmen Pérez Rúa's chapter focuses on digital fan communities of romance fiction, which have given rise to new reading practices, inasmuch as fans establish bonds with other participants and play increasingly active roles in their approach to the genre. In contrast with earlier studies of fandom, which mostly typified fans as passive consumers, new trends acknowledge the role of fan communities as forms of resistance against corporate dictates, inasmuch as fans appropriate texts and reinterpret them, in addition to creating content and reconsidering topics ranging from the legitimacy of the genre to its potential to disrupt patriarchal displays. In particular, Pérez Rúa analyses discussions in digital fan communities revolving around a controversial passage in Julia Quinn's novel *The Duke and I* (2000) and concludes that digital interpretive communities of romance fiction contribute to maintaining the reputation of the genre and may even exert influence on prospective trends of romance fiction and criticism.

The chapters comprised in the third section of this volume deal with aspects related to the landscape and cultural identity in romance fiction, such as the process of exoticization and eroticisation of heroes as sport champions and representatives of national identity, the use of paradise discourse to promote environmental awareness, and the adaptation of generic conventions to match the social changes taking place in different countries and cultural realities.

To begin with, Paloma Fresno-Calleja considers rugby romance novels that revolve around intercultural love stories between New Zealand rugby players of Māori ancestry and women of foreign extraction. Novels like Rosalind James's *Just Good Friends* (2012) and Tracey Alvarez's *Mend Your Heart* (2017), around which Fresno-Calleja centres her analysis, pertain to the tradition of exotic romances, as a subgenre within romance fiction, whereby New Zealand is presented as an idyllic destination and as a romantic bicultural utopia. In these novels, as a member of the national rugby team of the All Blacks and usually of Māori ancestry, the hero shares prototypical values related to the romantic hero and the warrior archetype, sport becomes instrumental since the games of love and rugby mirror each other, and the idyllic setting of New Zealand turns into a trope for tourist promotion and national branding.

From a sociolinguistic approach, María-Isabel González-Cruz presents the results of analysing a corpus of thirty-five romance novels written by English authors and published between 1995 and 2004, which are mostly set in the Canary Islands and portray the love story between an English-speaking woman and a Spanish man. Drawing on the concept of exoticism as the presentation of a culture for consumption of another, these romance novels convey the representation of the exotic Other by means of linguistic mechanisms, they also construct paradise discourse through the incorporation of mythological elements and landscape descriptions, and they bring to the fore the pulse between financial interests of mass tourism and the protection of the environment.

This section is drawn to a close with Alejandra Moreno-Álvarez's chapter, which looks into the evolution of popular Indian romance fiction written in English by means of exploring the marketing strategies of publishers to meet the demands of readers at the turn of the twentieth-century. Recent social changes in India have contributed to the rise of contemporary Indian romance novels with a feminist outlook as a counterpart to Western chick lit fiction. Moreno-Álvarez delineates an evolving tetrapartite chronology comprising Mills and Boon romance classics produced from a Western perspective, Rupa Romances set in an Indian context and written by Indian authors, Harlequin's Mills and Boon's adaptation of Western romance to mirror the new Indian cultural reality, and finally, the Red Romance Series from Pageturn combining modernity with Indian heritage. Moreno-Álvarez concludes that the publishing strategies of romance fiction in India have evolved from aiming to a global and local audience to target a glocal readership.

The last section of the volume addresses generic innovations in romance fiction in the light of evolving gender discourses and give evidence of the increasing hybridisation of romance novels owing to their blending with other related popular genres like chick lit and young adult fiction.

Drawing on political issues and generic innovations, in the first chapter of this section, Miyuki Hanabusa argues that some novels pertaining to contemporary Japanese popular fiction that arose in the 1990s may be considered as adaptations of Western chick lit, even if they adjusted to reflect contemporary Japanese realities. The genre of *L-bungaku*—involving novels targeting girls and commending both love and liberation—embraces feminist demands like women's pursuit of professional careers and work-life balance, while other related genres, such as *oshigoto shosetsu* (work novel) and *wa-mama shosetsu* (working-mom novel), respectively focus on women's careers and the struggles of working mothers in their everyday lives. Focusing her analysis on novels written by Setsuko Shinoda and Kei Aono, Hanabusa looks into aspects like women's careers, the reversal of traditional gender roles and the coveted implementation of institutional reforms, hence concluding that these popular Japanese genres not only serve as a form of literary escapism for Japanese women, but also as a source of female empowerment.

Owing to the increasing hybridisation of romance fiction with other genres, Irene Pérez-Fernández focuses on Black British writer Malorie Blackman's Noughts and Crosses literary series as examples of young adult romance fiction challenging formulaic and escapist generic conventions to give rise to politically committed novels of ethnic diversity. Blackman's young adult novels introduce genre innovations that rewrite dominant discourses of love and bring to the fore the denunciation of discriminatory practices, which has often been missing in young adult fiction. As Pérez-Fernández argues, Blackman's novels comply with some of the conventions of romance, but they also address issues of special relevance to young adult women, such as teenage pregnancy and the oversexualisation of female bodies. It is finally claimed that Blackman's contribution to transforming young adult fiction lies in the deconstruction of romantic love and patriarchal values, the incorporation of feminist concerns and racial diversity, and the introduction of alternative and empowering role models for young female adults.

Bringing this section to a close, Elisa Serna-Martínez analyses Opal Palmer Adisa's novel *Painting Away Regrets* (2011) as paradigmatic of the genre of the Caribbean antiromance and suggestive of the pulse between Western progress and African diasporic cultures. As Serna-Martínez claims, Adisa's antiromance novel differs from romance fiction since its narrative of intimacy engages critically in imperialist and diasporic discourses, erotic passages disclose the mechanisms of political power and spaces of intimacy become spaces of resistance for women. Serna-Martínez contends that, by portraying sexual and spiritual practices, domestic spaces turn into legitimate locations to take civil action and bring the private sphere into public recognition.

This volume efficiently achieves its intended purpose as it elaborates on the trends and academic interests of third-wave romance criticism. It attests that the classic formulaic quality of the genre is no longer perceived as constraining but adaptive, it underscores that the popularity of romance novels and their adjustment to capitalist patterns of consumption evince their growing profitable dimension, and it proposes that the hybridisation of romance fiction and its inclusive adaptation to embrace other cultures are indicative of the incipient potential of the genre. By means of the thoroughly-researched chapters comprised in this book, not only is it ascertained that contemporary romance fiction can engage in dialogue with relevant political discourses ranging from ecology to multiculturalism, but it also proves the appropriateness of the genre to address current feminist claims, thus leaving behind earlier activist voices that mainly held romance fiction with contempt.

Given its emphasis on the evolving consuming patterns of romance novels, along with their gendered commitment, political perspectives and generic innovations, this volume paves the way for establishing forthcoming trends in romance criticism. Accordingly, prospective volumes may consider subjects like the serialisation of romance fiction in digital platforms and its effects on the evolution of the genre, the analysis of the inclusion of diverse sexual identities in romance fiction given the rise of gay and lesbian romance novels, the responsibility in the wake of scholarly interest in new masculinities to vindicate male authors who felt compelled to write romance fiction under pseudonym, and the potential arising from the interaction of the genre with aging studies as romance novels may increasingly portray love and sexuality in old age.





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BOOK REVIEWS

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# *Reading the Trace in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*

Rosario Arias and Lin Pettersson (eds.)

Gylphi, 2022. 258 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-78024-100-5

The volume *Reading the Trace in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*, edited by Rosario Arias and Lin Pettersson, is a collection that assembles a variety of essays dealing with the concept of the trace in different literary texts from the nineteenth century onwards. This concept was originally coined by Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology* (1976), where he described the notion of the trace as the articulation between “the living and the nonliving in general, origin of all repetition” (65). This connection between past and present, and between presence and absence, has been widely used by literary critics and scholars within the fields of psychoanalysis, as well as Trauma and Memory Studies, in order to analyse the origins of certain subconscious wounds that might still damage the present.

The versatility of the trace as a concept can be seen in Derrida’s notion of “Hauntology,” a term that the philosopher coined in *Specters of Marx* (1994). In this text, the theorist explained that by taking the shape of a ghost, the trace becomes a “deconstructive figure hovering between life and death, presence and absence” (Davis 376). Although, the concept of the trace as a ghost had been previously studied by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, whose “phantoms,” opposite to Derrida’s “specters,” became the “presence of a dead ancestor in the living ego, still intent on preventing its traumatic and usually shameful secrets from coming to light” (Davis 374). These theories not only expanded the knowledge within the psychoanalysis area of study, but also connected the studies between the Memory and Trauma field. Nevertheless, it was not until Paul Ricoeur’s contribution to the topic with *Time and Narrative* (1983-1988) that the concept of the trace was not adapted to historical and fictional narratives. As Rosario Arias and Lin Pettersson claim, for Ricoeur, literature became the connection of the “insurmountable gap between history (the real past) and fiction” (4). Then, according to Ricoeur, any type of narrative—fictional or not—should be considered and studied under the perspective of the trace, as any information we gather from the past shapes how we (re)interpret it in the present.

Based on this premise, Arias and Pettersson’s collection reunites a great diversity of studies in which the apology of the past becomes the protagonist by applying Ricoeur’s perspective on modern and contemporary writings. The relevance of the trace is seen in how the contributors have applied this study on a wide variety of critical theories within the literary sphere, such as post-humanism, postcolonial, or historical narratives, as well as the most commonly associated with the study of Trauma and Memory: the ghost stories. But it is in fact this array of different perspectives that proves the relevance that the concept of the trace still has in the present-day research, since the thread that binds these multifaceted chapters is, in effect, the importance of its appliance in modern and contemporary fiction.

The book has been sectioned in three parts that are initiated by an introduction written by the editors. The introductory chapter of this volume acts as a theoretical base that will not only provide a chronological explanation of the previous studies in the field, but it will also specify the fundamental concepts and approaches that are needed in order to recognise the applicability of the trace in the analysis of the literary work. Additionally, in the following eleven chapters, each contributor includes additional information that is specific to the topic of their research. Therefore, the organisation and division of the book is fundamental in order to make this collection a great example of how the trace is applied and used in literary analysis, since the previously suggested theories are applied from the broader aspects to the most specific ones.

Part I: “Modern Traces,” contains four chapters that emphasize the figure of the ghost, presence or apparition as a symbolism for memory and the traumatic past. In chapter one, “Traces of Light and Dark: History, Memory and Landscape in the Ghost Stories of E.F. Benson,” Ruth Heholt emphasizes the importance of how the “haunting” is created by individuals longing for the past, and the importance of the physical space in remembering. In chapter two, “Definition, Recurrence, Type and Functions of Ghosts (as Traces) in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*,” Margarita Estévez-Saá explores the use of “ghosts invoked by the text itself” (33). In this chapter, Estévez-Saá analyses the layering and the significance of ghosts in James Joyce’s work by interpreting the spectral as an ethnic group that has been silenced. These ghosts, according to the contributor, become an instrument for political vengeance, since they claim their own identity and history. In chapter three, “‘Unnatural Promises’: The Trace of Evil in Elizabeth Bowen’s ‘The Demon Lover,’” Laura Lojo-Rodríguez succumbs to the analysis of the ghost story in order to explore the chaos and fragmentation caused in the individuals after the atrocities of war. Similarly to Heholt’s emphasis on the location, Lojo-Rodríguez accentuates the importance of the family house in the ghost story, and opens a gendered discussion by introducing the notion of the “male gaze” and female subjection. In the Fourth and last chapter of the section: “The Straight Line is Not the Most Artistic Path between Two Points: Graphic Images in Conrad’s *Lord Jim: A Tale*,” Jorge Sacido-Romero extraordinarily creates an analogy between the process of writing and a maritime voyage. For Sacido-Romero, the trace not only becomes a literary notion, but also a physical one, since maps are similarly, full of traces. Even though, the haunting does not take the shape of a ghostly apparition in this novel, but it takes place in the protagonist’s obsession with mass literature, which the contributor compares to Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*.

The following four chapters in Part II: “Contemporary Traces,” cover the physicality of memory, so as to explore the importance of the material traces and the body. In chapter five, “Memory Texts and Material Traces: Michèle Roberts’s Retrieval of the Past in *Daughters of the House* and *Ignorance*,” Sonia Villegas-López introduces the topic of traumatic memory, which is both induced by physical objects, places, as well as photographs, and words—that is to say, by traumatic narratives and testimonies. Most importantly, she remarks the authenticity of the (re)writing of the historical narratives through what she addresses as the “relics of the past,” by supporting Dominick LaCapra’s idea that history can be incomplete. In chapter six, “Traces of Memory and Perception in Samantha Havery’s *The Wilderness* (2009) and Anne Enright’s *The Gathering* (2007),” Nadine Böhm-Schnitker discusses the ethical impact of writing about memory and Alzheimer. Introducing the field of Illness Narratives, Böhm-Schnitker explores the concept of forgetting, unreliability, and the concept of identity as a trace, as well as a “function of memory” (112). Chapter seven, called “Re-Membering the Body in Philip Roth’s *The Dying Animal*,” written by Marta Cerezo Moreno, continues deepening the idea of the illness as a trace; specially, she uses the analogy of the physical wound and the psychological one. Moreover, and similarly to Villegas-López work, she studies the importance of photography as a trace, analysing the beauty of the unmarked body before the trace even existed on it. In chapter eight, “Of Bodily Traces, No-Traces, Non-Traces and Virtual Traces: The Conversion of Human Remains in Literature and Culture,” Marie-Luise Kohlke contemplates ethical implications of using human remains as traces to (re)build the past, while also considering the lost memory and identity once the human becomes non-human.

The last section, Part III: “Traces of the Other,” contains three chapters that accentuate the importance of cultural studies by acknowledging topics such as British Colonialism, Passing as the Other or the South-Asian Diaspora. In chapter nine, “Cultural Haunting and the ‘Trace’ of the Colonial Other in Arthur Conan Doyle’s Short Fiction,” Juan-José Martín-González analyses Doyle’s less-known work from a postcolonial perspective. In this way, Martín-González introduces the importance of the “transgenerational trauma,” and blends the concept of memory with matters of race, identity and belonging, since this kind of trauma can be inherited by a whole nation or cultural group. In chapter ten, Nieves Pascual Soler studies “The Trace as Passage of Becoming in *The Passion According to G.H.*” The contributor explores this Kafkaesque novel by exploring the limits between remembering and forgetting what means to be human, as well as discussing the consequences of losing the individual’s memory, feelings and even their own identity. Finally, in chapter eleven, “Dressing Differently: Dress as a Derridean Trace in the Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain,” Noemí Pereira-Ares explores the notions of memory and trace from the very original perspective of clothing. In this chapter, the contributor defends how the dressed body can be used as a trace of the past in diasporic writings, but also, how clothes can be a way of communication, a language, and most importantly, a part of a culture’s identity.

*Reading the Trace in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* (2022) has proven the relevance of the concept of “trace” within literary studies in the present-day research, and so, this volume can be an outstanding illustration of how this theoretical

approach can be applied to a substantial range of topics. The versatility of the trace can explore an array of different themes and genres: from the most haunting ghost stories to the most “quixotic” or “kafkaesque” ones, while also being used within specific theories, such as illness narratives, post-humanism, or postcolonial studies. It is precisely that particularity what makes this book very special, and maybe only accessible to students and academics who already have some notions on concepts studied in the field of Memory and Trauma. Nevertheless, this book is a great tool that demonstrates how the trace can be used to explain a great variety of topics, by defending Paul Ricoeur’s perspective on how the Derridean theory could be applied into the field of literary criticism. Is it for this reason that this collection is fundamental for those researchers and scholars who aim to specialize within the field of Memory and Trauma Studies.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***Cultural Representations of Gender Vulnerability and Resistance: A Mediterranean Approach to the Anglosphere***

**María Isabel Romero Ruiz and Pilar Cuder-Domínguez (eds.)****Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. 233 pp.****ISBN: 9783030955076 ISBN 9783030955083**

**C***ultural Representations of Gender Vulnerability and Resistance: A Mediterranean Approach to the Anglosphere*, henceforth *Representations*, sheds a different light on cultural issues, such as gender violence, vulnerability and resistance of contemporary visual and literary English-speaking cultures. The collection's concerns for social issues mentioned above are carefully dealt with on the basis of transnationalism. This publication is indeed innovative, as well as enlightening, not only for the academic scholar, but also for the avid socially-conscious reader.

Consisting of twelve chapters (a thoroughly-developed introduction followed by most engaging eleven papers), the publication is divided into three thematic sections with the objective to explore contexts and their definitions within the field. Part I, entitled "Gender Vulnerability, Resilience and Resistance," starts off by tackling vulnerability, resilience and resistance from a gender-focused perspective. In her paper, "Growing Resilient in Irish Magdalene Laundries: An Analysis of the Justice for Magdalenes' Oral History Project (2013) and Kathy O'Beirne's Autobiography *Kathy's Story: A Childhood Hell Inside Magdalen Laundries* (2005)," Elena Cantueso-Urbano magnificently analyzes the notion of trauma in the "reformation" process of underprivileged women in Ireland upon studying Kathy O'Beirne's—one of the

women residents in Laundries—own autobiography, thus making her research most attractive. Her paper closes on a hopeful note by stating that coping-with-vulnerability mechanisms, such as resistance/resilience, can be geared towards the healing of victims of trauma and abuse. On the subject, chapter three, “Becoming Resilient Subjects: Vulnerability and Resistance in Emma Donoghue’s *Room*,” by María Elena Jaime de Pablos, opens with an analysis of Donoghue’s *Room* (2010), which proposes examining vulnerability, within the notion of resistance, for the understanding of the novel’s character’s subjectivity. This paper addresses a most problematic reality from the outside world looked upon from the world inside, more specifically from the claustrophobic fear that living within four walls, over an extended period of time, instills in the vulnerable subjects of the story (a mother and her child). Despite fear and hopelessness, the narrative offers a glimpse of hope, however, as the reader becomes witness to the “feminine” influence exerted by the woman character, Ma, “an intelligent woman, a caring mother, a proper figure of attachment, a source of affection and a model of principled behaviour” (*Representations* 37) over her child. Such influence will have a positive effect on both characters after their long-endured confinement. In the end, they manage to turn oppression and vulnerability into the venues by which to consolidate resilience/resistance. From a slightly different perspective, resilience/resistance and vulnerability are presented in chapter four, “Of Mice and Women: Gendered and Speciesist Violence in Joyce Carol Oates’s ‘Martyrdom,’” by María Sofia Pimentel-Biscaia. Neatly argued, Pimentel-Biscaia’s paper draws a parallel between human and non-human suffering in the analysis of Joyce Carol Oates’s short story “Martyrdom.” Pimentel-Biscaia’s own point resides in the necessity to take into consideration “both entities’ embodied subjectivities as ‘martyrs’” (54). Based on Oates’s short story, in which the wife willingly accepts the violence her marriage entails, the present paper entertains firstly, the figure of martyr as a composite of an abstract concept and a material object; secondly, the decision of self-representation, which adds affective value to the story and, lastly, the presence of the voiceless and unrecognized martyr whose sacrifice “is ideologically positioned in terms of human animal and gender relations” (55). The thesis statement proposed herein is worthy of recognition, as paralleling gendered and both human and non-human animal relations constitute a novelty within the collection. Closing Part I of this collection, Auxiliadora Pérez-Vides’s paper, entitled “‘Nobody Kills a Priest’: Irish Noir and Pathogenic Vulnerability in Benjamin Black’s *Holy Orders*,” highlights the fragile and precarious nature of vulnerability palpable in the deficient practices of Ireland’s systemic power. In her analysis of Black’s fiction, Pérez-Vides makes the reader better understand the exposure of the Catholic Church’s dysfunctionality of moral practices on subjects from different social, age and gender groups as well as the failures of the infrastructural norms in Ireland. As a whole, Part I has been designed—through carefully selected chapters—to show a gradual transformation of a somewhat “fragile” concept of vulnerability into a “stronghold” firmly rooted in the notions of resilience/resistance as a means to disclose and expose oppression on “others,” regardless of place and time—in other words, across nations and throughout history. Leaving the door open for further research, this first section anticipates the introduction of new concepts, notions, theoretical constructs, and case studies, to name some, the reader can only be looking forward to.

Part II, entitled “Gender Vulnerability, Agency and Interdependencies,” guides readers farther into exploring vulnerability with the use of new elements for identity-building, thus turning this publication all the more engaging. Pilar Cuder-Dominguez opens this section with her paper entitled “Crime Fiction’s Disobedient Gaze: Refugees’ Vulnerability in Ausma Zehanat Khan’s *A Dangerous Crossing* (2018).” The scholar argues that Khan’s novel makes a powerful critique of the failure of European states and transnational institutions to morally respond to the needs of a population whose vulnerability “has become ‘pathogenic’ on account of the negligence and shortcomings of official agencies” (2022, 93). Using a straightforward, illustrating, and clear writing style, Cuder-Dominguez’s paper directly addresses the notion of gendered human as both subject of international human rights and object of humanitarian action (105) to conclude that, in such a manner, fiction and reality come together to defend the vulnerable. Beatriz Dominguez-García contributes to the study of vulnerability by offering a feminist perspective. Her paper, “Detection, Gender Violence and Atkinson’s Jackson Brodie Series” in chapter seven, constitutes a study of Atkinson’s narrative focused on the detective stories of the series. Dominguez-García’s “modus operandi” alternates between the depiction drawn on the protagonist by the TV series and that of the written text. The paper turns most enlightening and inquisitive upon revisiting perceptions on vulnerability conveyed by both media, TV series and Atkinson’s fiction writing adding a touch of originality and novelty to the collection. Still from a feminist perspective, E. Guillermo Iglesias-Díaz’s paper, entitled “Resisting Binaries: Vulnerability, Agency and the Sovereign Subject through a Feminist Critical Gaze,” proposes understanding vulnerability as the mechanism to challenge and resist the masculinity and neoliberal myth of the sovereign subject using Andrea Arnold’s film *Red Road* (2006) as its case study. When it comes to vulnerability and agency, Iglesias-Díaz points to the role-reversal seen in Arnold’s film, which subverts the notion of “holding the gaze” traditionally attributed to the male calling into question the traditionally-conceived construction of the sovereign subjectivity. Iglesias-Díaz concludes by highlighting the complexity that vulnerability, as opposed to agency and sovereign subjectivities, entails. Closing Part II, “Trans- National Neo-Victorianism, Gender and Vulnerability in Kate Grenville’s *The Secret River* (2005),” by María Isabel Romero-Ruiz explores gender and vulnerability concepts using Grenville’s novel’s ability to invert the notion of colonization upon displaying “sympathy for both parties, the colonisers and the colonised, under situations of precarity and vulnerability” (151). A well-synchronized contextualization for a better understanding of the state of affairs in Grenville’s novel makes the perfect fit for the analysis of Neo-Victorian narrative in which post-colonial issues converge. It is in retrieving cultural memory through fiction, one can assume, that we can recollect past events through gendered paradigms. In summary, Part II of this publication broadens the scope of research by allowing new terms to



become essential in exploring vulnerability far and beyond traditional academic standards. Part II also sets the stage for vulnerability, resistance/resilience, and other intervening aspects, to be perceived as active constituents in Part III, the last section of this publication, which showcases a most unconventional representation of vulnerability, that reflected in Trans\* / Post\* Identities.

Part III constitutes the last, and trendiest, section of this publication. As stated by the editors in the introduction to the book, “Gender Vulnerability and Trans\* /Post\* Identities” seeks “new paths to envisage embodiment beyond heteronormative constrictions in recent TV, Sci-Fi films and Dystopian Fiction, by looking into cultural representations of non-binary identities associated with vulnerability” (*Representations* 2022, 9). Opening the section, chapter ten, “The Vulnerable Posthuman in Popular Science Fiction Cinema,” by Rocío Carrasco-Carrasco, questions the notion of the post-human depicted on the screen as opposed to the traditional canon of the “other”—a marginal, vulnerable, passive figure evoking human fears and desires—by stating that some contemporary films have portrayed the post-human subject as an “alternative way of thinking the world” (170), hence disrupting the understanding of difference. In analyzing Glazer’s film *Under the Skin* (2013) and Sander’s *Ghost in the Shell* (2007), Carrasco-Carrasco declares that such films offer two clearly distinct images of posthuman subject. On the one hand, Glazer’s film, builds a posthuman character portrayed as “unnamed and impassive alien,” an abductor capable of killing men. On the other, Sander’s draws a picture of a posthuman as “a human-machine hybrid” working for the police who eventually discovers their true identity. In reflecting upon the identity of the posthuman subject, the scholar argues that identity seeking must be viewed as a process in constant change versus the idea that proposes subjectivity as a universal consciousness (171). Carrasco-Carrasco’s paper constitutes a magnificently drawn reflection upon identity seeking and development in non-human subjects, a most engaging idea for Sci-Fi enthusiasts. Exploring out-of-the-norm vulnerability remains on course in chapter eleven, entitled “Trans\* Vulnerability and Resistance in the Ballroom: The case of *Pose* (Season I).” Juan Carlos Hidalgo-Ciudad’s approach to vulnerability proves most captivating, for not only do the subjects under analysis live in a world populated by LGBTQ+, Black and Latinx characters, but their roles are interpreted by Trans\* actors themselves. The series makes visible an “up-to-now-silenced voice not only in the story but, more importantly, in the telling of that story” (188). Resorting to the “Ballroom Culture” as the backdrop of the analysis, Hidalgo-Ciudad touches on issues such as vulnerability and precariousness in the Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ communities. In his concluding arguments, Hidalgo-Ciudad asserts that this image of the Ballroom Culture in the end offers a soft vision of an environment that reinforces the validity of the American Dream for the dispossessed (199), a most provocative statement to reflect upon. *Representations* closes by adding a new framework, the utopian genre, on which to analyze gender identity and its constraints. Antonia Navarro-Tejero, in her paper entitled “A Trans Journey Towards Resistance: Vulnerability and Resilience in the Dystopian Narrative of Manjula Padmanabhan,” employs feminist activism to analyze thought-provoking dystopian scenarios, such as that of women perceived as the “endangered sex at risk” by the displacement of technology or the depiction of resistance through stories of transmasculinity and transfemininity. Navarro-Tejero concludes that in the dystopian event that displacement by technology might occur, the vulnerable would use their ability to adapt upon joining forces and transforming their precarious realities, thus converting mechanisms of oppression into mechanisms of resilience/resistance.

On the whole, *Cultural Representations of Gender Vulnerability and Resistance* is without doubt a noteworthy contribution to the study of vulnerability and, in turn, its mechanisms of resistance and resilience. Its thought-out structure denotes careful attention, on the editors’ part, towards a theme-based classification of the chapters this collection comprises. Parts I, II, and III follow each other in a perfectly synchronized order presenting no disruption to the flow of ideas, theoretical frameworks and themes, among others, developed and proposed by the collaborators on this project. In addition, due to its transnational nature, as it leans on both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches as well as the non-Anglo-Saxon perspectives afforded by the contributors, this publication gradually draws the reader’s academic and intellectual curiosity for the subject under analysis leaving them “wanting for more.”



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BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***The Poetics and Ethics of (Un-)Grievability in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction***

Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau (eds.)

New York and London: Routledge, 2023. 229 pp.

ISBN: 9781032389752 (hbk); ISBN: 9781032389769 (pbk); ISBN: 9781003347811 (ebk)

**T**he *Poetics and Ethics of (Un-)Grievability in Contemporary Anglophone fiction* is a collection of eleven chapters that seek to explore various modalities of (un-)grievability in different contexts. The idea, which was born from a seminar on the same topic, is set in a wider collaborative relationship between the two editors, Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau, which has led to the fruitful production of seven other volumes on contemporary fiction, ethics and trauma. Their relationship has been and still remains productive, thanks to their shared interest in contemporary fiction, ethics and trauma.

The volume mainly uses Judith Butler's work on (un-)grievability, frames of perception and vulnerability as a shared condition amongst all beings. The chapters consider her research and apply it to different ethical and political frameworks, such as war, climate change, alienation and posthumanism. Judith Butler follows Levinas's ethics of alterity, which challenges the notion of self-identity of the subjects, and that establishes the relationality of all beings (Onega and Ganteau 2023, 1). Her work goes beyond in her postulation that there is an ontological vulnerability, one that is common to each of us and that becomes the basis for communities and interdependence among subjects (3). Despite this common vulnerability, Butler realises that grievability is not equally shared among everyone. Grievability is defined as "the capacity to be grieved or mourned collectively and officially" (4), which brings protection and potential. Therefore, she is concerned with distributing such grievability equally (5). The consequences of this unequal distribution of grievability are explored throughout this volume, leading to an in-depth analysis and application of her work.

Studies such as these are essential because they consider issues that affect the daily lives not only of people, but of other non-human and even non-living creatures as well. Research on war, for example, shows that naming casualties is an effort to grant grievability to victims (Lloyd 2016, 271). Moreover, there has been an increasing attention on nonhuman lives, which anthropocentric Western beliefs regard as ungrievable or less grievable (Du 2022, 99). Studies that deal with ecological loss, ecological grief and ecofeminism have flourished, especially those dealing with climate change, pollution,

habitat destruction and extinction. In this volume there are plentiful explorations of the interdependency between humans and non-humans, be it the environment, trans-human creatures or other animals.

*The Poetics and Ethics of (Un-)Grievability in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction* is a compilation of eleven chapters that dwell on (un-)grievability from various contexts. Those chapters are structured around five thematic parts: “The Presence of History,” “Grieving the Earth,” “Outcasts,” “Contamination” and “After the Subject.” Each section is connected theoretically and builds up on the others, fully exploring the different implications and intricacies of grievability in a variety of contexts. Both the first and the last chapters are written each by one of the editors of the book, giving the volume a rounded feeling of care and closure, as the reader accompanies the authors in a thorough journey on grievability.

The first section, “The Presence of History,” opens with Susana Onega’s piece on David Mitchell’s *The One Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010). It is a historical novel that talks about the effects of the encounter of Dutch and Japanese cultures in a time when both cultures were utterly incompatible. It portrays rising capitalism, the violent imperialist relationships between these countries, and the different allocations of grievability based on race, social status and gender. Certain characters are rewarded for their capacity for care, selfless love and hospitality and, as Onega explores, it is made clear that an ethics of care and a politics of hospitality is the best way to mitigate vulnerability and ungrievability (Onega and Ganteau 2023, 33).

The following chapter is about Rachel Seiffert’s *A Boy in Winter*. Paula Romo-Mayor establishes that the traumatic landscape that characterises the twenty-first century has “brought to the fore human vulnerability as an inescapable existential predicament” (36). The novel is set during the mass shootings undertaken by the *Einsatzgruppen* during the Holocaust and responds to the author’s concern with the behaviour of individuals during or after wars. Romo-Mayor explores how the characters’ decisions to help others when confronted with their vulnerability depict the interdependency of human lives and the recognition of the common precariousness of human condition.

The last chapter of this part is written by Katia Marcellin on Ali Smith’s *The Accidental*, a novel that explores trauma and loss. In it, the set of characters “seem to be caught in a time that does not allow for change or accident to occur” (55), yet the arrival of someone new forces them to alter their perception of time and their relationship with grief. Marcellin proceeds to consider the different family member’s relation with time and argues that their egotistical practices keep them apart from grief and grievability, until the spectre of the other questions their frames and allows them to “envision different ways of relation to one another” and transform into something else (70).

The second part, “Grieving the Earth,” builds on Butler’s vision of grievability as something that applies not only to humans but to the world of the living in general (2020, 100). It starts with Bárbara Arizti’s analysis of *The Swan Book* (2013), written by Alexis Wright. Arizti expands on the way Indigenous Australians were deprived of any grievability and reduced to what Giorgio Agamben conceptualised as *homo sacer*, a figure of Roman law defined solely by “its capacity to be killed” (1998, 8). Indigenous Australians were massacred without repercussions, and the damage was also caused on their traditional lands, which were illegally occupied. In her analysis, Arizti fuses Western scholarship with Indigenous philosophy to understand the novel’s approach to mourning, loss and grieving for the people and for the environment.

The fifth chapter shares the same sense of connection. Ben Smith’s *Doggerland* (2019) is interested in depicting climate change through a claustrophobic environment that mixes a slowly dying land with a post-apocalyptic future. Angelo Monaco, the author of this chapter, analyses the constant dialogism between the past and the present throughout the narrative, with a fascination for precariousness and grievability. He considers the palimpsestic nature of this novel, the role of nature, which has been exploited until near exhaustion, and “the bare existence of humanity under conditions of loss and alienation” (106) in which humans and nature exist in a bare state, dispossessed and ungrievable.

The third part called “Outcasts” explores the figures of two characters that have been set aside due to societal norms. Firstly, Maite Escudero-Alías considers *Ill Will. The Untold Story of Heathcliff*, written by Michael Stewart in 2018. Escudero-Alías establishes the relationship between the moors, a wild and mysterious terrain, with Heathcliff’s character. Heathcliff and Catherine’s forbidden love is forged in the moors and it transcends human and non-human boundaries, entailing interdependence and self-destruction. The chapter offers a reading “that carries a textual and ideological fixation with *Wuthering Heights* in the representation of both ecology and kinship” (121). It delves on the incestuous relationship between the two characters, how they are turned into ungrievable subjects, and explores other examples of bare lives and their connection to the environment.

The following chapter written by Paula Martín-Salván analyses Toni Morrison’s *Love* (2003), particularly the role of Celestial, a prostitute with a scar on her face who acts as a mysterious central figure that is constantly reduced to a subsidiary position. Martín-Salván explains how the fact that she is barely acknowledged by critics is a reflection of her construction “as an ungrievable subject through structural and social mechanisms that bring about her exclusion”

(136). She discusses Celestial's role in the narrative and her prominent position as a ghost at the end of the book, after her and her lover's death, when she is allowed to sing and grieve, finally recognised and heard, even if it is after her passing.

The next section returns to one of the most recent mass traumatic epidemic that took place before the COVID crisis. It is titled "Contamination," and explores the outburst of AIDS that happened in the 1980s and how it was systematically represented, which individuals were de-humanized as a result of homophobic politics and how communities dealt with such deadly disease. José M. Yebra's complete analysis offers a multifaceted approach, as he considers two novels in the same chapter that show very contrasting approaches to homophobia in the 1980s (154). He references Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004) and Colm Tóibín's *The Blackwater Lightship* (1999). Yebra pays attention to the category of elegy and analyses the different approaches taken in these novels by and towards AIDS victims.

The second chapter is written by Giulio Milone and it centres on exploring how, during the peak of the AIDS epidemics, barely no deaths from AIDS could be publicly grieved (169). A highly discriminatory and stigmatising hierarchy condemned certain groups of people, especially those belonging to the gay community, to silence and ungrievability. Milone complements Rebecca Makkai's *The Great Believers* (2018) by providing a careful analysis of multigenerational trauma, the burden of traumatic memory and an eventual working through grief thanks to narrative and art.

Last but not least, the fifth part is called "After the Subject" and is composed by two more chapters that deal with two highly acclaimed contemporary novelists. Both works in this part offer an insightful exploration of (un-)grievability and Butler's hierarchy of grief. Despite our shared vulnerability and mutual dependency, not all lives are treated equal, some deaths are declared ungrievable while others are worth mourning and protection (Butler 2009, 20), and this precisely lies at the heart of these post-human novels. *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro (2005) is at the centre of Sylvie Maurel's consideration. It takes place in an alternative England where human clones are bred and killed for their organs to save the lives of ill humans. Maurel explores the mechanisms that are used to exploit and dehumanize these clones, which become an ungrievable underclass relegated to the shadows of society.

The final and closing chapter in this volume is written by Jean-Michel Ganteau on Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me. And People Like You* (2019). He argues that the novel seems to raise Butler's triple question: "Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, [What] *makes for a grievable life?*" (2004, 20; italics in the original) and decides to show how the novel addresses them concentrating first on ungrievability, then on the permanence and power of grievability, and finally on literature's capacity to shift the norms of grievability (Onega and Ganteau 2023, 205).

All in all, *The Poetics and Ethics of (Un-)Grievability in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction* offers a strong and complete study of different modalities of (un-)grievability in a variety of settings that stands as both relevant and thought-provoking. The authors fulfil the task of providing a nuanced study of Butler's critical concepts and the volume proves to be useful for anyone interested in trauma, vulnerability and grievability in a wide array of contexts based on timely issues. It succeeds in its epistemological task, and it constitutes a key contribution to the field.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# *Representing Vulnerabilities in Contemporary Literature*

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

New York: Routledge, 2022.

ISBN: 978-1-032-42405-7

The volume *Representing Vulnerabilities in Contemporary Literature* (2023) is an extraordinary finding within the field of vulnerability studies as it explores, as the editors prove with an extensive and incisive bibliographical revision of works in the same field, the inherent problematic nature of both the conceptualization of the term vulnerability, and its representation in contemporary literary depictions of it, particularly emphasizing how these depictions might complicate its portrayal from ethical and aesthetic perspectives.

“The literary representation of different vulnerabilities is a narrative, dramatic, and poetic resource as old as literature itself” claim Fernández-Santiago and Gámez-Fernández in the introduction to this exceptional collection (4), where they further draw attention to how definitions of the term have recently evolved to encompass various aspects of the concept, spanning a broad range of features that include opposing factors such as individual and social, ethics and politics, hazard and safety, agency and passivity or private and public, among others (2). But perhaps, and since the 9/11 attacks, the interconnected effects of globalization on economy, migration or ecology, the more recent effects on health of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing Fourth Industrial Revolution, are reconceptualizing vulnerability as a relational ontology with an emphasis on “porosity” and “liquidity” (echoing Zygmunt Bauman’s metaphors to describe how contemporary society has become more uncertain, unpredictable, fluid, and open to change) (5). As Janet M. Wilson indicates in the preface of the volume, the “paradigmatic shift in the cultural ethos associated with theorists like Butler and Fineman . . . underpins the rationale for this collection and the upsurge in studies of postcolonialism, posthumanism, and the environment to which it contributes” (viii-ix). But conversations on vulnerability must entail the ground-breaking notions of other relevant and crucial scholars on the field. Fernández-Santiago and Gámez-Fernández manage to deliver a perfectly cohesive introduction to the volume where not only do they provide the necessary background of the volume and a preamble introducing the collaborators, but also trace the most significant studies and works on the field, functioning as a theoretical presentation for the reader. Names such as the already mentioned Judith Butler and her excellent works *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (2004), *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2016) and *Frames of War. When in Life Grievable?* (2009) or Martha Alberston Fineman and her publications “Populations, Pandemics and Politics” (2021) or “Reasoning from the Body: Universal



Vulnerability and Social Justice” (2020) are joined by other great scholars like Benjamin Wisner and his “Vulnerability as Concept, Model, Metric, and Tool” (2016), Jean-Michel Ganteau and his works on vulnerability and fiction, especially his publication *The Ethics and Aesthetics of Vulnerability in Contemporary British Fiction* (2015), Byung-Chul Han and *The Transparency Society* (2015) or Alyson Cole, who in “All of Us Are Vulnerable, But Some Are More Vulnerable than Others: The Political Ambiguity of Vulnerability Studies, an Ambivalent Critique” (2016) warns that the “genealogy [of vulnerability] needs to be acknowledged and evaluated” (in Fernández-Santiago and Gámez-Fernández 1), a statement that functions as the trigger to the anxieties presented on the volume.

The volume’s critical engagement with vulnerability and the politics of its representation identifies the key questions that demand immediate scholarly attention while emphasizing the significance of asking, reevaluating and revisiting these questions in order to redefine (if necessary) previous concepts around the term. Our world is in constant change as we deepen in a post-postmodern society, and advancements in technology and science are emphasizing human (and non-human) vulnerability in different and multifaceted levels. New ontologies and realities are starting to be acknowledged when studying vulnerabilities. And so, this volume highlights ecological, technological, and disability as new areas of interest within the field, in addition to precarity (and precariousness), trauma, and gender. But as the volume poses new questions to take into consideration when analyzing vulnerable subjects and relations on vulnerability, it also encounters challenges. Giving due regard to how the concept of vulnerability is a two-sided coin as its portrayal often straddles a delicate balance between inclusion and stigma when merely responding to “human infinity” (7), it is not unexpected how acknowledging posthuman ontologies in the face of globalization can lead to the discovery of a multitude of new and diverse perspectives and realities as the recognition of the posthuman and non-human realities requires a reconsideration of conventional views on human nature and identity, which paves the way for new insights and understandings. In these circumstances, as Fernández-Santiago and Gámez-Fernández indicate, “the demand of an ethical response ranks on a hierarchy of visibilization directly correlating with strategies of representation” that go from defamiliarization and sensationalism to sentimentalism and performance (7). But the overlapping demands that different vulnerable groups may have, and the inherent intersectional nature that vulnerability is unveiled to have obliges scholars to reconsider vulnerability as something interconnected, very much inscribed in the very liminal act of determining ontologies, involving a level of ontological uncertainty that addresses the body politic as much as its material embodiment (10).

Thus, under the premise that the literary visualization of different vulnerabilities presented along the volume can, on the one hand, help raise social awareness to foster global solidarity grounded on affinity and affect, and, on the other hand, contribute to stigmatize and trivialize the spectacularization of vulnerability, this compilation brings together some of the most important names in the field of vulnerability studies and other disciplines such as trauma, critical posthumanism, narrative theory, gender or ethics. The result is the creation of a self-reflective and perfectly structured volume that follows a meticulous order and reveals “insight into the aesthetic and ethical concerns of current representations of vulnerabilities that necessarily involve a specific definition of vulnerability itself [while] also raising the question about the increasing interest it generates in literary discourse at this specific historical time” (5). David T. Michell and Sharon L. Snyder discuss how the scarred figures depicted in *Ceremony* (2006), *The Return of Lono* (1971) and *Fathers and Crowns* (1992) highlight the racial interdependency of embodied lives while functioning as “vehicles of potential transformation for the insights that attention to vulnerable embodiments entail” (31). Esther Sánchez-Pardo revisits the traumatic past in relation to the human and cultural loss in the Middle Passage as seen in *Dub* (2020). Jean-Michel Ganteau, on his part, establishes relations and interdependences between human and ecological vulnerability in *The Long Dry* (2006) highlighting the power of literature as ecological force capable of presenting and representing vulnerability as a complex interconnected concept. Miriam Fernández-Santiago explores the literary representation and over-sentimentalizing nature of vulnerability in *Manhattan Beach* (2017). Peter Arnds goes on to explore survival narratives in relation with non-human vulnerabilities in works from different cultural contexts, finding a common ground in how these narratives hold the potential for resistance and resilience. Carolina Sánchez-Palencia analyses the non-violent force represented in *Home Fire* (2017) as an important force to challenge the prevailing hierarchies that determine the value of different bodies. Susana Onega presents an evaluation on *Even the Dogs* (2010) that links the state of vulnerability to social invisibility and collective grieving among a group of adject individuals, concluding on the essentiality of acknowledging human vulnerability. Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández argues that fostering reading as a radical means of comprehending the Other brings to light the precarious situations that the female characters depicted in *Just Another Jihadi Jane* (2016) experience. Sonia Baelo-Allué proposes in her analysis of *The Silence* (2020) that the exposure of human beings to artificial ontologies impairs the autonomy of transhuman realities. Francisco Collado-Rodríguez’s chapter on *Neuromancer* (1984) delves into the concept of immortality within the material constraints of technological advancements and artificial intelligence, advancing that technological immortality eventually becomes an exceedingly precarious form of existence. Mónica Calvo-Pascual provides a magnificent finale to the volume with the exploration of vulnerability in Larissa Lai’s *Salt Fish Girl* (2002) and *The Tiger Flu* (2018), arguing that, through novels, the reader is exposed to the interdependence and vulnerability of both the face of the Other and the othered environment, urging the reader towards action and response-ability. Ultimately, both experimented scholars on vulnerability studies and young researchers will find the introduction and the whole collection of chapters incredibly helpful as the volume discerns and exemplifies new attitudes towards the representation of vulnerability and the problematization of precisely these exact representations in very interesting and varied attitudes and fields within literary studies.



## BOOK REVIEWS

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# *The Cultural Politics of In/Difference: Irish Texts and Contexts*

Aida Rosende-Pérez and Rubén Jarazo-Álvarez (eds.)

Oxford: Peter Lang, 2022. 266 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-80079-727-7

**T**he *Cultural Politics of In/Difference: Irish Texts and Contexts*, part of Peter Lang's series "Reimagining Ireland" and edited by Aida Rosende-Pérez and Rubén Jarazo-Álvarez, looks at Ireland's past, present and future developments in its interrogation of the concepts of "difference" and "indifference" and how these have been represented and have operated within Irish social, political and particularly cultural and literary contexts. Rosende-Pérez and Jarazo-Álvarez successfully bring together a number of contributions in order to question both constructed difference and articulations of indifference in Ireland. The chapters thoroughly examine how these are manifested in cultural and literary productions as well as the different strategies of resistance and dissent that are found in these narratives.

The first introductory chapter, written by the editors of the volume, set outs the aims of the collection. Through an approach of in/difference as a cultural politics, following Sarah Ahmed's reading of this term in her *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), the volume "seeks to explore the discourses and processes that produce and reproduce what we [the editors] have dubbed as Ireland's 'cultural politics of in/difference', and its effects both in terms of the material experience of Othered subjects and in their representation in cultural and literary forms" (2). The chapters brought together here provide a discussion across a variety of disciplines, addressing how categories of difference—such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, disability, class and age—function within Irish society and culture and how these are depicted in literary and cultural spaces.

Chapter two focuses on two novels from the Quirke series by author John Banville, published under the penname Benjamin Black: *Christine Falls* (2006) and *Even the Dead* (2015). Auxiliadora Pérez-Vides' analysis of the texts is informed by Slavoj Žižek's *Violence* (2008) and Sarah Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) in order to illustrate how Black's fiction points to the presence of structural crime in Ireland. Pérez-Vides argues that both texts bring readers into contact with Ireland's hidden past as well as display the author's "critique of the transhistorical indifference to victimization that have dominated much of the Irish socio-cultural order" from the mid-twentieth century (13). As she examines both novels, Pérez-Vides effectively shows how these reveal that the web conformed by Ireland's infrastructures of power has been difficult to unravel.

In chapter three, Loic Wright provides an analysis of the representation of masculinity in Patrick Kavanagh's *Tarry Flynn* (1948), set in the rural Ireland of the 1930s. He argues that the novel portrays those biopolitical technologies of governance that were deployed by the Irish Free State in order to construe Irish rural masculinity. Moreover, he contends that it reflects "the language-as-containment" found in political and cultural discourses at State and domestic levels, discourses which "resulted in a sense of stagnant masculinity manifested in increasing outbursts of both gender-based

and homosocial violence in rural Ireland” (31). Through his analysis, Wright demonstrates how Kavanagh’s text offers a critique of the gender politics of the time as well as it shows the different lived experiences of Irish men and women during the early years of the Irish Free State.

The fourth chapter centres on Anne Griffin’s novel *When All Is Said* (2019), as Asier Altuna-García de Salazar aims to show how the protagonist, 84-year-old Maurice, is concerned with a construction of masculinity that is informed not only by age but also by a haunting melancholia and mourning. Drawing on studies of masculinity and ageing in Irish literary fiction and on Jacques Derrida’s view on hauntology via Colin Davis’ *Haunted Subjects* (2007), Altuna-García de Salazar offers an insight into how this novel depicts the figure of the ageing Irish male and how Maurice’s internal monologues are used to establish a dialogue with his ghosts. The tragic outcome of the text, Altuna-García de Salazar concludes, follows this Irish man’s different reality and consequent failure to deal with the combination of ageing, masculinity and haunting, as he is haunted by his memories and his masculinity staggers to the point that he cannot go on with his life.

Through chapter five, Aida Diaz Bild focuses on Roddy Doyle’s use of comedy and humour, particularly on his 2013 novel *The Guts*. She points to the recent darkening of the author’s novels as these have approached more serious issues in recent years, yet emphasises that the element of humour is present in most of them. Díaz-Bild neatly explores how “despite the serious and grave problems that the characters confront, the novel [*The Guts*] is filled with humour and joyful hope” (88), and therefore the text demonstrates that solidarity can be provided through laughter.

Aida Rosende-Pérez and Rubén Jarazo-Álvarez deal with Eilís Ní Dhuibhne’s novel *The Dancers Dancing* (1999) and Lisa McGee’s TV series *Derry Girls* (2018-) in chapter six. They follow Susan Cahill’s (2017) and Caroline Magennis’ (2021) work on (Northern) Irish girlhood and Libe García Zarranz’s idea of “joyful insurrection as feminist methodology” (2016) in order to analyse how the two narratives go against and beyond the prevalent invisibilisation of adolescent girls in Irish literature and culture and their constant connection with trauma, thus claiming that both depict joyful insurrections as forms of feminist disobedience. Through the chapter, Rosende-Pérez and Jarazo-Álvarez skilfully illustrate that both narratives offer spaces for alternative representations of Irish female adolescence, allowing these teenage girls to transgress fixed constructions of girlhood that generally burden them with shame, guilt and trauma.

In chapter seven, Ekaterina Mavlikaeva examines the representations of women and girls and how the intersecting categories of disability, Traveller ethnicity and gender are negotiated at both structural and individual level in Rosaleen McDonagh’s play *Mainstream* (2016). In this text, Mavlikaeva posits, McDonagh manifests “the importance of respecting and accounting for intersecting oppressions” (117). As she looks thoroughly at the depictions of the female characters in *Mainstream*, Mavlikaeva efficiently reveals how the play defies hegemonic constructions of disabled, racialized and gendered bodies, as well as it challenges the marginalisation, oppression and negative representations of Traveller women and girls through the celebration of their differences.

The eighth chapter reviews a number of strategies that Irish authors have used in their adaptations of Greek tragedies, particularly regarding the characteristic element of the chorus. Marit Meinhold considers Brendan Kennelly’s *Medea* (1988), Marina Carr’s *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998) and Simon Doyle and Gavin Quinn’s *Oedipus Loves You* (2006). In analysing how these works engage with the chorus following three different strategies, Meinhold exemplifies the varied forms in which Irish writers attempt to adapt the source texts for a contemporary audience.

Belén Martín-Lucas focuses on Emma Donoghue’s short story “Counting the Days,” from her collection *Astray* (2012), in chapter nine. Martín-Lucas looks at “the material and symbolic processes of abjection of ‘undesirable’ Irish bodies [...] and [...] the mechanisms of colonial necropolitics (both in Northern Ireland and in Canada) that regulate their expulsion” (148) through an exploration of “the continuum of necropolitics operating on each of those three spaces depicted in the story—Ireland, the boat and Canada—as ‘death worlds’” (149). Thus, she effectually asserts how this story foregrounds necropolitics not only in old but also current biocapitalism, as well as it provides an insight into how anger can be produced by abjection and materialised in cholera and eventually death.

Through chapter ten, Sara Martín-Ruiz approaches citizenship and reproduction rights in her analysis of Marsha Mehran’s *Rosewater and Soda Bread* (2008) and Melatu Okorie’s ‘Shackles’ (2010). Mehran’s novel questions how the Irish State has played a role in the subjugation of women through its intervention in reproductive rights, and Okorie’s short story questions the impact of the 2004 Citizenship Referendum and how the Direct Provision system renders asylum seekers as threats to the State. Therefore, Martín-Ruiz provides a powerful examination of these two narratives that denounces how Ireland, until recent years, prohibited abortion to protect the rights of the unborn yet has created the category of “aborted citizens,” this is, particularly asylum seekers contained in Direct Provision Centres.

In chapter eleven, Pilar Villar-Argáiz succeeds at her attempt to “explore how writers envision new beginnings and cosmopolitan identities through visualizing new forms of community which offer alternative ways to the ‘contaminated’ notion of democracy” (184). On the one hand, she considers the work of Theo Dorgan, while on the other—building

on what poet Eavan Boland refers to as “[t]he democratic sparkle of spoken word platforms” (2018, 6)—she focuses on the poetry of Stephen James Smith. Through her analysis of these artists’ poems, Villar-Argáiz effectively illustrates the strong role that the arts can have as vehicles of social transformation.

Manuela Palacios-González and María Xesús Nogueira-Pereira examine two poetry collections in chapter twelve: Irish writer Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill’s *The Fifty Minute Mermaid* (2007) and Galician writer Luz Pichel’s *Casa Pechada* [Locked House] (2006). Drawing on animal studies, ecocriticism and ecofeminist work, they particularly explore how these contemporary poets are contesting modes of oppression against animals and against women through their writing. Both writers, Palacios-González and Nogueira-Pereira conclude, depict “the violent othering experienced by the subaltern [...] through animal tropes and motifs that expose the anthropocentric and patriarchal subjugation of both women and animals” (230).

The volume comes to a close with an interview of author Lisa McNerney that centres particularly on her renowned “Cork trilogy”: *The Glorious Heresies* (2015), *The Blood Miracles* (2017) and *The Rules of Revelation* (2021). In an engaging conversation, Hedwig Schwall and McNerney discuss a variety of issues regarding her writing, some which have been addressed throughout the works in this collection, such as individualism and nationalism, the influence of religion and markedly Catholic restraint in Ireland, and the intersection of gender, social class and ethnicity, to mention a few.

To conclude, *The Cultural Politics of In/Difference: Irish Texts and Contexts* constitutes a thoroughly comprehensive volume that addresses a variety of themes relevant within Irish literature, culture and politics. The authors that have participated in the volume offer an invaluable approach to a broad range of narratives which look into Ireland’s past, present and future and contribute to a construction of community built on equity and social justice. Their works, that Rosende-Pérez and Jarazo-Álvarez have carefully weaved together, focus on current affairs in contemporary Ireland as well as on topics of interest within the field of Irish studies, such as: the prevailing consequences of the violence perpetrated by the State; the construction of Irish masculinities in the past and present; the visibilisation of adolescent girls and their alternative representations; the intersectionality of gender, disability and ethnicity within the Traveller community; the adaptation of Greek tragedies to the Irish stage; the discrimination inflicted upon asylum seekers through the establishment of Direct Provision; and the use of poetry as an agent of social transformation; to mention a few. In their examination of Ireland’s cultural politics of in/difference within the narratives that they explore, the chapters effectively attain the editors’ aim to analyse how this impacts the experiences of Othered subjects and their representation in literary and cultural productions. In sum, *The Cultural Politics of In/Difference: Irish Texts and Contexts* is an excellent and essential reading for any researchers or readers who are interested in Irish literature and culture and how these engage with those subjects marked as Other and their articulations of resistance and dissent.

## Acknowledgements

This publication has been co-funded by the “Programa de axudas á etapa predoutoral da Consellería de Cultura, Educación e Universidades da Xunta de Galicia.”



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BOOK REVIEWS

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**LETICIA DEL TORO GARCÍA**

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# ***El placer estético del terror: tres cuentos de Edgar Allan Poe***

**Eusebio V. Llácer Llorca**

Valencia: Biblioteca Javier Coy D'Estudis Nord-Americans, 2022. 180 pp.

ISBN: 978-84-9134-989-1

Eusebio V. Llácer Llorca es profesor de literatura en la Universidad de Valencia. Sus intereses académicos han girado en torno al mundo de la traducción y la investigación literaria, con un interés particular en el autor norteamericano Edgar Allan Poe, al que ha dedicado diversos estudios críticos. El libro que nos proponemos comentar a continuación es el último de los que ha realizado Llácer y se sitúa como una aportación novedosa dentro de los estudios realizados hasta el momento sobre la obra del conocido autor norteamericano. Llácer, empleando un lenguaje claro, asequible por igual para el lector experto como para aquel mero aficionado al mundo literario, acerca a sus lectores a tres de las historias más conocidas de Poe: “La Máscara de la Muerte Roja,” “El Pozo y el Péndulo” y “El Tonel de Amontillado.” Pero lo hace desde una perspectiva completamente diferente a la que estamos habituados. No centra su atención en un análisis del contenido de las obras, sino que su enfoque va dirigido a presentar las estrategias empleados por Poe para lograr esa atmósfera de terror que ha atrapado a tantos lectores entre sus páginas. Es por esta razón que la obra resulta igualmente atractiva tanto para aquellos expertos en la obra del norteamericano como para aquellos lectores que se inicien por vez primera en el conocimiento de dichos textos. Particularmente es de destacar dentro del análisis realizado por Llácer su manera de exponer y desarrollar los contenidos dado que resulta muy didáctica y proporciona al lector herramientas útiles que éste podrá aplicar en futuras lecturas. Es por ello que considero que la lectura de este libro resulta amena a la par que muy interesante.

Estructuralmente, el libro se compone un prólogo, siete capítulos, una sección de bibliografía y un glosario. La obra se inicia con un Prólogo realizado por el Dr. Christopher Rollason donde obtenemos un resumen acerca de los diversos contenidos que van a ser abordados a lo largo del libro. A ésta le sigue el capítulo titulado «¿Qué fue de Edgar Allan Poe?,» que se constituye como un elemento imprescindible dentro de este libro dado que Llácer realiza un esbozo muy completo de Poe. Se nos informa aquí que, pese a la notoriedad alcanzada por Poe en la actualidad, en su época fue considerado un autor mediocre que vivió malamente y que murió casi en la indigencia. Son de destacar también aspectos de su biografía que marcarían particularmente su obra como el hecho de que quedó huérfano con apenas cinco años, siendo adoptado por una familia que no siempre se mostró cercana.

su niñez en Inglaterra, que dejaría unos recuerdos indelebles en la mente de Edgar: su residencia, una casona decadente situada en una neblinosa villa y rodeada de árboles gigantescos, los castillos, las antiguas construcciones, su colegio... [...] ya de vuelta en los Estados Unidos de América comenzaría un periplo de amores frustrados, abandonos y desencuentros que marcarían para siempre su forma de ver la sociedad, las mujeres y la vida. (23)

A esto se unirían una larga lista de desamores y pérdida de la que sería su esposa a una edad temprana, hechos que marcarían de manera notable el carácter introvertido y oscuro del escritor, y que le llevarían a morir a la temprana edad de cuarenta años, víctima de una posible intoxicación etílica. De esta manera Llácer lleva al lector a darse cuenta de que la cruda realidad en la que Poe vivió inspiraría en dicho autor el empleo de una atmósfera lúgubre y extraña que caracteriza algunas de sus historias más importantes, donde la muerte se convertirá en un tema recurrente.

El deseo de autodestrucción, presente en muchos de los relatos, y que lo conecta directamente con nuestro siglo XXI, está íntimamente relacionado con el anhelo de la muerte como único medio de reencuentro con sus seres queridos; el tema encuentra apoyo incondicional en el del culto a la memoria de los muertos, socialmente reforzado en tiempos de Poe. (31)

Posteriormente, y siguiendo esa línea didáctica que va a caracterizar este libro, encontramos el capítulo titulado «Fantástico, gótico, tradición alemana y terror.» Antes de entrar en materia y acercarnos a Poe, Llácer hace una introducción de cómo el elemento fantástico va tomando forma en la literatura y va evolucionando como género literario. Una de las características a destacar en esta y en posteriores capítulos es el hecho de que Llácer no se limita a exponer opiniones, sino que siempre ofrece al lector una visión general de las teorías críticas más importantes del momento, referidas a cada uno de los elementos que describe. De este modo, no solo permite al lector adquirir unos conocimientos generales sobre el tema que se discute, sino que, además, abre la posibilidad a éste para ampliar información a partir de los autores citados.

Dentro de este capítulo sería destacable su presentación del concepto de género literario, partiendo para ello de autores clásicos como Aristóteles y Platón, y pasando por otros más actuales como Goethe, Todorov o Frye. El lector obtiene así una visión general de cómo este concepto tan complejo ha evolucionado a lo largo de la historia, y cómo la construcción de cada nuevo género literario es fruto de un largo proceso. Posteriormente Llácer pasará a describir el origen de la literatura fantástica como tal, y más concretamente, el de la novela gótica, que servirá de base e inspiración a Poe, puesto que en ella se vislumbran elementos que éste empleará en sus historias. Suele ser el caso del protagonista, que habitualmente será una víctima que siente devoción y fascinación por su propio torturador. O la propia acción, que habitualmente tiene lugar en un lugar cerrado, opresivo, como una cripta o un castillo, elementos que van a contribuir a crear una atmósfera claustrofóbica y oscura propia de este tipo de historias y que indudablemente fascinará a Poe. No obstante, si bien el norteamericano toma estos elementos como punto de partida, los adaptará a un estilo propio en el que tendrán cabida igualmente el misterio, el horror o los fenómenos extraños. De hecho, como bien apunta Llácer, el concepto de terror en Poe lleva aparejado un componente psicológico muy acusado que estaría marcado por su propia historia personal.

Otro aspecto clave en este capítulo será la diferencia entre lo fantástico y lo sobrenatural, dos términos que hasta casi entrado el siglo XX se solapan en la historia de la literatura, y que también adquieren su relevancia en la obra de Poe. Como bien expone Llácer, el impulso del racionalismo será el que acabe con los mitos y de paso a lo fantástico, especialmente con los estudios de autores como Freud y sus estudios del subconsciente. Se pasa así de explicar el mundo a partir de elementos externos al hombre a percibirlo a partir del propio ser humano y su realidad interior, jugando así con los propios temores y empleando juegos psicológicos para ambientar esa atmósfera de terror a la que Poe nos tiene tan habituados.

Posteriormente viene el capítulo denominado «El cuento de Poe: diseño y composición,» donde, como bien indica su encabezamiento, vamos a conocer algunas de las características principales que constituyen los relatos breves de Poe. Indudablemente, la obra de este autor pasaría desapercibida en su tiempo porque se consideraba un tipo de escritura eminentemente práctica, dedicada exclusivamente a entretener a un público de clase media que no tenía excesivo interés por la literatura. No obstante, es en la brevedad de esas obras donde radica su originalidad dado que su limitado espacio hizo que Poe creara un estilo muy personal que pocos autores han llegado a igualar hasta el momento. Llácer considera que Poe emplea una fórmula similar a las pesadillas donde siempre tienen cabida varios elementos imprescindibles: una atmósfera opresiva, que va en aumento según va transcurriendo la historia, y con la que el autor va creando un halo de misterio e incertidumbre; unos personajes poco definidos, desdibujados, que contribuyen a esa atmósfera de pesadilla; y la presencia de un narrador con el que el lector acaba identificándose. El objetivo es conseguir que el lector llegue a imbuirse tanto dentro de la propia historia que se sienta protagonista de ésta y, por tanto, sufra los mismos miedos y el terror que sus protagonistas.

Los siguientes tres capítulos, que llevan por título «La tragedia del Tiempo: “La Máscara de la Muerte Roja”,» «El círculo de la supervivencia: “El Pozo y el péndulo”» y «El ansia del ‘otro’ y la miseria moral: “El tonel de amontillado”» constituyen

una verdadera lección práctica para el lector respecto a cómo aproximarse a la obra de Poe, por lo que los recomendaría particularmente. Considero que el lector poco acostumbrado al análisis literario va a encontrar aquí herramientas muy útiles sobre cómo proceder ante un texto y ver qué aspectos habría que tratar en cada momento.

Cada uno de estos capítulos se inicia con una introducción del relato que va a ser analizado donde se ofrece información relativa a su fecha de creación, el lugar donde fue publicado (no debemos olvidar que todos los relatos de Poe aparecieron inicialmente en revistas y periódicos), y su contenido, con una breve presentación de los personajes principales.

Los tres relatos se caracterizan por tener lugar en espacios cerrados, claustrofóbicos, donde la acción se vuelve cada vez más acuciante, y en momentos temporales indeterminados que van desde la Edad Media hasta la época de la Inquisición. A Poe realmente no le interesa fijar un tiempo concreto ni un espacio identificable para sus relatos porque cuanto más misterioso, más intrigante y más oscura se vuelva la descripción, mucho más se sentirá el lector atrapado por sus narraciones. Así, el primer relato transcurre en un oscuro castillo del que solo llegamos a saber que está constituido por siete cámaras a través de las cuales sus personajes se mueven mientras permanecen reclusos, aislados del mundo exterior. En su segundo relato nuevamente encontramos esta situación claustrofóbica donde el protagonista, atado y en la más completa soledad, se encuentra en una oscura prisión mientras ve como un péndulo se aproxima lentamente hacia él con el propósito de asesinarlo. El tercero, que los críticos han supuesto que podría localizarse en tierras de Francia, tiene lugar en una cripta húmeda y sombría en la que uno de los dos personajes encuentra la muerte tapiado tras una pared.

El elemento determinante de estas historias será su brevedad. Eso implica la escasez de descripciones. Por lo general Poe utiliza personajes planos, de los que vamos a saber muy pocos detalles, y que van a definirse por sus propias acciones. Es por esa razón que el lenguaje cobra gran importancia, sobre todo el uso de los adjetivos o de ciertos elementos tipográficos que le sirven a Poe para transmitir esa sensación de urgencia, de rapidez, que contienen sus historias, tal y como Llácer nos explica a lo largo de su estudio.

Tras estos análisis vendrá el capítulo final, «Conclusión» donde el autor hace una recopilación de las ideas principales, al que le siguen dos secciones propias de un estudio de esta categoría como son la «Bibliografía» y un «Glosario.»

Considero que esta obra se constituye como un estudio muy exhaustivo de la manifestación del terror en la obra de Poe que resulta altamente recomendable para aquellos que desconozcan al autor norteamericano y deseen tener unas ideas previas antes de iniciarse en su lectura. Igualmente es un material adecuado para aquellos que busquen un ejemplo de cómo abordar el análisis de una obra literaria dado que Llácer proporciona unas herramientas muy útiles sobre cómo realizar dicha tarea.



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BOOK REVIEWS

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# ***The Memory Marketplace: Witnessing Pain in Contemporary Irish and International Theatre***

**Emilie Pine**

Indiana University Press, 2020. 247 pp.

ISBN: 978-0-253-04952-0.

Everybody knows Emilie Pine as one of the most popular contemporary Irish authors at the moment, especially since she became a best seller writer with the publication of her collection of personal essays entitled *Notes to Self* (2018), where she describes in detail important episodes of her life with no deceit helping, in numerous ways, many women who have suffered sexual violence or even dealing with infertility problems. Pine is also a modern drama professor at the University College Dublin and she has published extensively about Irish theatre and film, regularly writing some reviews for Irish Theatre Magazine. This author has contributed to some collections including *Ireland in Focus: Film, Photography and Popular Culture* (2009). Emilie Pine has also edited *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture* (2011) and *The Memory Marketplace: Witnessing Pain in Contemporary Irish and International Theatre* (2020).

In this last publication, her volume of essays under the title of *The Memory Marketplace: Witnessing Pain in Contemporary Irish and International Theatre*, Emily Pine offers an overview of how she observes what she personally calls the memory marketplace making reference to public performances of painful stories which are “not simply formed, and told, and watched, and listened to, but are imagined, produced, and consumed in a cultural, social, and economic sphere” (1). Pine states that we must consider the market dynamics of trade in order to understand when and why tell stories about the past and how we perform as witnesses to painful pasts in general, taking into consideration that they are not just told but sold and bought. Moreover, the author claims to be really interested in the different ways in which some reading performances of painful events can help the audience to interpret them as transactions. Moreover, she points out that

ignoring the marketplace for memory is not paying the necessary attention to what the witnesses of painful pasts are telling us and they need to be heard.

This book, divided in five main sections that will be described next, takes its starting point from theatrical moments when the literal and symbolic memory marketplace becomes visible and when the commodity trading of the performance becomes undeniable. According to Emilie Pine, and understanding this idea as her general view about this concern through the whole book, “the memory marketplace is particularly visible in testimonial ‘witness theatre’, in which an onstage witness [...] performs painful memories for an audience” (3). It could be said that she conceives that these memories are valued by the audience who, in terms of Paul Celan, “bear witness for the witness.” *The Memory MarketPlace: Witnessing Pain in Contemporary Irish and International Theatre*, edited by Emilie Pine, focuses on the consumption and production of painful memory in contemporary Irish and international theatre and all the chapters found here will be so helpful for scholars in order to understand how memories of pain are staged by theatre companies and playwrights and how these memories are offered to the public who consumes and witnesses. Each chapter of this book considers the message being sold to the audience, the possibilities for reception and remediation, the effects of different levels of social and cultural capital on the status of the witness, and how theatrical strategies can “highlight competition, or create solidarity, through recognizing different forms of capital, and involving the audience in mnemonic labor” (33).

This book is structured into a very detailed and self-explanatory introduction followed by five main chapters which are then organised into several sections and in each one a play is discussed focusing on testimonial and memory plays (or “witness plays” as Pine calls them), which stage the personal experiences of subjects who traditionally do not enjoy social and economic capital, as a way of understanding if theatre can work as an intervention in the marketplace. Something quite relevant to highlight here is that the author takes her cue from a long history of feminist performance, not only in theatre but also in performance art, which has used the autobiographical as a mode to “reveal otherwise invisible lives, to resist marginalisation and objectification and to become, instead, speaking subjects with self-agency,” in Heddon’s terms.

In the first chapter called “Tell them that you saw us: Witnessing Docu-verbatim Memory,” Pine defines docu-verbatim as “a ‘new form of...ritual’ that responds to the consumer demand for art to react to crisis and to make the intricacies of those crises available, via a combined presentation of the relevant facts and an agreed message” (44), and she states that this blended term is designed to encompass documentary and verbatim theatre styles which have experienced a recent market resurgence and popularity. The author also points out that docu-verbatim theatre is a different experience from consuming fiction theatre because the performers of fiction theatre relate their narratives to an implied audience while docu-verbatim generally is characterized by a direct address style creating an uninterrupted relationship. In addition, according to Emilie Pine, this genre of performance “projects itself differently [and] it makes sense to consider how the audience may react differently [...] and may create the potential for both collective and individual ethical witnessing, but it does not automatically lead to ethical action outside the theatre” (46).

In the fourth of the ten sections included in this chapter, entitled *Witnesses to Painful Experience*, Pine claims that the docu-verbatim play offers its consumer the access to the voice of victimized, disenfranchised and traumatized individual. She adds that these plays are not easy to witness due to most of the memories and histories of vulnerability discussed are uncomfortable for watching and listening because the experiences described are directly related to rape, child abuse and murder which are “still taboo social facts that are hard to hear and, as a result, are all too often underlistened to” (49). Pine, for getting her purpose, considers three productions focusing on the Irish play *No Escape* (2010) by Mary Raftery and two plays by New York-based Tectonic Theater Company: *The Laramie Project* (2000) and *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later* (2010), dealing with very hard memories such as the story of institutional child abuse in Ireland including thirteen witness statements (being this the case of the first play) and the homophobic hate-crime murder of Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, in 1998, narrated in the other two mentioned plays.

The second chapter entitled “The Witness as Commodity: Autoperforming Memory” deals with the autoperformance theatre designed, in Pine’s terms, “to capture consumer attention with its combination of high emotion, novelty, and accessibility [and attractive] for a particular market segment keen to buy into bottom-up stories by previously ‘unheard’ witnesses” (94). The author states that this kind of performance carries the risk of alienating the audience due to it always present very difficult stories and witnesses though this risk is lessened thanks to the production strategies encouraging empathy and identification. Furthermore, Emilie Pine claims that sometimes she feels disempowered as a spectator of autoperformance testimony because, for her, the tension between witnessing and consuming such performances is immobilizing and she does not know what to do after the show because of “the enormity of the feelings projected by the show, and felt by the audience [...] prevents the translation of consumption into action” (96). The author’s discussion here focuses on two testimonial works featuring the stories of victims of transnational violence against women being the first production *I Once Knew a Girl*, by Sepinuck, and *Nirbhaya*, Yael Farber’s one. In the second and seventh section within this chapter these two plays are analysed in detail and presented as women’s memories of violence through their monologues which are directly addressed to the audience’s empathetic sensibilities. Pine states that “audiences who go to

these shows and find them powerful, have an equal opportunity to respond with action as well as empathy [...] because while audiences are encouraged to feel, that emphasis on feeling may prevent change" (116).

In "The Commissioned Witness, Theatre, and Truth," the author deals with the public truth commissions (TRC) given some victims the opportunity to restore their civil and human dignity by relating their accounts of violations of which they are the victim. According to Pine, "public truth commissions literally give witnesses a stage or platform and an audience" (123). She also expresses how theatre can mediate not only the experience but also the expectations of TRC and the processes of witnessing and she argues that theatre "can acknowledge the risks of witnessing to a truth commission—false confessions, temporary catharsis, and commodification—while also using creative strategies to limit or foreclose those risks" (124). Emilie Pine analyses here three key plays: *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997) by Jane Taylor and the Handspring Puppet Company, *Death and the Maiden* (1990) by Ariel Dorfman and *Claudia* (2016) by La Conquesta del Sud and Claudia Poblete Hlazick.

"The Immaterial Labor of Listening: Presence, Absence, Failure, and the Commodification of the Witness" is the title of the fourth chapter of this volume and here the author focuses onto the labor of listening, a labor which is usually performed by the audience. Once more two plays are analysed, they are *Twilight Los Angeles* (1994) by Anna Deavere Smith, and *Come Out Eli* (2003). As Pine indicates, in this kind of theatre, actors "do not have a script and they do not learn the lines, the novelty of this production is the premise of a spontaneous and instinctive performance [...] based on sound rather than written text, and on listening rather than learning by heart" (166).

In the last chapter of this volume, "Consumers or Witnesses: Site-Specific Performance," six plays are considered: *Worlds End Lane* (2010), *Laundry* (2011), *Boys of Foley Street* (2012), *Vardo* (2014), *Thirteen* (2013) and *Sunder* (2016). All of them share the feature of being represented in the so-called "alien places" that create "shell shock" in the viewer, as Miriam Haughton defines them. These places offer "not easy scenes to consume, not just because they require you to think about another's pain, but also because they require you to act" (194). This chapter focuses on Pine's personal experience and it considers site-specific theatre of "two varieties: interactive and guided performance, and audio-guided performance" (191).

*The Memory MarketPlace: Witnessing Pain in Contemporary Irish and International Theatre* (2020) is an ambitious volume with a long shelf life ahead of it. The five chapters redacted by the author and editor, Emilie Pine, are a very useful testament for readers and scholars interested in contemporary Irish and international Theatre. With no doubt at all, this book deserves and should find an appreciative, engaged, and one hopes wide readership.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# *Invention. The Language of English Renaissance Poetics*

Rocío G. Sumillera

Cambridge: Legenda, Modern Humanities Research Association, 2019. 159 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-78188-320-4

*Invention. The Language of English Renaissance Poetics* written by Rocío G. Sumillera (Universidad de Granada) and published by the Legenda imprint of the Modern Humanities Research Association in 2019 is a useful and enjoyable work on early modern literary studies and cultural history. This book is the refined crystallization of Sumillera's doctoral dissertation on poetic invention in sixteenth-century England. Its main purpose is to trace the evolution of the concept of invention, from its classical tradition of logic, grammar and rhetoric, to its late modern understanding as imaginative mental capacity for creation. Sumillera's achievement consists in showing, through five chapters, how Renaissance poetics of invention "constitutes a key moment of conceptual transition between the omnipresent notion of imitation in Antiquity and the overwhelming significance assigned to the imagination by Romantics" as the source of novelty and genius (2). The focus is put on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and how English authors engaged with Continental discussions on poetry. This is why the book also covers French, Italian and Spanish sources brilliantly explained and accompanied with learned and exhaustive notes. The result is a convincing, full of examples history of the early modern cultural origins of artistic values of originality and innovation for the literary practice.

By revisiting the ancient and medieval understanding and university teachings of invention in logic, grammar, and rhetoric, Chapter 1 uncovers the gradual assimilation into early modern poetic discourse of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian and Boethius understanding of invention as the finding of arguments and proofs for persuasive compositions. Since before sixteenth-century "poetry was not an independent art" (17), it was mainly considered as a rhetorical practice of ornamentation, informed by grammar and rhetoric languages. In that sense, for fifteenth-century English writers, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* (1200-15) appeared to be an influential work in which invention was seen as an application of reason to the process of poetic writing, alien to the forces of inspiration. Chapter 2 engages in how from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century invention was, from the fields of rhetoric and dialectic, progressively related to imagination. The chapter shows how English authors assimilated humanistic Continental currents of thought proposed by Lorenzo Valla, Rudolph Agricola, Juan Luis Vives, and Petrus Ramus, in which they described poetics in rhetorical terms, and conceived of inventio as being a part of dialectic. However, more than "a process of discovering already existing ideas," authors such as William Caxton and Leonard Cox suggested that invention was equivalent to an "active construction" of the poet's wit (25 and 33). The rhetorical readings of Horace's *Ars poetica* and the history of the recovery of the Aristotelian Greek text of *Poetics* during the sixteenth century is nicely employed by Sumillera to determine the productive relation between rhetoric and poetry in that period. While from the Neoplatonic understanding of poetic

*furor* poetry relied on the natural abilities of the poet, the rhetoric practice was thought as the result of training and mimetic reproduction of models. Chapter 3 follows the pedagogical practice of rhetorical imitation and its relation to invention, by exposing how Humanists such as Petrarch and Erasmus exhorted to transcend the rigid practice of imitating models like Cicero, and to prefer, instead, emulation in order to gain in poetic freedom an avoid plagiarism and slavish imitation. In that regard, Philip Sidney, George Puttenham, Spenser and William Webbe, were key authors who praised transformative imitation, a “liberating form of mimesis that favours the discovery of one’s own personal style” (52). In that sense, for Sidney, poetry could be presented as the art of imitating nature’s creative powers within the poet’s own imagination.

Chapter 4 demonstrates the apogee of invention as poetic innovation, and as the main value in England to judge and assess poetry, since it added quality and taste to compositions. For late sixteenth- and seventeenth century English authors like George Gascoigne, invention was far more than a part of logic and rhetoric, and it was envisioned as the living power of the novelty and grace of poetry. By examining the relation between poets and translators, Sumillera shows that translation was seen by inventive author as an imitation exercise reproducing traditional models. Nevertheless, poetic invention was also suspicious by English Puritan intelligentsia, since the same capacity “could potentially be turned to a variety of purposes, including lying, feigning, and deceiving” (96). Such tendency toward false inventions, immoral passions and idolatry were criticized by English Protestant authors such as John Northbrooke, Stephen Gosson, and Hugh Latimer. Chapter 5 approaches the emergence of imagination as the mental process from where invention emanates. Rhetoric and poetry paid attention to imagination in order to recognize the different ways emotions could arise from a given speech. Medieval and early modern theologians and natural philosophers understood imagination and phantasy as the faculty of the soul responsible of linking senses experience and thought. This pivotal position gave rise to an ambiguous assessment of imagination. On the one hand, the general conception of imagination in Medieval times had it as a source of deceit and mere imitation of what already exists. Its connection to the senses related imagination to irrationality and error. English Puritans, for instance, affirmed that Catholic practices were based on corrupted imaginations leading to idolatry. On the other hand, Neoplatonism gave imagination the positive ability to be an intermediary between the body and the intelligible realm through making. In that case, a disciplined imagination was thought to be ultimately the responsible of good poetry. “Despite the widespread distrust of the imagination, it gradually began to gain ground against invention-based definitions of poetry,” and, from seventeenth century onwards, imagination stood as an “appealing term for poetics” (120).

To conclude, Sumillera correctly affirms that Romantic ideas of creative genius must then be linked to the early modern concept of poetic invention and its origins in rhetorical-logical theories. Early modern invention should be understood as a transitional stage to the study of the creative imagination of the poet’s mind. England Renaissance poets and theorists are great examples of how novelty and creativity processes of invention were turned onto the touchstones of poetic glory. Thomas Wright, Robert Burton, Edward Reynolds, and Francis Bacon found in imagination the natural, mental source for invention, opening the path for natural philosophy and medicine to explore and explain the compositions of poets. This book is an important contribution to the increasing studies of Renaissance poetics, but also to word history, historic epistemology and history of knowledge, art and technology, for invention as a generative capacity is entangled with the history of early modern ingenuity and modern genius.

## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Poetry in the Mind*

Joanna Gavins

Edinburgh University Press, 2020. 167 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-4744-9246-1

Joanna Gavins is a British academic and scholar; her central research is in the field of stylistics, which is the study of how people use language to create meaning. She is currently a Professor of Literature and Director of Research in the School of Humanities at the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom. While Gavins is particularly known for her work on narrative, where she has developed a theory of “text-worlds” that seeks to explain how readers construct mental representations of the fictional worlds presented in narrative texts, she has also published extensively on various topics in the field of English literature, with a particular focus on cognitive poetics and narratology. She is the author of several books, including *Text World Theory: An Introduction* (2007), and *Reading the Absurd* (2013). Gavins is also the editor of the John Benjamin’s book series *Linguistic Approaches to Literature* (Peskin & Hanauer 2023), and director of the *Text World Theory Special Collection* at the University of Sheffield (2021).

Gavins’ work on cognitive poetics has been particularly influential, exploring how readers process and make meaning from literary texts. In her analysis, she explores topics such as literary language, genre, metaphor, and corpus linguistics. Furthermore, her research has helped to bridge the gap between cognitive psychology and literary studies, providing new insights into the ways in which we understand and appreciate literature.

The book discussed in this review is “Poetry in the Mind” (Gavins 2020), where Joanna Gavins outlines the foundations of contemporary understanding of poetry, and it also offers a compelling analysis of the cognitive processes involved in reading and interpreting poetry. Drawing on insights from cognitive psychology, linguistics, and literary theory, the author offers a nuanced account of how readers engage with poems at a cognitive level. However, the author also sheds new light on ways in which poetry interacts with our thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

The structure of the book almost follows the pattern of an academic paper, with a first section acting as an introduction and/or theoretical framework, where Gavins explains the foundations of her Text-World Poetry Theory, and how it helps understanding what every individual’s concepts are created inside their brain while perceiving art, such as reading poetry. This first chapter is entitled *Reading Poetry*, where she also features poems such as “Crates” (6), written by Jo Bell, in order to provide a more tangible example of how her text-world theory of conceptual world-building works. Furthermore, she also uses William Wordsworth’s poem “Nutting” (11), where he dissociates reality from emotional situations.

The following chapters of the book, act as examples of applying her cognitive-linguistic framework of Text-World Theory, with practical examples where she explores the topics of:

*Time and Space*, by using Simon Armitage’s poem “Evening” (30) and addressing the poem’s background, such as the landscape of Northern England, from where the poet originates, and referencing his cultural and temporal setting too.

*Intertextuality*, which she finds at Sinéad Morrissey’s “1801” (53) while arguing that: “‘1801’ was a pastiche of Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals, the bulk of which were written in the homes she shared with her brother, William [...]” (53).



*Absence*, where she finds an image which revolves about the different ideas of negativity and loss, not only in imagery but also syntactically, in “Hearsay” by John Burnside (80). The speaker suggests that absence is not only the lack of something, but also a presence in its own right. However, Gavins also analyses in this chapter the multiple ways in which Burnside would express feelings of defeat, neglect, death, and the syntactically complex resources the poet would use in order to attain the unattainable contents of the poem. In fact, in order to achieve this, she introduces the term of “compression,” which is normally used in cognitive science in order to express “transformation” of abstract concepts into “human-scale ways of thinking” (Turner 2006, 18, quoted in Gavins 2020, 83). Therefore, Gavins shows how in the poem “Hearsay,” the author would not only express multiple ideas of negation, but he would also make the reader feel fear and a feeling of emptiness like if anything was missing.

In Chapter 5, *Performance*, the shared experience of poetry is found in “End Times” by Kae Tempest (101-4). His performance also emphasizes the political and social dimensions of the poem. The speaker suggests that the end times are not a result of natural disasters or cosmic forces, but the product of human actions and inactions. Tempest’s use of specific, concrete details, such as the image of plastic waste in the oceans, helps to ground the poem in the reality of the world we live in.

One of the most striking aspects of Tempest’s performance is the way he combines anger and despair with a sense of hope and possibility. While the poem paints a bleak picture of the world, the speaker suggests that there is still a chance for change, and that we must all take responsibility for creating a better future. The poem’s final lines, “let us go then, you and I, / let us try,” suggest that even in the face of the end times, there is still reason to hope and to act. Gavins analyses the way Tempest delivers their song to a wider audience while breaking the barriers of power and authority.

Furthermore, *Metaphor* is found in Chapter 6, where Gavins analyses “Song of a Stone” by Alice Oswald (128-29). In her final case study, Gavins chooses a poem on the basis that is filled with what she calls *conceptual metaphors*, which help creating a sense of the stone’s significance and the larger themes they represent. Through this chapter, the author examines the ways in which Oswald’s “poetic texts push the boundaries of metaphorical language itself, while at the same time redefining how metaphorical expressions function in the mind” (Gavins 2020, 128). For instance, one metaphor that appears throughout the poem is the comparison of the stone to a performer. The stone is described as having a “voice,” and its shape and texture are likened to the art of a performer. This metaphor suggests that the stone, like a performer, has a unique identity and purpose, shaped by its experiences and interactions with the world.

Additionally, Gavins links Oswald’s poetry as being influenced by Ted Hughes’ “The Horses,” where he uses similar rhetorical figures and metaphors. Furthermore, the metrical patterns of “Song of a Stone” and other stylistic figures make the poem uniquely interesting and thought-through such as its parallelisms and the poem’s own text-worlds.

Finally, Gavins moves on into the *Poetry in the Mind* chapter, which acts as a conclusion and closure of the book, Gavins summarises her findings while she analyses her case studies poems by a range of poets, including Simon Armitage, Sinéad Morrissey, John Burnside, Kae Tempest, Alice Oswald, Ted Hughes, among others. Through these readings, she has demonstrated how the cognitive mechanisms outlined in the first section of the book evolve in the different ways readers engage with poems in practice. She also explores the role of figurative language, such as metaphor and metonymy, in shaping readers’ cognitive responses to poetry.

One of the strengths of the book is its interdisciplinary approach. Drawing on insights from linguistics, psychology, neuroscience, and literary theory, Gavins offers a nuanced and multi-dimensional account of the workings of the poetic mind. By examining the cognitive processes that underpin our experience of poetry, Gavins is able to shed light on the ways in which poems bring meaning, and the ways in which they engage with our emotions and our sense of self.

Another strength of the book is its accessibility, since despite its complex subject matter, *Poetry in the Mind* is written in a clear and engaging style that will be of interest to a wide range of readers, from students and scholars of literature and linguistics to anyone with an interest in the workings of the human mind.

Similarly, in her book *Text World Theory: An Introduction* (2007), Gavins provides an overview of the text world theory, which is a framework for analysing the way in which readers mentally construct the fictional worlds presented in literary texts. In this previous work, how readers use their knowledge and experience to create mental models of fictional worlds is explained. It provides a detailed introduction to the theory, its underlying concepts, its applications in literary studies, and how these models shape the reader’s understanding of the text.

However, while both books, *Text World Theory* and *Poetry in the Mind*, share a common interest in the study of language and cognition, they differ in terms of their specific focus and methodology. In contrast, *Poetry in the Mind* focuses specifically on the cognitive processes involved in the interpretation of poetry. Drawing on insights from cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology, Gavins explores the way in which readers make sense of poetic language, and the

role that metaphor, imagery, and other literary devices play in shaping readers' understanding. The book provides a detailed analysis of a range of poems, exploring the ways in which their linguistic and cognitive features contribute to their meaning and impact. While *Text World Theory: An Introduction* (2007) provides a broader introduction to the text world theory and its applications, *Poetry in the Mind* provides a more specific and detailed exploration of the cognitive processes involved in the interpretation of poetry. Both books, however, demonstrate Gavins' expertise in the field of cognitive poetics and her ability to bridge the gap between cognitive psychology and literary studies.

Therefore, *Poetry in the Mind* is an insightful and thought-provoking book in the field of cognitive poetics, which brings together insights from a range of disciplines. This book is of interest to scholars and students of literary studies, cognitive psychology, and linguistics as it offers a detailed analysis of the cognitive processes involved in reading poetry. Gavins makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how literature is experienced and interpreted, while explaining the emotional processes that poetry triggers in the reader's mind. *Poetry in the Mind* highlights the intrinsic concepts of poetry and looks for an in-depth understanding of concepts such as: metre, performance, metaphor and intertextuality.



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CONFERENCE REVIEWS

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MARNI APPLETON

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# ***Dis/Orientations and Dis/Entanglements Conference Report***

## **University of Malaga. September 21-23, 2022**

**T**his three-day international conference, held at the University of Málaga from 21-23 September 2022, set out to critically interrogate the concept of orientation and its usefulness for evaluating literary texts and cultural products. Sara Ahmed (whose work was invoked frequently throughout the conference) describes being oriented as knowing where one stands or feeling “at home” (7). Disorientation then, describes the opposite: feeling lost, uncertain or confused. Much attention was devoted to the ways in which dis/orientation can be utilised in terms of affect, but also in terms of understanding temporality and identity. The scholars at this conference proved the productiveness of orientation as a critical lens for interpreting various cultural products including films, television series, novels, graphic novels and short stories.

The conference opened with a roundtable on the contemporary English novel, with papers from Professors Susana Onega, Ángeles de la Concha and Pilar Hildago. Opening the panel, Professor Onega discussed how literature evolves alongside cultural change: in our current moment, global conflicts, the erasure of traditional concerns about the “other” and the isolation of the individualised, commodified self creates a profound sense of disorientation. By focusing on the novels of Jon McGregor, Professor Onega highlighted how the loss of communal bonds and the isolation of the individual subject is counterbalanced by a need for physical connection and intimacy. Professor de la Concha’s paper focused on Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire* and *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by Ahmed Saadawi, and the complex interweaving of the personal and the political that characterises the struggle for power in both novels. She made use of Moisés Naím’s work on power to illuminate how characters with opposite ideologies make use of the same strategies to achieve their seemingly opposite goals.

The themes brought out in this invigorating introduction set the tone for what was to come: an emphasis on power dynamics, a blend of the personal and political and the impacts of neoliberal ideologies and globalisation on community. In a panel on fictionalised motherhood(s), Dr Lin Pettersen (University of Málaga) and Dr Miriam Borham-Puyal (University of Salamanca) explored the relationship between motherhood, power and the body. Dr Pettersen’s paper focused on Emma Donoghue’s 2020 novel *The Pull of the Stars* and the novel’s depiction of state-sanctioned obstetric violence in Ireland during the 1918 influenza pandemic. Dr Borham-Puyal’s paper explored the entanglement of machine and monster with human-mother characteristics in the television series *I Am Mother*. There were compelling connections across both papers, especially in regard to the physicality of the mother’s body, which is largely absent in *I Am Mother* (in which the “mother” is a robot), and which is both abused and disempowered in *The Pull of the Stars*, as the mother(s) become entangled in religious, political and medical discourses and with shame. Both of these papers also explored complex orientations towards time, which emerged as another key concern of the conference: the spectre of the unknowable future in Dr Borham-Puyal’s paper, and the uncannily recurring past in Dr Pettersen’s paper, in which she drew parallels between the COVID-19 pandemic and the 1918 influenza pandemic.

Disorientation and time were explored further in a panel on temporalities, subjects and spaces. Dr María Magdalena Flores-Quesada (University of Málaga) spoke about temporal orientations and vulnerability in Gail Honeyman's novel *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* (2017). Her paper argued that the protagonist's use of a "shield of invulnerability" keeps her trapped in a loop of trauma and so without a future. Yet when the protagonist becomes aware of this construct and lets herself become open to a dynamic of care, she is able to disentangle her past and move forward, into the future. A paper from Dr Paula Martín-Salván (University of Córdoba) explored the instability of apocalyptic temporality in Colson Whitehead's 2011 novel *Zone One*, while Ana Tejero Martín's (University of Salamanca) paper asked how the anthropomorphisation of place in N. K. Jemisin's novels creates a sense of disorientation. Together the papers offered a fascinating examination of how a protagonist's environment—formed by time period, phantoms from the past or a fantastical landscape—shapes their narrative directions and possibilities.

History, and orientations to the past, were further explored in Professor Patricia Pulham's (University of Surrey) keynote paper "Reorienting the Past: Anachronism as Affective Strategy in Contemporary Culture." Professor Pulham addressed the manipulation of history in contemporary film and television, such as *The Great* (2020) and *Bridgerton* (2020), as well as Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* (2006), raising questions about authenticity and accuracy. While deliberate inaccuracies and anachronisms are employed in these texts for entertainment purposes, Professor Pulham argues that they create specific affective responses which challenge our responses to both historical and contemporary cultures. Beth Roberts (University of Surrey) also investigated the manipulation of history—but in her paper, she looked at a 2010 play by Lauren Gunderson, *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight*. The titular character is represented by two performers: one who is embodied and interacts with the other character, and another who is an observing character, reflecting on her past actions. Roberts' describes this as a "disembodied confrontation," referring to the ways in which the historical character of Emilie is given an opportunity to reorient her feelings towards her past self on the stage. Thus, Roberts' paper also interrogates the ways in which we understand historical women. Both papers demonstrate a cultural preoccupation with reimagining history across narrative forms.

The entanglement between past and present was also the subject of Dr Sofía Muñoz Valdivieso's paper (University of Málaga); however, she explores this entanglement through the personal histories of the fictional characters of Bernadine Evaristo's polyvocal novel *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019). The characters' lives are deeply interconnected, something that is revealed through the narrative structure of the novel, the entanglement of the characters' personal pasts and presents, and the complex histories of Britain and Empire, which serves as a backdrop for the lives of these (primarily) Black British women.

It comes as no surprise that Britain's relationship to its imperial histories came up more than once during the conference, particularly in a moment marked by a resurgent emphasis on British nationalism in the wake of Britain's exit from the European Union, alongside the mass displacement of people in Europe as a result of conflict. In her contribution, Dr Martyna Bryla (University of Málaga) explored the concept of hospitality as orientation towards the "other" in her paper, conversely framing Brexit as a device which orientates away from others, and which problematised the sense of belonging many felt in the UK. Specifically, Bryla considered the Polish-British author Agnieszka Dale, whose short story collection, *Fox Season and Other Short Stories* (2017) resists the divisive orientations provoked by Brexit. While the rhetoric surrounding Brexit connects national identity with belonging, Bryla notes that in Dale's stories, it is instead "the fabric of life we share with others" that we are encouraged to orient ourselves towards. Hannah Coomb's paper (University of Portsmouth) also investigated orientations of belonging, but rather than un/belonging to a state, her paper explored the physical space of home, through the autobiographical accounts of child refugees. While children have less of a robust understanding of national belonging than adults, they have deep affective attachments to their home—a place of safety, familiarity and comfort. Yet for the child refugee, the physical space of their home becomes the opposite, something dangerous and threatening; thus, they must find new ways to orient themselves to find comfort in challenging circumstances.

Disorientation then, is not always about uncertainty, but can orient us away from feelings of isolation or unbelonging and help us to nurture feelings of security or foster connections with others. Dr Victoria Browne (Oxford Brookes University) addressed this function of disorientation in her keynote paper, "Disorientation as Feminist Method." Dr Browne's paper proposed a decentring of the future in experiences of pregnancy, or "pregnant time," in order to open up the possibility of new forms of solidarity between pregnant people who experience miscarriage, abortion and live birth. Whereas stillbirth, miscarriage and abortion can be veiled in shame due to being seen as "failed" pregnancies, orienting pregnant time away from an expected future event would allow pregnancy to be theorised as "an open-ended process of emergence," which is meaningful and significant in and of itself. Thus, Dr Browne's work shows us that disorientation as a concept can be applied productively as a way to move beyond the ways we should feel—for example, ashamed. After the initial shock of disorientation, we can be reoriented towards new ways of being in the world that feel better.

The breadth of applications of dis/orientations and dis/entanglements explored throughout this conference showed that these are versatile concepts that can help us to unpick the many directions contemporary literature and cultural

products tend towards. But there are recurring themes that are worth paying attention to. Firstly, they seem to be most useful for conceptualising and understanding the experiences of those who feel like outsiders, or those who are disempowered—which are perhaps increasingly common feelings in the current conjuncture. This can be seen in the recurrence of feminine experience as a key concern of the conference, and also in the number of papers dedicated to exploring queer narratives and texts about migration. Nevertheless, while disorientation might seem to capture feelings of loss or confusion (which are deeply imbricated with experiences of prejudice or disempowerment), many of the papers presented at this conference moved beyond the feelings of dis/orientation and considered the directions in which it might take us. In his paper on “hopeful disorientations,” Manuel Hueso-Vasallo (University of Málaga) drew on Ahmed’s work to argue that the disruption caused by disorientation can offer us hope and help to orientate us towards new, better ways to understand and live in the world. In other words, disorientation can be a route through which to discover which beliefs, preconceptions and ways of living are not sustaining us. Examining the world another way, from a different direction, can offer us hope and might pave the way for transformative change.



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## CONFERENCE REVIEWS

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**EVA DARIAS-BEAUTELL**

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# ***TransCanadian Networks/ESSE Workshop***

**(ESSE Collaborative Project Workshop Scheme)  
Universitat de les Illes Balears. November 9-11, 2022**

### Event Report<sup>1</sup>

The workshop took place in the terms articulated in our original application for funding. Designed for the research team of the funded project [TransCanadian Networks](#) (RED2018-102643-T) to meet with a selected group of European scholars in the field of contemporary Literatures and Cultures of Canada and articulate the research axes of a new application for a larger grant, the workshop had three key objectives: a) to expand the size of the present research team, inviting prominent Europe-based Canadianists, b) to define, refine and organize the work around crucial areas of research within the field and c) to write the first draft of the application for the larger grant. These objectives were fully achieved. The event was highly successful and provided the necessary time and space to work out practical and intellectual details of this new expanded project.

The workshop participants came from six different National Associations. The core Spanish team was composed of the seven principal investigators of the *TransCanadian Networks* groups: Pilar Cuder-Domínguez (U. de Huelva), Eva Darias-Beautell (U. de La Laguna), Ana Fraile-Marcos (U. de Salamanca), Belén Martín-Lucas (U. de Vigo), Alejandra Moreno Álvarez (U. de Oviedo), Andrea Ruthven (U. de les Illes Balears) and Pilar Somacarrera (U. Autónoma de Madrid). In addition, the following prominent Europe-based Canadianists accepted our invitation from Poland, Norway, Czech Republic, England and Lithuania: Anna Branach-Kallas (Nicolaus Copernicus University), Libe García Zarranz (Norwegian University of Science and Technology), Martina Horakova (Masaryk University), Gillian Roberts (University of Nottingham) and Rūta Šlapkauskaitė (Vilnius University). It is important to note that the *TransCanadian Networks* team has a long and fruitful history of collaboration through joint publications and the organization of top research events in some of the most crucial areas in the field. The sustained research collaborations between Spanish and Canadian institutions are paradigmatic of the quality and the level of commitment of the team's work. Additionally, the extended group of scholars involved in this application has also consistently over the years edited and published research results and organized scientific events hosted by both their home universities and Canadian ones.

During the 2-day workshop, each team member presented their specific area of expertise and discussed possible interconnections with the rest. We started with an initial exchange around crucial research questions such as the meaning of Canadian Literature and the possible alternative denominations of the field. We also discussed our position as

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this report was published on 3rd December 2022 in The ESSE Messenger Blog.



researchers and our methodological approaches. Having feminist and affect theories as common methodological ground, the team also shared overlapping research interests in Indigenous studies, settler colonial studies, trauma and war studies, posthumanism, critical race theory, queer and trans studies, and spatial and environmental readings of literature and culture. Within this large conceptual and theoretical area, we worked collaboratively to build a preliminary bibliography, articulate the project's objectives, write a position statement for each of the researchers, design research dissemination activities and think of specific actions that can have social and environmental impact. The group managed to include all these items into an advanced draft of the future application for funding, which is expected to result in a solid and cutting-edge funding proposal.

The resulting new application will be presented to the Spanish National Research Council (Agencia Estatal de Investigación. Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación). A call for applications for the funding of Research Networks (Redes de Investigación) is expected by September, 2023. The extended project is expected to have a significant impact on Canadian Studies in Europe and beyond, showcasing the work of Europe-based researchers in key areas of the interdisciplinary field of Canadian Literatures and Cultures and leading the context of research in Europe.

Additionally, the group also agreed to explore alternative or complementary sources of funding, such as the following programs within Horizon Europe (2021-2027): Hera Network, Synergy Grant and Marie Curie.



## WORKSHOP COORDINATORS

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Eva Darias-Beutell (Universidad de La Laguna)

Libe García Zarranz (Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

Rūta Šlapkauskaitė (Vilnius University)

III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LINGUISTICS

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**M<sup>a</sup> EVA PIÑEIRO FARIÑA**

UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

# ***Language Contact: The Influence of English on the Hispanic Community of the United States***

**Supervisor: Ignacio Palacios Martínez**

**T**he objective of this study is to explore a case of language contact between English and Spanish in the United States by focusing specifically on the use of lexical anglicisms in the digital Hispanic press of the Northeast. In order to achieve this goal, I stated the following hypotheses:

- 1 Since Hispanic online journals in the U.S. belong to an English-Spanish language contact context, it is expected these journals would tend to use an extensive amount of anglicisms which would be mostly pure loanwords.
- 2 Due to the variety of topics covered by Hispanic newspapers, the anglicisms should also include a wide range of semantic areas.
- 3 As a result of these journals' focus on U.S. Hispanics, a great proportion of anglicisms would tend to be used exclusively in the U.S. and not internationally.

This is a self-compiled corpus-based study (80,000 words). Materials were selected from twenty-three Hispanic publications which were closely analyzed in terms of the date of their foundation, readership and sections. Some of the sources used for the selection of these journals were the *Hispanic Yearbook* (2008-2009), *Allied-Media Corporation* and Veciana-Suárez's *Hispanic Media, USA* (1987). Thirty headlines per section were closely studied focusing in particular on those that included examples of lexical anglicisms. The anglicisms recorded (around 3,000) were then entered into a dataset according to their type (pure loanwords, hybrids and pseudo-loans, among others), semantic field (e.g., social life & human types, sports, technology), inclusion in reference dictionaries such as *DLE*, *CLAVE* and the *OED*, dictionaries of anglicisms (e.g., Alfaro (1964), Lorenzo (1996), Rodríguez (2017), Moreno-Fernández (2018)) and general corpora (*CREA* and *CORPES XXI*), frequency, etc.

The challenges found during the research process concern the methodology, particularly the selection of publications, and the classification of anglicisms.

Preliminary findings show the following:

- 1 The proportion of anglicisms found amounts to 3.7% (378.6 anglicisms every 10,000 words).
- 2 Pure anglicisms are more frequent than other types (60%).
- 3 Most of the anglicisms in the data are used internationally (*CREA*, 69%).
- 4 The semantic fields of sports (16%) social life and human types (13%), and technology (11%) are the most productive.

This study seeks to offer some insights into the use of lexical anglicisms in the Hispanic digital press of the twenty-first century in one of the most diverse areas of the U.S, the Northeast, thus filling the existing research gap on this particular topic in this area of the country and serving as a reference in relation to other studies which have traditionally focused on other areas (e.g., the Southwest, Florida). Ultimately, this study aims to provide some insight into the variety of Spanish used by the Hispanic press of the Northeast, the nature and the presence of English in the Hispanic community and help to understand some aspects of American society as far as the Hispanic community of the Northeast is concerned.



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III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LINGUISTICS

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# ***Object Preposing and Information Structure: A Contrastive Study of English, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese***

**Supervisors: Ángel Luis Jiménez Fernández and María Victoria Camacho Taboada**

**T**he present research focuses on the information structure (IS) of object preposing (OP) constructions in English, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese, with three clear purposes: 1) to distinguish the different types of OP constructions in the three languages, 2) to draw a systematic comparison of their formal and semantic properties, and 3) to formulate a unified syntactic account for the phenomenon of OP.

IS refers to the way in which information is formally packaged within a sentence. While in Spanish and Mandarin Chinese a (direct) object may frequently be preposed to a sentence-internal/-initial position in order to get a focus or topic reading, in English OP seems to be subject to more syntactic constraints. If it is true that OP is required by, or at least closely related to discursive needs, it would be plausible to assume that the forgoing contrast observed in the three languages may be the reflection of their differences in IS.

To undertake the investigation, I adopt the feature inheritance (FI) hypothesis and the corresponding language typology proposed in Jiménez-Fernández (2010, 2020), Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa (2014), and Miyagawa (2010, 2017). Grounded on the theoretical foundations laid by these authors, the present thesis would have the working hypothesis that the differences among the three languages in terms of OP may be due to their respective configuration as either agreement- or discourse-prominent (or both) languages. The prominence in a certain type of features is represented by the possibility of passing them from phase heads (C and *v*) down to some lower heads (T and V), which would contribute to yield the subject-predicate or topic-comment/focus-presupposition structure as the basic sentence pattern in that language.

The present study is expected to be a tentative approach to a unified account for discourse-driven object dislocation in English, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese, with which we can hopefully get a more refined knowledge of their IS.



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III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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ANA MARÍA CRESPO GÓMEZ  
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# ***Femininity and Sexuality in Indian Diasporic Literature: Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee and Bharati Mukherjee***

**Supervisor: Jose Carlos Redondo Olmedilla**

The project gauges the portrayal of Indian women's sexuality and femininity in three short story collections written by diasporic Indian women in the USA (Bharati Mukherjee's *Darkness*, 1985; Chitra Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage*, 1997 and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*, 2009). Hence, theoretically, an approximation is made to understand social constraints concerning femininity and sexuality before the British Raj, enabling the comparison with further changes promoted by colonialism.

The method encapsulates a multidisciplinary approach aspiring to analyse the works under a critical literary scope without disregarding other disciplines, such as history or anthropology. The last stage comprises assessing the literature and analysing femininity and sexuality in the short stories by contending with the results of the previous theoretical framework. Finally, the main research framework explores cultural studies, especially the latest tendencies in gender, diaspora, postcolonial studies, ethnicity, or identity studies. Understanding the complex intersections of female sexuality and femininity in India, but much more precisely in the region of Bengal, entails a multidisciplinary analysis of its socio-historical context. Much emphasis has been placed on how "The Woman Question" in colonial Bengal occurred during the Bengal Renaissance. We also consider how aspects such as mythology or the era of social reform were of interest in portraying femininity and sexuality and reinforcing the stereotyped image of the *bhadramahila* by the dawn of the twentieth century. The socio-historical framework concludes by reaching "The New Indian Woman" through *Strishiksha*, or education for women. We also look at the development of this new femininity in the early twentieth century through the creation of female associations.

The aim is to update the literary criticism involving this issue. Albeit this project hinges primarily on works written by Indian women, it underpins the most valuable critical works on topics related to cultural studies. By introducing critics such as Gayatri Spivak, Lata Mani and Annia Lomba, the intertwining of colonialism and gender is considered without neglecting other postcolonial critics of renown. On equal terms, gender is approached by reputed critics such as Uma Chakravarti or Tanika Sarkar.



The subsequent literary analysis is twofold. First, it focuses on the contextualisation of South Asian diasporic literature and its feminisms. The second part delves into the study of the short story collections based on the earlier frameworks, both theoretical and socio-historical, but we also the interviews.

The last part is devoted to the interviews. By approaching Indian-origin female scholars whose main focal interest responds to the aims of this thesis and who also take part in the Indian diaspora, we have been able to understand first-hand their experiences, motivations and what it means to be a diasporan. This project has presented some challenges, among which we could outline the difficulty in accessing the bibliographic material because most valuable references are in London, in SOAS (School of Oriental and Asian Studies) and the British Library. In addition, the results so far have enabled us to publish in various monographs and journals.

III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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**VIRGINIA DIAZ-CRESPO VILLAFUERTE**  
UNIVERSIDAD DE CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

# ***The Element of Fire in The Lord of the Rings and Other Stories in Tolkien's Legendarium***

**Supervisor: Beatriz Gonzalez Moreno**

Since humanity started to develop its own self-consciousness, we have been constantly trying to understand the world around us by observing it. For centuries, nature has been a recurrent theme profusely used by writers and artists as a creative source of inspiration, allowing the human being to be in touch with all the elements in it. Being identified by ancient civilisations, the four western natural elements—earth, air, fire, and water—from which everything was made up according to the Greek philosophers, were seen as the main elements of all matter. Presented as opposites or in combination in many literary works, they have stood out for their symbolic function from the ancient Greece to our days.

J.R.R. Tolkien has been considered, by many experts, as an environmentalist writer due to the detailed descriptions of the natural worlds and living beings in his books. For this reason, some scholars have investigated the role of nature in Tolkien's works focusing on trees and forests, fauna and flora, rivers, mountains, and creatures, as well as in the general environmentalism introduced by the author in his books to discover the real purpose of its use. In this respect, it is worth mentioning the self-confessed love J.R.R. Tolkien felt for nature, since it could be considered as one of the most important characters in his stories, playing a relevant role on its own. However, there are not many studies which delve into the analysis of the four natural elements in Tolkien's legendarium. Thus, my PhD dissertation will focus on the element of fire to analyse its role and symbolic meaning in J.R.R. Tolkien's book *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), as well as in other selected stories of the first and second age from an ecocritical perspective. In doing so, I will try to determine and interpret the encoded meaning of this natural element and its influence on not just the characters, but also locations and the peoples living in Middle-Earth. The two main approaches used in this research are Ecocriticism and Symbolism. Regarding the former, Ecocriticism establishes the relationship between literature and the physical environment, which will help to understand Tolkien's perception of nature. As for Symbolism, it provides an extensive explanation about the nature of symbols and the duality of the natural elements, helping to decode the meaning behind the words. In this way, my findings intend to demonstrate the importance of the element of fire in *TLOTR* and other stories, proving that its appearance in Tolkien's works is not a circumstantial fact but on purpose.



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III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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**ARIADNA GARCÍA CARREÑO**

UNIVERSIDAD DE ALMERÍA

# ***George Sterling's Poetry: The Great Forgotten Work of Fin-de-Siècle American Literary Scene***

**Supervisor: Jesús Isaías Gómez López**

**T**he present project aims to study George Sterling's (1869-1926) lyrical production, suggesting that ongoing changes affect his poetic tone, style and ideas throughout his literary career. The purpose is to analyze these modifications chronologically using three of his poetry collections: *The Testimony of the Suns* (1903), *A Wine of Wizardry* (1908) and *House of Orchids* (1911). This hypothesis arises because each work is composed in differentiated stages in terms of Sterling's location—Sag Harbor, bohemian San Francisco or idyllic Carmel—literary influences—Ambrose Bierce, Joaquin Miller and Jack London—and ideology—hedonism and bohemianism are absent in the first collection, but predominant in the others.

Methodologically, we follow the idea of *poem as unit of dimensions*—verbal, visual, acoustic and articulatory. Through their interaction, compositions evoke the meanings reflected by the poet (Brooks & Warren 1945; Zink 1945; Wimsatt & Beardsley 1970). Klarer (2004) and Abrams (2012) label this concept as “poetic multidimensionality.” This approach develops an innovative poetic analysis that is not only limited to a *shape/content* dualism. The research procedure is 1) presentation of the historical/sociocultural macrocosm contextualizing the poet during each collection's composition, 2) analysis of selected poems' poetic multidimensionality, and 3) drawing conclusions about each collection's style and content.

The main problem hindering this study is the bibliographical vacuum on Sterling's poetry, which—considered “traditional”—has been ignored since the literary avant-gardes' emergence in the 20th century. Therefore, analyzing Sterling's poetic facets becomes a pioneering study which, despite the short research period, has obtained a first clear result: the first collection shows that Sterling has not found his own poetic identity yet, as the compositions imitate Bierce's dicta. The second collection, then, being fantastic and macabre in tone, will be the first radical change in Sterling's lyrical work.



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III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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**SERGIO GARCÍA GÓMEZ**

UNIVERSIDAD DE LA RIOJA

# ***Vision and Cognition in C. S. Lewis's Till We Have Faces: Conceptual Models and their Epistemological Significance***

**Supervisors: Francisco J. Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez  
and María Asunción Barreras Gómez**

**B**ritish author, scholar and literary critic C. S. Lewis conceived language as unavoidably metaphorical and considered it a writer's role to translate abstract ideas into understandable ones, a task frequently achieved through images. Visual references and metaphors are constant in his writing, and they arguably play a significant role in his writings' reception, the reading experience and in the effect they may have on the reader's epistemological journey. This thesis aims to identify those elements of his writing which caused him to become such an influential writer in his time and one hundred years later. This is achieved by analyzing the use and effect of conceptual models in his fictional works from a cognitive perspective, taking into account some of the author's metaphysical, philosophical and religious views and the role he attributed to literature as a means to understand reality.

This dissertation focuses on the aspects of Lewis's literary style in his last novel *Till We Have Faces* (1956)—which Lewis himself referred to as his best book, but also his biggest failure. A comparative study between the conceptual models present in this novel and those in other works of fiction by Lewis will shed light into the aspects that differentiate this work from his other writings, as well as the characteristics they share. Such research is conducted under the principles of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, within the frame of Cognitive Linguistics as postulated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their seminal works *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999), as well as other studies in the field. More specifically, this analysis applies the principles of Cognitive Poetics to some of Lewis' literary works, thus resulting in an unconventional approach to the writings of this popular author.





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III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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ÁNGELES JORDÁN SORIANO  
UNIVERSIDAD DE ALMERÍA

# ***Culture and Politics in the Nineteen Sixties in Great Britain: The First Government of Harold Wilson (1964 -70)***

**Supervisor: José Francisco Fernández Sánchez**

The objective of this research project is to explore the role of arts and culture during Harold Wilson's first government (1964-1970) and to determine if British intellectuals and artists supported and reinforced his government, or if, on the contrary, they remained detached from the model of society promoted. This study also offers relevant data to take into consideration with regard to the current state of Great Britain, since the problems that this government attempted to solve are still very present nowadays: racial, gender and sexual orientation discrimination.

The theoretical framework to be used is that provided by British Cultural Studies. This set of theories is directly linked to Cultural Studies since its core is that the study of all artistic works must be based on the analysis of knowledge practices and the social conditions of the moment in which they are created. Consequently, artistic material will be analysed by historical criticism and textual analysis, taking into account actual testimonies of these artists and the opinions of historians such as David Kynaston and Dominic Sandbrook.

With regard to the corpus considered, this study will offer a multidisciplinary overview of different disciplines: literature, music and cinema. In this selection, diversity will be prioritised, attempting, in this way, to provide more significant and plural data beyond the opinions of the most popular and canonical artists of this decade. The section devoted to literature will deal with Angus Wilson's *Late Call* (1964), Veronica Forrest-Thomson's early poems and Ann Jellicoe's *Shelley, or the Idealist* (1966) and *The Giveaway* (1970). The chapter on music will be devoted to The Who and The Kinks. The works selected for the section on cinema still need to be considered as one of the challenges of this research is the blurred boundary between cinema and drama during this decade.

III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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**LORENA MARTÍNEZ VÍLCHEZ**

UNIVERSIDAD DE ALMERÍA

# ***The Handling of Trauma in Ha Jin's Fiction***

**Supervisor: Jesús Isaías Gómez López**

**T**his research project is focused on the narrative work of Ha Jin (1956), a Chinese-American writer who, after the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989, decided to indefinitely stay in the United States and not return to his natal country, China. Up until now, Ha Jin has written nine novels, four short story collections, seven poetry books and a book of essays. This thesis only examines his novels and short story collections by classifying them into two sections: (a) fiction that takes place in China and (b) fiction that takes place in the United States.

The trauma theories that are being used in this research project can help us understand the physical and emotional wounds that human beings suffer as a consequence of traumatic experiences such as gender-based violence, armed conflicts and suppression situations, the process of migration, or the consequences of revolutions. Because of this, studies like those made by Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and Laurie Vickroy's *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002) are relevant for this research project, along with other relevant pieces on trauma and literature fields.

The main objective of this research is to analyse Ha Jin's fiction, from the different perspectives and analyses that we can study thanks to trauma theories, in order to explain the suffering that Ha Jin's characters have to endure in their daily lives.

III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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**SOFÍA MEDINA LÓPEZ**

UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

# ***Eating Disorders as Coping Mechanisms in Transethnic North American Literature***

**Supervisor: Anna M. Brígido Corachan**

**W**omen have been subjected to the dominant discourses of patriarchal societies and have suffered continuous discrimination and inequalities for decades. As a response to such oppressions, the female body has been used by women as a vehicle of expression and as an instrument of resistance and rebellion to unfair situations. Through the control of their own bodies, women manage to reclaim their agency and build in this way their own symbolic language.

My research aims to establish a literary multiethnic study of how eating disorders serve as mechanisms to cope with the psychic consequences of cultural factors such as acculturative stress, body image, classism, racism and emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, aspects which affect women in different racial and ethnic groups in United States. The selected novels are Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), Julia Álvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent* (1991) and Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992).

Through a literary analysis and comparison of the female characters in the multiethnic novels, my intention is to show how female bodies represent sites of resistance and transgression against patriarchal oppression and how eating disorders are a tool for healing from trauma and pain. Although the selected female protagonists have different origins and cultures, they all use their fragmented bodies as weapons to protect and heal themselves from multiple forms of oppression. Moreover, one of my main objectives is to show the connection between eating disorders and identity crisis and explain the relationship the female characters have with food as it serves as a form of self-expression.

The proposed methodology to conduct this literary research is a deep analysis and comparison of the novels and of the selected female characters. As well as this, a theoretical background will be built based on fields of studies such as Body Politics, Trauma Studies or Food Studies. The study will take an anthropological, psychological, cultural as well as literary approach, as it focuses on attitudes in society which are portrayed in literature.

The results obtained until the present moment are that there has been an increase of eating disorders in ethnic minorities in the United States and that eating disorders are used as survival strategies in response to social injustices.



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III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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**ROCÍO MOYANO REJANO**

UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA

# ***The Presence of Ophelia in English Literature and Painting***

**Supervisor: Carmen Lara Rallo**

**T**his research focuses on the survival and prevalence of Ophelia in contemporary English novels in which she is presented as the main character as well as her depiction in some Pre-Raphaelite paintings. The main thesis, therefore, will address how her representation has gradually changing in the last two centuries. The works selected for the literary core can be examined as a retelling of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the sense that Ophelia is introduced as the main character and, consequently, the main focalizer of her own story. That is because of the emergence of the modernist movement and she has been portrayed as a much more active and empowered character and certain gaps in the original text have been filled. It is also worthy to ponder the following questions. Does Hamlet really love Ophelia? Has Ophelia been seduced by Hamlet? Does she kill herself deliberately? Is Ophelia really willing to die?

Even since its publication in 1603, *Hamlet* has proved a source of inspiration to subsequent generations of writers. Not only has she been a source of inspiration for painters and filmmakers, but she has also been studied by structuralism, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and new historicism. There have been several "derivative works" of this play which recount the story from the perspective of other characters, or to an increased extent, the story is set in another setting resulting in sequels and prequels to *Hamlet*. That is the case of Ophelia and the numerous rewriting that have been written from her view. Although she barely appears in only five of the twenty scenes in *Hamlet*, Ophelia is mentioned in two of the others—by Polonius and Laertes. To do that, the concept of interfigurality might be applied, that is, "the interrelations that exist between characters in different texts" (Müller 1991, 101) since "it represents one of the most important dimensions of intertextuality."

The process of depicting Ophelia in Pre-Raphaelite paintings involves the so-called reverse ekphrasis or the written description of a visual image. Several passages from *Hamlet* will be examined and compared in Pre-Raphaelite art. What this paper intends to highlight is that painting and literature ought not to be treated as two separate disciplines since Ophelia's portrayal in Pre-Raphaelite art will somehow determine her later depiction in contemporary English fiction. Thus, Ophelia's image is not only influenced by Shakespeare's source text, but also by Pre-Raphaelite paintings that portray a different side of her.





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III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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**ZAHRA NAZEMI**

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA; RAZI UNIVERSITY

# ***Literary Topoi of Greek Tragedy in Modern American Drama: A Study of Eugene O'Neill's Plays***

**Supervisors: Gabriel Laguna Mariscal and Nasser Maleki**

Eugene O'Neill was an ardent reader of classical literature. He was familiar with stories of Phaedra, Medea, and Orestes due to his interest in the works of Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus, but the imitation of these myths or tragedies is not limited to the modernization of the plots in *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) and *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931). Rather, certain classical motifs are also revitalized in his drama. Therefore, the present study finds it necessary to examine the reappearance of classical topoi in O'Neill's drama. After detecting certain topoi according to the characteristics offered by Escobar (2000; 2006) and Laguna Mariscal (1999), it is argued that the development of topoi can cause intertextual links between texts from different cultural and historical backgrounds. As such, the traditional approach of this dissertation leads to postmodern results. That is to say, by incorporating classical topoi, O'Neill's plays echo different classical texts. O'Neill's plays at times follow the tradition by deliberately imitating certain stories, but on other occasions, represent creative adaptations. The results of the study also demonstrate that certain classical concepts have not been extinguished. Rather, the past continues to be part of the present. Classical topoi as reflections of human experience continue to be a meaningful part of our present and future lives. Understanding them could help us appreciate what we read or see, revise the discourses we use, or enjoy the experiences we live.



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III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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NOELIA RAMOS SORIA  
UNIVERSIDADE DE VIGO

# ***Nin o Chithaeglr lasto Beth daer; Rimmo nin Bruinen dan in Ulaer!: The Celtic elements in the Lord of the Rings***

Supervisor: Jorge Luis Bueno Alonso

The world of *The Lord of the Rings* has been subject to numerous studies and comparisons that have sought to establish a link with all those cultural elements that may have influenced its creation. While Norse mythology has been commonly accepted (even by Tolkien himself) as one of the main references in the creation of his own fictional world, the role of cultural and mythological elements of Celtic origin has aroused some controversy. The aim of this study is to highlight those elements of the *Lord of the Rings* that are closely related to the Celtic world and to highlight their connection, whether intentional or unintentional and how some of the artistic design aspects of Peter Jackson's films have brought out or reinterpreted aspects of the original work in a Celtic key. The methodology used is based on the traditional empirical scientific method through the detailed study of the film pieces that make up the *Lord of the Rings* together with the three books. The lack of specific resources on the subject as well as the question of the Celtic legacy in Tolkien's work make the study difficult.

It is evident, therefore, that, despite Tolkien's irrational dislike of Celtic, there are several concepts and features of the cultures that cohabit Middle-Earth where numerous echoes of that culture resonate. For the most part of these are unconscious and unintentional choices, and they underline the persistence of Celtic culture even in the last two centuries. However, this analysis will take into consideration the possibility of Tolkien willingly hiding the roots of his inspirations to not classify any of them and avoid any kind of comparison; thus, there might be a possibility of Tolkien not actually despising Celtic culture, as it may be interpreted from his letters and commentaries.

This paper analyses three important aspects to be considered. In the first place, the relation between Valinor and the Celtic Tír na nÓg, and to what extent these lands at once resemble the elvish territories of Rivendell and Lothlórien and the Celtic underworld to the Fangorn Forest. Moreover, the similitudes between King Arthur and Aragorn will be considered as a matter of study which includes nurture, fate, and the role of swords in both characters—also, many links between Merlin and Gandalf may indicate a stronger influence of the *Matter of Britain* on Tolkien's development of some of the most relevant characters in the books. Finally, research on the character of Galadriel and its resemblance to some important Celtic deities such as Danu (goddess of earth and water) and the Morrígan (goddess of death) will be taken into consideration, as well as the use of her magic, talismans such as Nenya and Evenstar, and the importance of water and energies in Tolkien's representation of the elvish culture.

III AEDEAN DOCTORAL SEMINAR (2022)  
ABSTRACTS | LITERATURE/CULTURE

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**J. JAVIER TORRES FERNÁNDEZ**  
UNIVERSIDAD DE ALMERÍA

# ***Identity, Trauma, and Biopolitics in the Aids Literature of the United States and Ireland***

**Supervisors: M<sup>a</sup> Elena Jaime de Pablos  
(Universidad de Almería) and Eamon Maher  
(Technological University Dublin)**

Originally addressed as GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency) and considered a divine punishment for an exclusively gay population, HIV/AIDS constituted a socio-political and biomedical crisis that affected international politics and queer identities. Through queer literary criticism, works that tackle AIDS as a theme in both the United States and Ireland will be examined to study their views on HIV/AIDS—related stigma and the sociopolitical silence that has accompanied it in the LGBTQ+ community from the 1980s until the present day. Sex, the body, language, and drugs are central issues in this genre that reflect the reality and trauma of those affected by the virus.

A great variety of attempts to explain and describe the disaster of the AIDS crisis can be found from a social and medical point of view. The focus of this project is to analyze how the crisis affected, and the ways in which it is represented, in the West through literature and sociopolitical discourses in Ireland and the United States. The first cross-cutting objective is to determine the role of HIV and AIDS as playing a fundamental part and influencing the development of ideas generated to explain the nature of queer thinking and the definition of the queer community and their identities. Additionally, the *post-AIDS* cultural narrative will also be explored as the sociopolitical discourse of survival that originates after medical treatments halted the spread and mortal nature of the virus.

Given the nature of this research being closely related to the LGBTQ+ community, queer theory as applied to literary criticism has been considered as the main methodology of analysis. Among others, notable theoretical and philosophical works by Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, and Sara Ahmed will be used to account for issues of language, identity, trauma, vulnerability, abjection, and biopolitics. The corpus of analysis is comprised of a selection of works from American fiction and drama, and Irish fiction and drama in a comparative study of the AIDS literature genre. Both new voices and canonical authors will be included to cover a wider examination of the research question in both countries and to broaden the scope of analysis considering that the literary production tackling the HIV/AIDS crisis is limited. Tony Kushner's *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* (1995) and Colm Tóibín's *The Blackwater Lightship* (1999) are two examples of canonical American theatre and Irish fiction, respectively, by renowned authors who deal with HIV/AIDS in their works.



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