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## Rape Culture and Consent in Contemporary Anglophone Women's Rewritings of the Classical Tradition

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Sexualised violence is one of the central mythemes in Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as both gods and men predate lesser female divinities and female mortals, regardless of their age. Downplayed, taken for granted, normalised, or even sanctioned and legitimized under the male-centred auspices of the Classical tradition, unconsented sex, sexual assault and rape have recently found their way into a plethora of female-authored reimaginings which provide an unheard-of centrality to marginal female characters and myths with hardly any previous voice or visibility.

Considering the relevance of current debates on the prevention and eradication of sexualised violence, this paper aims to critically explore and demonstrate how English-speaking novelists such as Elizabeth Cook, Emily Hauser, Madeline Miller, Natalie Haynes, Pat Barker and Jennifer Saint are intent on debunking the discourses and narratives of Rape Culture. Understood as "a milieu that normalizes aggressive heterosexual male violence towards women" (Kessel 2022, 131), these novelists counter its nuances and ramifications by reinscribing them into tenets of Consent Culture, which prioritises balance, respect and mutual consent in sexual dynamics and relationships. Given that an imbalance in power politics is at the core of rape and other traumatic and intersectional forms of sexualized violence, instead of cancelling them and their perpetrators in these feminist revisions, it is victims and survivors that receive the main narrative focus, becoming empowered in the process. In contrast with their canonical counterparts, these recent iterations of Briseis, Cassandra, Circe, Helen of Troy or Atalanta, amongst others, tell their own stories from their own perspectives and even, more often than not, have a say in them, acquiring agency into the bargain and establishing cognitive bridges that strengthen emotional ties with readers.

Therefore, centered as it is on the reception of contemporary women's reimaginings, this paper applies the critical framework constructed by Cox (2011), Liedeke (2011), Cox and Theodorakopoulos (2019), Hauser (2019), and Nikolau (2020) to the broader narrative contexts of Cook's *Achilles* (2002), Hauser's *For the Most Beautiful* (2016), Miller's *Circe* (2018), Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), Haynes' *A Thousand Ships* (2019) and Saint's *Atalanta* (2023). Through close textual analysis of a selection of relevant extracts from these texts—rigorously structured on a date-of-publication basis in order to best appreciate its evolution, a special emphasis is placed on problematising this specific form of violence against women, as well as demonstrating how these novelists debunk rape myths while promoting, directly and indirectly, the culture of consent.

### Keywords:

Contemporary women's rewritings; myth debunking; rape culture; consent culture; sexualised violence.

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## Anglo-French Rivalry in 18<sup>th</sup> c. Drama: Staging the Middle Ages for the Seven Years' War

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Unlike other literary genres, drama has an immediate and massive impact on the general public, making it an effective propagandistic tool in times of political controversy. This paper studies the use of the medieval past in 18<sup>th</sup> c. drama through the lens of comparative literature by examining two patriotic plays, an English and a French one, premiered at the time of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). As instances of Early Modern medievalism, both tragedies revisit significant episodes of their respective medieval historical heritage in order to establish a connection with the contemporary war situation, derived from the fierce competition between Britain and France for economic and political supremacy over the Western world. On the one hand, the English tragedy *Athelstan* by John Brown (1756) revisits the Anglo-Saxons' struggle in the face of the Danish invasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. as an example of national union. Although chronologically set many centuries earlier, the play deals with the fear of inner dissention under foreign threat, a polemical issue equally raised by the increasing military tension with France by the time the Seven Years' War was about to start. Taking on the 18<sup>th</sup> c. revival of the racial and political myth of the Norman Yoke, and making the most of it to support the proverbial British anti-Catholicism too, Brown's patriotic play anticipates Romantic medievalism by locating the origins of national identity in the pre-Norman period. In parallel with this, French author Pierre-Laurent de Belloy takes an episode in the French medieval past to explore the end of the Seven Years' War from the perspective of his country. In fact, his play *Le Siège de Calais* (1765) recounts the English conquest of the city of the same name by presenting this traumatic episode in French medieval history as an example of Gallic resilience and patriotic sacrifice in the face of adversity, which reframes the new French defeat in the Seven Years' War as a question of being morally superior to the overreaching British Empire. Interestingly, both tragedies define the essential national character of their respective nations along the lines of the eternal devotion to the freedom of one's country and the staunch loyalty to the native political institutions under the threat of being replaced by foreign ones, and likewise delve on the question of true patriotism over individual self-advantage. Notwithstanding their similar partisan reappropriation of the medieval past, the two plays met vastly different receptions from their respective audiences. By examining the disparity of this response, this study seeks to analyse the ways in which these attempts at rewriting national history on the stage affected the self-image of early modern Britain and France.

### Keywords:

Seven Years' War; medievalism; comparative literature; patriotism; 18<sup>th</sup> c. drama.

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**"Time was running shorter, tightening around our house, crushing me": Trans-generational Trauma and the Domestic Space in Layla Martínez's *Carcoma* (2021) and Shirley Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962)**

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In *The Poetics of Space* (1957) Bachelard navigates the symbology behind the images and allegorical references that appear in literary texts, as he envisions them as "a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche" (Bachelard 1957, 15). Bachelard pays special attention to the figure of the images associated with the domestic space, as their extremely personal yet relatable meanings surround the concept of the house with a strong psychological and ontological significance. The notion of the *home* then, becomes a particular object of study for Bachelard, as the construction of the idea of the house creates an ongoing, conflicting dialectic between safety and comfort and stagnancy and entrapment (Bachelard 1957, 40). These associations with the idea of *home* locate the subject that tackles them as torn between "its reality and its virtuality", collapsing the divisions of past, present and future timelines.

This breach within linear timelines that occurs in the house becomes particularly prominent in *Carcoma* (2021) by Layla Martínez and *We Have Always Lived in The Castle* (1962) by Shirley Jackson. In both novels, the narrative voices, placed majorly within the domestic space, actively interact with the reality of the house they inhabit in order to grasp the scope of its virtuality — being in both cases this virtuality the trauma associated with the familial losses that have taken place within their respective households. Adopting the horror genre as the basis to build the narrative, both Martínez's and Jackson's works deal with the otherness and marginalization that come from carrying the weight of generational trauma within small communities and the difficulty of its overcoming when it radiates and coats the domestic spaces the narrators reside. Parting from Bakó and Zana's premise on trans-generational trauma, in which they pointed to a deep-rooted and many times undetected connection between children and their parents' trauma, this blur of past and present timelines embodied in the figure of the house will be studied in both novels as a way to detect the endemic presence of this psychological condition within the images associated to the domestic space. As Bakó and Zana mention in their study, victims of trans-generational trauma "psychologically identify more powerfully with their parents' harrowing past than with their own separate and distinctive present" (Bakó and Zana 2003, 174)". The protagonists of both novels will go through similar processes, showing a consuming, ingrained connection with their ancestors' somber pasts, which projects itself in the figure of the haunted house, and the conflict that results from "unfastening" that generational bond while trying to keep familial attachments alive.

**Keywords:**

Trans-generational Trauma; Space Theory; Shirley Jackson; Comparative Literature; Horror Literature.

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## Forgotten Women: María de Zayas in Romantic Britain

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The Romantic era was a pivotal moment for Anglo-Spanish relations. The Peninsular War sparked a sudden surge of interest in Spanish affairs in Britain, leading to the creation of new representations and figurations of the country (Saglia 2000; Coletes and Laspra 2013, 2019; Saglia and Haywood 2018; Beatty and Laspra 2019). This phenomenon was also part of a wider process of reassessment of Spanish culture, society and history in European Romanticism. Regarding literature, German Romantic critics rediscovered the Spanish literary tradition and notably contributed to restore its reputation in Britain, at time in which there was a growing interest in foreign literatures (Saglia 2019). Recent studies on the reception and dissemination of Spanish writers in Romantic Britain (Perojo and Flores 2022) explore the role that the periodical press played in shaping British public opinion about Spanish letters and reveal that British critics, publishers and translators created a canon of Spanish literature that was almost exclusively male. Although male authors were the ones garnering most of the attention and admiration, Spanish women writers did not go completely unnoticed. In fact, there are few but significant traces of their presence in British print culture in the Romantic period. Teresa de Ávila (also called Saint Teresa of Jesus, 1515-1582) became a source of inspiration for Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who regarded her as a feminine ideal and even considered publishing an expurgated version of her works suitable for a Protestant readership (Perojo Arronte 2018, 99-106). He never did so, but the translation of "Soneto a Cristo crucificado," a sonnet attributed to Teresa de Ávila (although the authorship is unclear) can be found in John Bowring's *Matins and Vespers: With Hymns and Occasional Devotional Pieces* (1823). Bowring also translated four poems by the Spanish-Portuguese writers Violante do Céu (1601-1693) and Maria do Céu (1658-c.1753) in *Ancient Poetry and Romances of Spain* (1824). Identifying these traces is essential to reconstruct this neglected canon of women writers, but this paper centres specifically on one of these authors: María de Zayas (1590-after 1647).

Zayas is primarily renowned for her novels, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637) and *Parte segunda del sarao y entretenimiento honesto* (also known as *Desengaños amorosos*, 1647). Her works enjoyed considerable popularity at home and abroad and some stories contained in them were translated into English in the early eighteenth century (Murphy 2018, 60). Zayas faded into oblivion until the late Romantic period, when in 1832 Thomas Roscoe translated "El castigo de la miseria," a story contained in *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, for *The Spanish Novelists*, his three-volume anthology of Spanish narrative texts in English translation, which also includes works by Cervantes and Quevedo, among others. By examining Roscoe's translation as well as the "Introductory notice" that precedes it and other scattered references to her in the periodical press, this paper shows that the most sentimental and indecorous aspects of Zayas' novels were rejected and sheds new light on the reception of her works in Britain.

### Keywords:

María de Zayas; British Romanticism; Anglo-Spanish relations; reception studies; Thomas Roscoe.

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### **A Reversal of State. Subversive Humor in Erdrich's *The Round House* and King's "The Baby in the Airmail Box" adopting agendas**

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Stigmatized as enemies of the nation, for too long have Indigenous Peoples (Native Americans and First Nations Peoples) seen their lands and cultures being grabbed and decimated by an hegemonic, foreign power. These dispossessions were based on Western laws that all too easily disregard legal agreements between parts when one of them is a cultural minority. While being dispossessed of material resources and culture, programs pursuing a complete assimilation into the hegemonic culture were applied. As part of the assimilation programs, Indigenous children were targeted, forcibly separated from their families and dramatically exterminated in this pursue. Conversely, stories about white Western children kidnapped by Indigenous peoples provided a fertile soil for heaping grievances towards a demonic Other, and permeated into Western popular lore. Cultural resistance against these prejudices, based on asymmetrical power relationships, and the reclaiming of agency over their own stories take the form of humorous accounts of white children *adopted in* Indigenous families, in the works of Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* and Thomas King's "The Baby in the Airmail Box."

Inscribed within the framework of Postmodern and Gender criticism and Cultural Studies, this study of cases draws from their Indigenous writers resisting hegemonic dominance by means of first, employing English language and second, "getting the knife in [...] by being funny" (Atwood 244), i.e. weaponizing said language by means of humor. Employing close reading techniques to compare and contrast the deployment of humoristic strategies in both works, focusing in Erdrich's Linda Wishkob/Lark embedded story and King's short story, this study argues that their use of parody, irony and sarcasm does not only follow a political agenda intent on exposing the effects of oppression, but also uncovers the convoluting maze of "Indian Law" (Erdrich 227-230) and the inapplicability of Canadian or US Laws for cases such as legally adopting a white child into an Indigenous family, thus resulting into a blockage of action and inability of taking proper legal course, in what can be described as patent examples of intersectionality.

In the conclusions we will interpret how the multilayered effect of humoristic devices operates in both texts, in terms of law, myth, parallelisms and Indigenous versus Western prejudices regarding infancy and upbringing, especially under the light of the last news about reservations and mission schools.

#### **Keywords:**

Indigenous Humor; Comparative Literature; Louise Erdrich; Thomas King; Cultural Studies.



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## Emotional, Symbolic and Materialist Dimensions of Human-Nonhuman Relationships in Anuradha Roy's *The Earthspinner*

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Human vulnerability, the impact of social and political change and the intersection of class, caste and gender in India are central to the novels of Indian writer Anuradha Roy. Her characters are richly drawn and their life stories are often at the root of various manifestations of social injustice. Through a lyrical prose style, Roy offers a committed and sensitive portrayal of human nature. Emotions as diverse as love, nostalgia, loss and social issues such as hypocrisy, sexual harassment, cruelty and violence are at the heart of her exploration of the complexities of the human condition. *The Earthspinner* (2021) is her fifth novel. It revolves around myth, history and memory and is set over a period of five years between India and England focusing on the lives of Sarayu, Elango and the dog Chinna. *The Earthspinner* explores, among other things, the art of pottery and the creative process, love across religions, and loss and longing in relation to the concept of "home". In this multi-layered work, the voiceless dog Chinna wanders through the lives of the various characters, acting in turn as an emotional communicative link, whose impeccable and faithful behaviour makes us reflect on the arbitrariness of racial and religious boundaries and the folly of some human choices. The aim of this paper is to examine this novel through the lens of Affective Ecocriticism. Affective ecocriticism seeks to understand the emotional and psychological dimensions of human relationships with the natural world by exploring the intersections between affect theory and environmental discourse. As Bladow and Ladino assert, "Bodies, human and non-human, are (...) the most salient sites at which affect and ecocriticism come together".

I will pay particular attention to how Roy relates imagery of fire and earth to emotions of loss, longing and anger in the novel, and how "place shapes the emotional lives" of the characters (Bladow and Ladino 2018). I will also address issues of social justice, sense of place and non-human animals in environmental ethics. Non-human animals play an important role in affective ecocriticism by challenging anthropocentric views of the natural world and encouraging us to rethink the emotional and affective experiences of non-human animals. In *The Earthspinner*, the dog Chinna demonstrates his inherent value as a sentient being and probes beyond human nonsense in questions related to religious fanaticism and loss. Finally, based on the novel's insistence on the continual transformation that the earth undergoes as it spins, I will apply Stacy Alaimo's theory of trans-corporeality by alluding to the parallels and similarities between the material and affective turns.

**Keywords:**

Affective ecocriticism; Anuradha Roy; material ecocriticism; symbolism; trans-corporeality.

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**(Re)membering Collectively, Healing Communally: Richard Wagamese's Indian Horse**

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In his writings on collective memory, French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs established that "in order to remember, one must be capable of reasoning and comparing and of feeling in contact with a human society that can guarantee the integrity of our memory" (Halbwachs and Coser 1992). The act of remembering, from Latin *rememorari*, to call to mind, *re-* (again) and *memor* (mindful) becomes, therefore, a collective effort. Nevertheless, the aftermath of traumatic events may disrupt such endeavor due to the painful obstacles that being mindful presents in these cases. Consequently, said hindrances often prevent members of a community from going on with their lives (Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart 1991). In order "to withstand adversity, to endure by being flexible, to adapt to conditions of crisis" (Fraile Marcos 2019), forgetting might seem the safest choice. I argue, however, that collective remembrance plays a crucial role in the development of mechanisms of resistance and resurgence in communities profoundly affected by trauma. Often understood exclusively as an individual phenomenon, resilience goes hand in hand with social progress, which unavoidably also resonates in the development of the individual (Cyrułnik 2003). Thus, this paper examines the apparatus of collective memory as catalyst for Indigenous resilience and healing in Richard Wagamese's novel *Indian Horse*. In the novel, Saul Indian Horse, a member of the Fish Clan peoples of Northern Ontario staying at the New Dawn alcohol treatment center, narrates his life on paper from childhood into early adulthood after forcibly being taken to St Jerome's catholic residential school and having been stripped of his identity to assimilate into Eurocanadian culture. Storytelling is envisioned as Saul's therapy while also serving as a portrayal of the progressive journey into consciousness of the trauma he suffered. Thus, readers become mindful of the abuse endured by the protagonist at the same time as he does, which allows for the (re)connection of the character not only with his equals, but also with the audience. Following Jan Assmann's idea that "every individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others" (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995), this essay demonstrates that Saul's eventual bouncing-back process will only be feasible once he recollects and reconnects with other members of his community who have similarly endured the trauma perpetrated by the residential school system. Ultimately, the reader is made aware of new possibilities for change and hope in the present thanks to the character's recollection of the past.

**Keywords:**

Collective memory; resilience; indigenous; residential schools; identity.

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**Identities on the Move: Textual Assemblages in Migrant's Testimony**

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Testimonial life narratives bring to the fore the "I" whose rights are at stake. In the case of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, it becomes ever more important for their voices to be heard so as to counter polarization on the rise. For lack of rightful representation, people on the move are usually othered, especially so at times of several other intersecting crises as now, where a postpandemic society is not willing to open itself to those most in need. The emotional power of the "I" of the eye-witness as expounded by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2012) is by no means new. Yet nothing seems to be transcending the usual divides and discourses deployed by both media and the general public when addressing issues such as global migration. A new look on the concepts of vulnerability and resistance (Butler, Gambetti and Sabsay 2016) may suggest a way forward. When faced with such radical vulnerability as that of migrants in the current political climate, the one is not possible without the other. Reorienting our critical lens, therefore, to texts where textual assemblages pose a challenge to traditional readings of literature is potentially illuminating for scholars in English studies.

Following Ian Buchanan in *Assemblage Theory and Method* (2020), literary assemblages are here understood as "a critical response to the growing awareness at the turn of the last century that [...] the world is [...] textured in quite different ways" (1). In this paper, the focus is on what Maria Tamboukou calls "mobility assemblages" (Tamboukou 2020, 237). The aim of this paper is to study and apply assemblage thinking to an Anglophone literary masterpiece, namely Mondiant Dogon's *Those We Throw Away Are Diamonds: A Refugee's Search for Home* (Dogon and Krajcski 2021). Combining poetry, oral and family history, and a non-linear narrative where the narrator is self-affirmed as unreliable, this memoir is paradigmatic of the affective, political, and narrative entanglements of contemporary displacement.

Drawing on testimonial narratives scholarship (Schaffer and Smith 2004), I showcase the multiplicity of voices in the narrative, as it recounts the memories and stories the witnessing child's "I" re-members and re-constructs from his time in Congo as a Bagogwe Tutsi, to the journeys he undertook, to and from Rwanda, across borders and refugee camps, alone or accompanied, until reaching the United States in adulthood. In looking back at a past full of insecurity, death, and trauma, the "I" and the "we" become enmeshed, and an activist self emerges.

This paper puts assemblage theory to the test in a complex self-narration exercise by highlighting the experience of migrants whose lives and livelihoods, rights and identities, are at stake. My analysis sheds light on the web of affective attachments we become entangled in as well as the ways in which activist texts unsettle expectations of what is right. Contesting stereotypes, the text

concludes in a hopeful tone, as it paves the way for further research on migrant narratives' textual assemblages and their role in contemporary society.

**Keywords:**

Memoir; testimonial narrative; migrant's identities; textual assemblage; mobility assemblage.

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**'The materialism of action and abstraction': Avant-guard perspectives in Gertrude Stein's *Spanish Summers***

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Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) belongs to the generation of American expatriates who established their residence in Paris in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Like other American authors such as Henry James or Edith Wharton, Stein felt attracted by the charms of the City of Light and joined the group of American intellectuals and artists who saw in the Paris of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the embodiment of the modern experience. Yet, Stein was also keen on other European cultures. In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Stein travelled on various occasions to Spain, where she visited several Spanish landmarks such as Granada, Madrid or Majorca. Influenced by her close friendship with the two Spanish artists that she met in Paris, Pablo Picasso and Juan Gris, and hypnotized by the charms of the Mediterranean Sea, Stein developed a fascination for Spanish culture and avant-garde art that would reflect and had an impact on her writing.

The influence that Stein's time in Spain has played in the development of Stein's work has been rarely addressed by criticism (Murad 2013, Murad 2016). However, a thorough look at Stein's literary production, as well as at her private correspondence proves that the author had a fascination with the country that often worked as a source of inspiration not only for her poems, plays and narrative texts, but also for her testing of new literary techniques, as the recurrent presence of Spain in her experimental text *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) proves. Drawing on visual culture studies (Antliff 2001; Mitchell 1995) and modernist studies (Marcus 2013; van Hulle 2013), this paper examines Stein's portrayal of Spain in different private and public texts written during and after her visits to the country. I shall determine how, as a writer and artist, she perceived in Spain what she labelled as 'a materialism of action and abstraction' (Stein 2020, 86) that impacted on the development of her modernist writing and on her transatlantic perspective towards art and literature.

**Keywords:**

Gertrude Stein; Spain; visual culture; modernism; travel writing.

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**Hope as an act of rebellion and resistance in the face of a global ecological crisis: *Bioluminescent*, the first LunarPunk anthology (Norton-kertson 2023)**

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Framed in globalized and neocolonial context of ecocide and progressive mass extinction of species and ecosystems (Nye *et al.* 2013) Solarpunk fiction, which originated in the late 2000s, imagines green futures based on renewable energy and a DIY aesthetics (Wagner and Wieland 2022). Counter-narrating dystopias, it is driven by a radical hope which dares to envision societies able to overcome the challenges of a changing climate and to achieve sustainability, egalitarianism and social justice (Wagner and Wieland 2017). Thus, within the theoretical framework of ecocriticism and environmental humanities (Oppermann and Iovino 2017), SolarPunk climate fiction (cli-fi for short) has emerged as an increasingly popular genre that puts environmental issues at the very center of imaginary futures. Although often considered a subgenre within science fiction, as current global catastrophic events rapidly unfold, it is also considered speculative fiction as many of the impacts of climate change are no longer futuristic. To this regard, Solarpunk promotes a creative *rebellion* not just against the fossil fuel industry and the idea that a climate apocalypse is inevitable but mostly, a literary and cultural reaction against a status quo based on despair and defeat (Ulibarri 2018, 2020).

Just recently, hopeful Solarpunk imaginaries and possible futures have taken a step further to reconnect with dormant powers and energies socially and culturally oppressed. As such, LunarPunk has been recently born as its new subgenre through a new anthology called *Bioluminescent* (Norton-kertson 2023). The first science fiction and fantasy anthology of its kind, it brings together fiction and poetry not just as an act of Solarpunk rebellion but as a complementary form of a LunarPunk resistance.

In this line, the objective of this presentation is to introduce and briefly analyze this anthology as a fairly new and relatively undeveloped subgenre of Solarpunk. It will follow a methodology that explores its analogous relationship, as much as its own particularities, both in the aesthetic aspects and thematic lines of these two subgeneres. Additionally, It will be argued that the worlds in this new anthology vary from eco-utopias to Solarpunk space communities, to the more spiritual, magical, and fantastical side while fighting real world climate crisis. Moreover, it struggles for solutions to global social problems and the movement to build more resilient communities in harmony with all sentient beings, both human and non-human, with Nature and the forces of the Universe.

The analysis will thus be structured around messages of radical hope. The works analyzed will be a novelette by Starhawk (1979) and a short story by Wendy Wagner, by Sarena Ulibarri and by Justine Norton.

As a conclusion, it will be highlighted the power of storytelling to illuminate the way toward transforming hopeful possible futures and to show that the time for action is now. In particular,



in this new anthology, hope is celebrated as an act of rebellion and resistance in the face of a global ecological crisis.

**Keywords:**

LunarPunk; SolarPunk; Ecological crisis; Climate fiction; Radical hope

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**Voices and Gazes in Terese Marie Mailhot's *Heart Berries*: An Exploration of Relationality in Practices of Self-Knowledge**

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In the context of the “postmodernist disruption of truth-telling” and the loss of the object of authentic self-knowledge, Patrick Hayes advances an approach to autobiographical writing that helps overcome the common-sense model of autobiography that takes self-knowledge for granted, and the anti-narrativist model that can only focus on the lost object (Hayes 2022, 66-92). The first goal of this paper is to review Hayes’ proposal to measure the “truthfulness” of self-knowledge by considering whether it is articulated as “a hermeneutic process” that offers a “stance of openness to the alterity of the self” (Hayes 2022, 75).

Resonating with other life-writing theories on relationality (Smith and Watson 2010; Miller 2002; Eakin 1999), Hayes suggests that autobiographical texts may achieve this by acknowledging that the meaning of a life is “continually revised within and through other centres of consciousness” (2022, 95). The second goal of this paper is to offer a reading of Terese Marie Mailhot’s *Heart Berries: A Memoir* (2018) which sustains that the text’s “authoritativeness” is articulated through the recognition that the memoir is an open-ended process of interpretation in which others never cease to take part.

The voices that saturate Mailhot’s memoir reflect how others engage differently with her subject positions—Indian, woman, survivor of child abuse, and sufferer of psychic distress. These various engagements turn the formative voice of others into ethically implicated gazes. Thus, while some voices are linked to a surveilling gaze that endangers Mailhot’s own voice, other voices are linked to a gaze that sees her and strengthens her voice.

**Keywords:**

Terese Marie Mailhot; contemporary life writing; truthful self-knowledge; hermeneutic self-knowledge; relationality.

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## Natural History Collectors in Neo-Victorian Texts

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As Samuel J.M.M. Alberti has argued "[t]here were over 250 natural history 'museums' in Britain by the turn of the nineteenth century, and countless menageries, shops, libraries and gardens also displayed natural objects, alive or dead" (2002, 291). The owners of such collections included notorious personalities like William Bullock (the London Museum curator), or Mary Anning, the famous fossil hunter and collector. Interestingly, Anning's experiences of hunting and collecting fossils have been fictionalised in different neo-Victorian novels, alongside other Victorian collectors (both fictional and non-fictional) embodying the passion for the possession and storage of natural specimens.

The literary portrayal of such collectors relies on the articulation of two crucial steps in the exercise of collecting: firstly, the finding of the specimen and the collector's physical contact with it, and secondly, the assortment and classification of the collectibles. My contention is that these steps lie behind the Victorian collectors' effort to orient themselves in an entangled world, firstly by means of the phenomenological contact with nature through the collected specimens, and secondly through the task of classification in an attempt to make sense of the collection as a microcosm of nature at a time of shaken certainties. On the one hand, the collector's physical contact with the fossilised creature can be examined in the light of Sarah Ahmed's paradigm of phenomenology, which brings together "a model of emotional intentionality" with "a model of affect as contact": "we are affected by 'what' we come into contact with. In other words, emotions are directed to what we come into contact with: they move us 'toward' and 'away' from such objects" (Ahmed 2006, 2). On the other hand, the exercise of classification is illuminated by the perception of collected items as mirrors of the collector's personality, supported by the accounts of some psychological processes surrounding the practice of collecting. In this context, Philip Blom, for instance, traces the craving for collectable objects back to the desire for the attributes that those objects represent (2004, 156).

In the light of this, the aim of the present paper is to explore a number of neo-Victorian texts portraying the image of the collector of natural specimens, from the perspective of the articulation of the two steps described above. This exploration will address classical examples of neo-Victorian fiction, as well as more recent ones, and will take as theoretical referents Ahmed's paradigm of phenomenology and different critical approaches to the practices of collectors' storage and classification of specimens.

### Keywords:

natural history; specimens; collectors; neo-Victorian texts.

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### ***The Shape of Water: A New Historicist Approach to the Role of the Amphibian Man as a Cold War Asset and Threat***

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The aim of this paper is to analyze the role of the amphibian man as both an American asset in the race to win the Cold War and a threat to American society, particularly its men. The captive state in which the creature survives for the majority of the film emphasizes the importance of keeping it alive as well as the danger it poses to those whose mission it is to experiment on it in order to gain an advantage over the enemy. This duality is best exemplified by the amphibian man's interactions with Colonel Richard Strickland, who is physically attacked by the creature, as well as by the amphibian man's interactions with the remaining characters and more specifically with the protagonist, Elisa.

To examine such duality further, all of the factors at work in the United States at the start of the 1960s must be considered. This implies that the Cold War and the Vietnam War, the latter of which was one of the most heinous conflicts ever witnessed in the twentieth century, must be viewed as both political conflicts and indicators of a crisis for white hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, this crisis must also be addressed in terms of the power dynamics between the United States and Latin American nations.

As a result, the New Historicism is the methodology that allows for the exploration of the historical, social, and political contexts that help explain the connection between white hegemonic masculinity, America's efforts to maintain its hegemony after World War II, and the otherness in which Latin American countries have had to exist, much like the amphibian man, whose origin is traced back to the Amazon.

Additionally, this approach is significantly influenced by Michel Foucault's power theory, which is critical when it comes to analyzing the conflict between so-called third-world countries and the United States, as well as shedding light on issues such as social class and race.

Thus, the portrayal of the amphibian man as an agent of destruction, whether of white American masculinity or of Communism, becomes the catalyst that exposes the fragility of both masculine and political power.

It is also worth noting that *The Shape of Water* was released in December 2017, the same year Donald J. Trump was elected President of the United States. It will become clear how this historical event is relevant to the analysis of the role of the creature by using the aforementioned new historicist approach.

#### **Keywords:**

New Historicism; masculinity; power; cultural studies; popular culture.

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### ***Viceroy's House* (Gurinder Chadha 2017): Discerning Who the Victors Are**

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Over a black screen, before any image has been projected yet and with just some faint background noise, Gurinder Chadha's 2017 film starts with the statement attributed to Winston Churchill: "History is written by victors". With this provocative beginning, Chadha seems to aim at sparking our reaction and, indeed, if we pay heed to some of the reviews, she actually gathered attention from all the sides involved in the historic events depicted in the film, and not always for the best. In formal terms, the influence of British audiovisual industry is undeniable, and in this sense the Empire is the victor: the filmmaker plays with the genre conventions of the heritage film, so dear to the British, and Chadha herself admitted she pretended to tell the story of the last Viceroy of India as if it were some kind of adaptation of the popular TV series "Upstairs/Downstairs" to the big screen. Perhaps for this reason, the film got bitter criticism especially from Muslim and Hindu reviewers, who considered the director attempts basically at whitewashing Mountbatten's responsibility in the partition of India and the aftermath of that decision and for that reason, it is the British the ones narrating the events.

However, it is my contention that the victors the film refers to is Gurinder Chadha's family: by including some autobiographical notes right before the credit titles at the end, she is paying homage to her ancestors as survivors of those terrible moments in the history of India and how the decisions adopted by the last Viceroy of India affected them. Furthermore, Chadha leaves clues throughout the film to leave clear that her narration does not pretend to be an accurate and "objective" version (one more) of the events that took place in the first half of the year 1947 in India: by means of narrative and formal devices, Chadha states right from the start through her critical gaze that this is *her*story, and it is from her situated knowledge that she gives her particular and subjective vision of those events. The focus of my proposal, then, will be the analysis of those devices and how the filmmaker tries to ultimately challenge "historical facts" or any attempt at offering the definitive version of historic events whatsoever, not as a way of denying the past, but from the firm conviction that only through a narrative act and all the processes involved in it, can you turn events into "facts".

#### **Keywords:**

Film; critical gaze; historic events; narrative; situated knowledge.

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## Mental Health and Resilience in Postpandemic Chicana Literature

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Mental health care has become the focus of important organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), in the last decades. According to several studies, before the pandemic depression was already the second cause of health issues globally (Goldberg et al. 2021). Furthermore, we should bear in mind an event that changed millions of people's mindsets around the globe, and that also had detrimental impact on their mental health: the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering mental health before and after the pandemic, we should notice that there are certain groups that have been more vulnerable to its negative effects. Some of these vulnerable groups are children, teenagers and young people, health care workers, marginalized groups, immigrants and refugees, and women (Goldberg et al. 2021; Ramos 2021; Tschakert and Neef 2022; Macias et al. 2020). Having said that, it is important to note that numerous studies on mental health conducted in the current century (Zarza and Sobrino 2007; NAMI; MHA) already indicated that the Latinx communities were especially vulnerable to mental health problems right before the pandemic, and even more so if we focus on the Latinx community in the United States. Studies on mental health indicated that this sector of the population was prone to suffer from mental health and were affected by disparities in mental health care if compared to their counterparts (Ramos 2020; Alegría et al. 2016). And the statistics are even higher when analysed from a gender perspective, which point(s) out deplorable numbers when it comes to Latinx women and their youth.

Although under the current climate conditions the encouragement of mental health care is ubiquitous globally, the studies that associate this field with literary creation are infrequent. For this reason, this paper aims to shed light on the many ways that mental health is represented in Postpandemic Chicana Literature; examine and unravel the literary representation of the diverse specific stressors the Chicanx community endures, especially women; as well as discuss the topics addressed through its creation. For this purpose, several works written by Chicana women, such as Erika L. Sánchez (2022), Julissa Arce (2022), Arianna Brown (2021) and Nadia Davis (2021), will be analysed.

### Keywords:

Mental Health; Chicanx; Women; Latinx Community; Postpandemic Literature.

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**"All that alchemy of tree and climate, genius and history": Naturecultures and Hope in Rebecca Campbell's "An Important Failure"**

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Focusing on Rebecca Campbell's award-winning story "An Important Failure" (2020), this paper offers an analysis of representations of various forms of resilience resulting from anthropogenic climate change. I argue that the story is grounded in the modern ideology that defends "the appropriation of nature in the production of culture" (Haraway, *Primate* 11) and reveals that climatic forces are "as much social, cultural, and economic as they are environmental, natural, and physical" (Badia, Cetinic, and Diamanti 2021, i). Consequently, in my analysis of Campbell's representation of climate crisis I aim to mobilize the notion of "natureculture" advanced by Donna Haraway, which refutes the modern idea that nature and culture are antithetical, to ponder distinct forms of resilience building developed while "staying with the trouble" (Haraway, *Staying*) of global warming. Shifting between the historical past and the narrative present and linking various regions of the globe by drawing "string figures with companion species" (Haraway, *Staying*) and the climate, Campbell provides a vivid image of the connections between human action, the climate, and the natural environment, between matter and the (in)tangibility of culture—represented by music making in the story. I read the story through Haraway's admonition that "nature and culture are [to be] reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other" ("Cyborg"151).

I also suggest that the story is deeply invested in eschewing despair and highlighting hope instead as a key mechanism of resilience, while problematizing the notions of both hope and resilience. Therefore, my analysis draws on Richard S. Lazarus' theorizations about the connection between hope and resilience, identifying hope as a coping strategy.

Moreover, I posit that, in an attempt to convey the intricate connections between human activity and climate change in the course of history, Campbell's story enmeshes at the structural and plot levels the temporal complexity of hope—an emotion that "is cultivated in the present, yet its object is some future outcome" (Doyle)—with the representation of resilience. However, if hope and resilience often undergird utopian projects that envision better possible worlds, in Campbell's "An Important Failure," like in other climate fictions, "the locus of hope is not improved life, but life changed, lived through and within ongoing catastrophe" (Doyle). Stressing from the very title the unlikelihood of returning to the natural balance of the past once anthropogenic climate change occurs, the story negotiates hope while speculating on the processes of human adaptation to the resulting hostile, ever-changing environment.

**Keywords:**

Anthropogenic climate change; Rebecca Campbell; natureculture; hope; resilience

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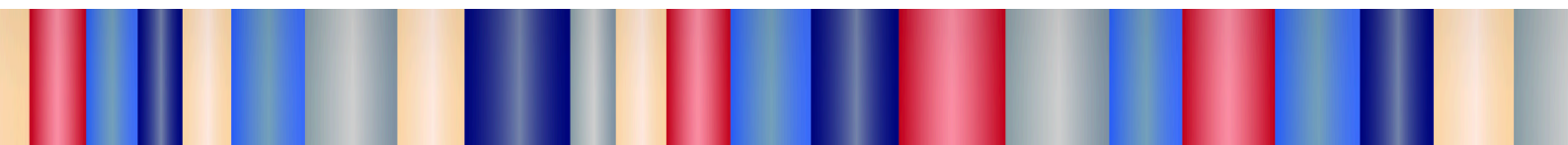
### **"Is this worth more symptoms?": The Graphic Pace of Chronic Illness in Tessa Brunton's Notes from a Sickbed**

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In *Notes from a Sickbed* (2022), American cartoonist Tessa Brunton depicts her life with myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). Narrated in the form of non-linear diary entries and scattered notes, the story chronicles the years that followed the first manifestation of symptoms in 2009 and the many changes that illness brought to Brunton's daily life, such as seeking a part-time job that allows her to work from bed and rearranging her furniture and the distribution of her house to accommodate her need to rest for days. While previous scholarly work has addressed the graphic representation of disability, mental distress, and illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease or cancer (El Refaie 2019, Cressman 2021), there is still a lack of critical work that probes the portrayal of chronic illness in the hybrid medium of comics. Building on theoretical elaborations from the fields of comics theory, crip theory, and the study of illness narratives, this paper will closely examine the graphic and textual representation of chronic illness in *Notes from a Sickbed*. Through deconstructed layouts, clear lines, and framed panels, Brunton meticulously reenacts not only her lack of control over her exhausting symptoms, but also the difficulty of conveying her ailment with words alone. As a contested illness, CFS tends to be disregarded in the medical domain and in everyday life due to the difficulty of "understanding a set of symptoms that are impossible to confirm by medical procedures" (Bülow 2008, 123). Drawing on Thierry Groensteen's study of the comics frame (2007), I will delve into the ways in which Brunton relies on the affordances of the medium to successfully communicate the manifestations of CFS, both physical and emotional. Focusing on her own personal universe, she lays bare her thoughts and emotions while bedridden, and cleverly portrays her feelings of loss and frustration when her entire world is reduced to her room.

Crucial to this graphic narrative is also the depiction of Brunton's constant monitoring of her symptoms and energy levels, always concerned with the "lag" that would signal the beginning of another severe episode. Susan Wendell's work on the relation between chronic illness and disability (2001) and Alison Kafer's formulation of crip time (2013) will be useful to explore how CFS disrupts a normative life development in terms of time and scheduling. Similarly, I will rely on Emma Sheppard's understanding of crip time as pacing, "the activity of scheduling a daily life, particularly rest and low-activity periods" to avoid high pain and fatigue (2020, 43). Painstakingly compartmentalizing every aspect of her routine, Brunton plans in advance her resting hours before working or socializing, and develops a strict self-care system that helps her during the most grueling episodes, such as preparing and freezing meals. All in all, I will argue that *Notes from a Sickbed* articulates a compelling portrayal of the most intricate aspects of chronic illness that challenges linear, medical descriptions while also guiding the reader through the subjective experience of an ill body.

**Keywords:**



Tessa Brunton; Notes from a Sickbed; Graphic Narrative; Crip Theory; Chronic Illness.

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### Tourism and the Popular Romance Novel

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Popular romance novels are escapist stories generally intended for a mass female readership. These novels have often been dismissed as second-class texts due to their formulaic nature, their love plot, and their escapist function. At the end of the twentieth century some seminal studies (McAleer 1999, Dixon 1999) began to change these prejudiced views. They were later followed by other studies that have used feminist, historical, sociological, and postcolonial approaches, thus contributing to more rigorous knowledge of these novels.

This paper focuses on category romances of the kind published by Mills & Boon. Category romances are short novels usually between 185 and 190 pages. As feminist scholar Rosemary Auchmuty says, these novels must be read "in the context of the time and manner of their production." Considered diachronically, they are "historical documents" (1999, x) that reflect the changes in British society from the first half of the twentieth century to the present, particularly those concerning gender relations. My approach to romance fiction is based on this premise. I try to show what these novels reveal about British society and history in the 1970s and 1980s, the period on which I focus.

Several novels written at this time are set in foreign countries. The reason is to be found in the social and economic changes taking place in Britain. In the tourism boom of the 1960s and 1970s, millions of Britons traveled abroad. Spain, France, Italy, and Greece became the favorite destinations in Europe. Many authors writing for the firm, including some of the most popular ones, set their novels in these countries and others in Africa and South America.

I intend to examine the interaction between romance novels, tourism, and the social context. These novels have been regarded as a form of armchair tourism. In fact, in some of them the descriptions come close to those found in travelogues, guidebooks, and tourism brochures (Radway 1984, Snitow 2001). Descriptions of places, food, and local customs are usual, although sometimes tinged with preconceptions. Several novels are critical with respect to tourism and the negative effects it causes on new destinations in Southern Europe. During the 1960s and 1970s, the rise of environmentalism in Britain gave way to many debates about the impact of tourism activity on the environment and the locals' way of life. This is reflected in some novels, which criticize

tourism overcrowding and how it destroys the charm and tranquility of places. As I intend to show, the escapism of the romance genre is not incompatible with social critique.

**Keywords:**

Romance novels; tourism; setting; historical context; social critique.

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**Thinking Conjuncturally about Cultural Polarization: Contingency, Articulation, and Hope**

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The goal of this presentation is twofold. To begin with, it attempts to facilitate a more inclusive understanding of the potentialities of conjunctural analysis. It starts out acknowledging two facts: first, that any given social moment is characterized by the complexity, the unpredictability, and the inconclusiveness of the world; second, that we need to question the inevitability of the relationships that make up any given situation and enter into a struggle over the disarticulation and the rearticulation of contexts so as to better understand how power is distributed. Here I take my cue from John Clarke, for whom a conjuncture marks a "moment of condensation: an accumulation of tendencies, forces, antagonisms and contradictions [that] produces a point of uncertainty and possibility" (2010, 341).

Then, by way of example, but also because it has come to determine how we make sense of experience, my presentation will focus on the spread of cultural polarization and will examine how cultural practices can enter into a dialogue over the context, thus determining the conditions and the limits of possibility. More concretely, I argue that polarization has become part of a new, dominant conception of society. We have assumed that current society is divided over every single cultural issue, and this now determines the coordinates that we set up to make sense of the challenges, the contradictions, and the conflicts that emerge every day. But are we really so polarized? Could it be that this view is contributing to create that which it attempts to describe—the tribalism, the self-interest, the fracturing of social relationships, etc.? In assuming that we are divided into two incompatible factions, we are normalizing that history is moving in one inescapable direction and towards just one possible outcome, when the truth is that the polarization discourse is just one contingent articulation out of many. It may give us the illusion of having found the essential principle that governs our lives at this particular moment but what it does is to distort reality so as to make it fit just one interpretation and, most importantly, it determines what we find acceptable or imaginable and blinds us to the potentialities of other articulations. That is, the polarization discourse makes acceptable some feelings and behaviours and not others; it determines what we find tolerable, imaginable or acceptable. I will argue that, instead of regarding it as a finished product, polarization should be seen as the starting point of one analysis of the conjuncture—the initial hypothesis, not the conclusion—and that such an analysis should be pursued by articulating the many processes or forces that, to the extent that they have been disarticulated, give a given

account its appearance of inevitability. Finally, I will reflect on the need to reconstitute the context as a context of hope.

**Keywords:**

Cultural studies; conjuncture; articulation; contingency; hope.

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Clarke, John. 2010. "Of Crises and Conjunctures: The Problem of the Present." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34 (4): 337-354.

**Grounded: The Fabric of Ordinary Life in Michelle Good's *Five Little Indians***

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There are a myriad of ways in which Indigenous scholars and writers have expressed the irreparable damage that the settler colonial project has brought to their lives. Recently, and partly as a result of the collective work conducted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the focus has widened to include the questions of sustenance, reparation and life through and beyond mere survival. Cree author Michelle Good's multi-award winning novel *Five Little Indians* (2020) may be paradigmatic of this interest. The novel tells the harsh, heartbreaking stories of a group of residential school survivors and their different struggles to overcome their traumas in the midst of deep brokenness inside and rampant hostility outside. Even so, through Good's vivid and honest language, the reader is also invited to discern that, as she herself states, "these characters are more than their trauma" ("These characters" 14:00). I argue that the novel invests in imagining the possibility of modest forms of happiness or, otherwise, the exploration of, in Sara Ahmed's words, "the kinds of worlds that might take shape when happiness does not provide an horizon of experience" (Ahmed 14).

This paper offers a reading of *Five Little Indians* with a focus on the representation of those moments of creative groundedness. Drawing on a combination of contemporary Indigenous scholarship and materialist feminist theories of affect, my reading moves through and beyond the resilience of survival and into the characters' attempts, with different degrees of success, to reinvent their utterly broken lives through solidarity, respect and mutual support. Nishnaabeg writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes about *land pedagogy*, or the capacity to retain a sense of "intelligent Nishnaabeg relationality" against past and ongoing forms of colonial dispossession, pollution, education and gender violences that have threatened the continuity of her culture (8). In a broader pan-Indigenous context, Glen Coulthard proposes the term *grounded normativity* to refer to "the ethical frameworks provided by these Indigenous place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge." These practices are always "based on deep reciprocity" and "are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place" (254). Following both Simpson and Coulthard, I examine this question of deep relationality in the novel as a form of *urban pedagogy*, the production of reciprocal, place-based practices in the inner city of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, where the stranded, utterly dispossessed and estranged characters end up. I further support my analysis on the notion of the "ordinary" as articulated by Kathleen Stewart and Lauren Berlant. According to Stewart, ordinary affects "give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergences" (1-2). For Berlant, the ordinary can be thought of as "an impasse shaped by crisis in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on" (8). Located at the intersection of these diverse conceptual fields, my paper ultimately probes the potential of situated, relational, community-based urban pedagogies to transform "crisis ordinariness" (Berlant 10) into positive attachments in Good's novel.

**Keywords:**

*Five Little Indians*; grounded normativity; Indigenous Canadian literature; land pedagogy; ordinary affects.

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**Beyond Nunangat: Urban Inuit Perspectives of Climate Change in Norma Dunning's *Eskimo Pie***

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The question of Inuit identity has been widely examined in the aftermath of colonial interference with special attention to the issue of the changing environment (Sheila Watt-Cloutier, 2015). However, these perspectives have not sufficiently explored how Urban Inuit have been subjected to the oppressive power structures of both Canada and Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homeland). The Eskimo Identification System, Project Surname, the Re: Eskimo Supreme Court of Canada ruling and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami electoral system have drawn invisible borders around the land claims areas, excluding Inuit who live in the South. The terms nonresident, non-Nunangat and Urban Inuit vary in legal and colloquial debates for the "unintentionally diasporic" (Dunning "Akia" 2), but the problem remains the same: colonial influence has spawned a social system of difference, separation and ranking (197). Norma Dunning's *Eskimo Pie* (2020) is a collection of twenty-six poems and two prose texts that explores the displacement of Urban Inuit. The poems call attention to the aforementioned historical events that gave cause to these circumstances and the intergenerational trauma that ensues. This is primarily achieved by intimating Dunning's mother's experience as a Padlei Inuit residential school survivor. In my analysis, I aim to explore how Indigenous self-presentation in *Eskimo Pie* contributes to ongoing discussions of Urban Inuit identity. This study will add Urban Inuit voices to my research on the interrelation between Inuit and the environment, identifying the injustices produced through colonial agencies and by extension, climate change.

Despite having never been to the North, Dunning's poetry recalls the Arctic environment. She attributes her connection to the land to her understanding of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) or what she and all Inuit have always known. Bonita Lawrence's (2004) scholarship on Urban Native peoples suggests the notion of "blood memory" to explain how Urban Native bodies have a genetic link to their ancestors, a mechanism that safeguards cultural survival. If the body contains genetic knowledge and the brain contains ancestral memories, then I would reason that an equally significant constituent to be considered is the land as an amplifier of embodied identity. I will employ Vanessa Watt's concept of "place-thought" and Warren Cariou's "territory" to support this view and explore how *Eskimo Pie* evokes the sights, smells and tastes of the Canadian Arctic. This paper will explore how the holistic nature of IQ entails that climate change generates multifarious effects that influence Inuit bodies whether they are out on the land or within urban spaces. The findings of this study suggest that Urban Inuit perspectives are essential for global discussions of climate change. In conclusion, my analysis will shed new light on Indigenous poetics as affective responses to current social and environmental crises.



**Keywords:**

Climate Change; Indigenous Poetics; Inuit Literature; Norma Dunning; Urban Inuit.

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**(Mis)-Representation of Girlhood in *The Testaments*: Erasure of Indigenous Girls and Presencing to Move Beyond the Damage**

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Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* makes a return to the dystopian theocracy of Gilead she introduced in her critically acclaimed novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the sequel, she introduces the testimonies of three characters that provide a well-rounded outline of the prescriptive construction of girlhood by the authorities. Atwood focuses on a deconstruction of the gender and class roles that affect young girls growing up within a highly restrictive and surveilled environment that aims to assimilate them into tightly defined gender roles. However, the ethnic component of the girls' identities and how this affects their experiences is left unexplored.

As part of *The Handmaid's Tale* franchise, *The Testaments* follows the same strategy of the first novel by leaving out experiences of racialized and indigenous peoples. The original novel excluded their representation by creating a white supremacist society, while the series leans into a "post-racial aesthetic" that creates inclusion via erasure (Crawley 2018). Moreover, Neville-Shepard suggests that the show depicts how "white feminism and necropolitics are inextricably entangled" (2023, 17). Atwood assumes a white liberal feminist perspective, whereby women are considered to be equally affected by Gilead's politics regardless of their race or ethnic origin. It is especially challenging to accept this premise of white liberal feminism as we look at the history and origin of North America as a colonized territory and its impact in the present.

Maryann Amor traces a connection between Offred's loss of identity in *The Handmaid's Tale* and the Canadian Residential School system. The Residential Schools—like other religious educational institutions in colonized nations such as Australia or the United States—acted as a "total institution", in which indigenous children were not only separated from their families and communities (thus forcing their assimilation) but also tortured, abused and killed. The connection between the institutional violence exerted onto indigenous children and fictional Gilead becomes even more prevalent in *The Testaments*. As readers follow the testimony of Agnes during her girlhood, she recounts the gendered impositions learnt in the school system, and the rampant violence and sexual abuse they were made to suffer.

This paper aims to explore the connections between *The Testaments* and the Canadian Residential School System, maintaining that it is a key ethical position to acknowledge which communities have suffered these acts of violence depicted in the narrative. In addition, it will also consider ways to move beyond "damage-centered research" (Tuck 2009) and account for the myriad of identities indigenous girls may embrace while being surrounded by a colonial legacy. Strategies

such as “presencing” may act as a decolonizing strategy that “exceeds exclusionary neocolonial notions of white, liberal girlhood” (de Finney 2016, 20).

**Keywords:**

*The Handmaid’s Tale*; *The Testaments*; Margaret Atwood; Indigenous girlhoods; Canadian Residential School System.

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**Ugly Feelings and Posthuman Kinship: Women Make Horror**

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While the prejudice against horror cinema as an inherently patriarchal genre produced for, and by, sadistic men has been challenged by many feminist scholars (Berenstein 1996; Pinedo 1997; Cherry 2002), who since the 1990s have addressed the pleasures of female viewers, horror films authored by women have not received comparable academic attention, either in horror studies or in feminist scholarship on genre and women filmmakers. The need for such analysis is particularly pressing now, as the past decade has witnessed a significant breakthrough of women horror practitioners, as emblematised by Jennifer Kent’s *Babadook* (2014) and Julia Ducournau’s *Titane* (2021), among others. Writing for *Broadly*, and making reference to this surge in female horror filmmaking, Evelyn Wang announces “welcome to the golden age of women-directed horror” (2017), and she mentions films such as *Raw* (2016), *Prevenge* (2015), *XX* (2017), *The Lure* (2015), and *The Love Witch* (2016).

However, despite this current discursive visibility and the increased critical recognition, there is still a substantial gap in academic thinking about female directors and horror cinema. This paper seeks to raise some questions about what is at stake when “women make horror” (Peirse 2020) by offering a comparative analysis of *Babadook* (2014), *XX* (2017) – an all women-directed horror anthology film – and *Titane* (2021). I argue that these films attest to major changes in the degree and nature of women’s involvement in the horror genre and open up space for considering the potential feminist implications of horror films made by women. In particular, this paper will focus on the recent horror cinema’s dramatization of the “good life” fantasy under neoliberalism – as discussed by Lauren Berlant (2011) – and a critique of the postfeminist model of overinvested, privatised and isolated motherhood. While the horror genre has always taken up the capacious terrain of “bad” motherhood, from the horrors of pregnancy (*Rosemary’s Baby*, 1968) to the malevolent mother (*Psycho* 1960, *Carrie* 1976), the films under discussion push the representation of the struggle with mothering through horror imagery in new directions, exploring

different facets of the monstrous feminine (Creed 1993, 2022) and posthuman kinship (Paszkievicz, Ruthven and Segarra 2021).

**Keywords:**

Motherhood; horror; feminism; affect studies; posthuman kinship.

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**Screening the Vulnerable 'Other': Parasites, Hospitality and Resilience in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006)**

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Current political systems have been concerned with hospitality towards migrants and refugees. As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, hospitality is "[t]he act or practice of being hospitable; the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers, with liberality and goodwill." However, hospitality as the notion of welcoming the stranger is subject to controversies. Building on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida differentiates unconditional hospitality from hospitality, as he claims that hospitality is always conditional. In fact, it is only unconditional hospitality that enables people "to give the new arrival all of one's home, all of oneself, to give him or her one our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or fulfilment or even the smallest condition" (Derrida 77). While hospitality establishes conditions to welcome or accept the other, unconditional hospitality does not have any conditions. In this light, Derrida highlights that the ethics of hospitality is determined by "the double nature of the border as a mechanism that welcomes or rejects the Other, the newcomer or the stranger" (Manzanas-Calvo and Benito-Sánchez 9). This essay explores the notions of othering, hospitality and hostility in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006). Set in 2027, *Children of Men* displays how human infertility leads the United Kingdom to become a police state in which asylum seekers are persecuted, imprisoned and killed. According to the film, the country believes that human infertility has been provoked by letting asylum seekers and migrants stay in the country freely. Given these situations of uncertainty and instability, hospitality is a major concern in the socio-political system of the film, thereby accepting or rejecting guests depending on whether they are considered valid or not by the country. In this light, resilience emerges as a capacity "to withstand adversity, to endure by being flexible, to adapt to conditions of crisis" (Fraile-Marcos 1) The methodology followed in this paper is based on a close reading of the film. Drawing from Derrida, Sara Ahmed, Ana M.<sup>a</sup> Fraile-Marcos or Judith Butler, this article examines Cuarón's film story from the perspective of the hospitality and affect frameworks. Through this analysis, hospitality

adamantly provokes situations of instability and uncertainty, and emotions lead to subvert ethnic vulnerabilities created by the police state through the use of psycho-social resilience.

**Keywords:**

Hospitality; ethnic vulnerability; resilience; emotions; *Children of Men*.

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**Reframing Narratives on Migration: The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees**

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As part of its work on migration and human rights, on 19 January, 2021 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) launched its #StandUp4Migrants Campaign seeking to illustrate "ways in which everyone can contribute to narrative change and elevate the voices of migrants, the communities that welcome them and those who defend their rights" (OHCHR 2021, n.p.). Among other elements, the campaign website features a Human Rights Seven Key Elements Guide in the form of "a toolkit of ideas and actions to reframe narratives on migrations" (OHCHR 2020, 7).

Taking an overall cultural studies-oriented theoretical stance (Barker and Jane 2016), this paper will conduct a critical analysis of the #StandUp4Migrants Campaign in general and the said toolkit in particular to cast light on the UN's attempt to reframe narratives on migrants and migration as a major issue of concern. To Lawrence Grossberg, "cultural studies aims to provide a 'better' understanding of 'what's going on'" (2010, 57)—in this connection, the analysis will specifically intend to make sense of the significance of the toolkit for promoting human-rights-based narratives on migration and migrants in the present conjuncture. Within the broader Foucauldian attention to discourse as "'unit[ing]' language and practice" (Barker 2004, 54) greatly permeating cultural studies, Critical Discourse Analysis (Flowerdew and Richardson 2018) will be methodologically employed for the analysis of a cultural product of linguistic nature with a view to situating language usage within the constitution of culture and society.

The results of the analysis reveal that the seven key elements in the guide underlie a challenge to the growth of right-wing populist discourse to a great extent articulated through "fear of migrants and asylum seekers" (Wodak, 2015: 43) and anti-immigration as a key component of the agenda of right-wing populist leaders in different world contexts since the 2008 global financial crisis (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017). Such elements come to capitalize on the use of narrative inasmuch as "it unveils fundamental culture-specific opinions about reality and humankind, which are narrativized in stories and novels" (Herman and Vervaeck 2019: 1). Human-rights-based use of narrative is thus fostered to "offer us frameworks of understanding and rules of reference about the way the social order is constructed" (Barker 2004, 131) regarding migrants and migration. The toolkit "is intended for broad use; including by organizations and institutions that work to promote the human rights of migrants, by migrants' human rights defenders, advocacy and service organizations working with migrants, public interest lawyers, and migrants themselves" (OHCHR 2020, 7). With a focus on the English-speaking world, the discussion of results and conclusions

will accordingly consider the potential utilization of this toolkit for the critical analysis of narratives on migrants and migration in different cultural products, for example, British and American refugees NGOs (Davies 2020) or the narrative outputs of the Refugee Tales Project in Britain (e.g. Herd and Pincus 2016).

**Keywords:**

Cultural studies; narrative; migration; human rights; OHCHR.

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**Back to the... Past?: Happiness, Kinship and Temporality in Drew Hayden Taylor's "Petropaths"**

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Drew Hayden Taylor's "Petropaths" (2016) is a short speculative fiction piece that tells the story of Duane, a troubled young Indigenous man who discovers a way to travel to the past through a series of petroglyphs left behind by his Anishinabe ancestors. The story focuses on the growing schism between Duane and his grandfather on account of their very different attitudes towards life, which is only amplified as a result of Duane's discovery, leading to disastrous consequences for the young man. While scholarly interest on Indigenous speculative fiction has exploded in recent years, there is still much ground to cover in regard to the usage of Indigenous slipstream techniques in short fiction, as well as on the connection between Indigeneity and the field of affect theory. In light of this, the aim of this paper is to analyze Taylor's story from the perspective of affect theory and kinship relations, and to illuminate how these are interpellated by different temporal perspectives.

Firstly, I draw from Sara Ahmed's notion of anxious happiness to explain Duane's negative self-identification. I assert that the anxiety Duane feels in his quest for happiness stems from his understanding of time being ostensibly linear, this inherently projects happiness into the future and causes negative affects insofar as it is seen as an unattainable or fleeting feeling. In other words I argue that the cause of the disconnect between Duane and his culture is that trans-temporal kinship cannot exist within a linear temporal framework, thus leading to a self-destructive cycle as he attempts to ease his pain by means of material possessions and drug consumption. As such, he finds himself in a relation of what Lauren Berlant calls cruel optimism where "something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (1).

Secondly, I explore slipstream temporality as a space where affective alliances can emerge, therefore constituting the perfect tool for decolonizing temporal perspectives through the process

of *biiskaabiyang* or “returning to ourselves” defined by Cree scholar Grace Dillon as a process of “discovering how personally one is affected by colonization, discarding the emotional and psychological baggage carried by its impact, and recovering ancestral traditions in order to adapt to our post-Native Apocalypse world” (10). Consequently, *biiskaabiyang* can be understood as an Indigenous-based form of affective resistance against a linear construction of feelings through a focus on trans-temporal kinship with one’s ancestors. In this way, this paper addresses the multilayered connections between the vectors of temporality, affect and kinship and how these are utilized in Indigenous speculative fiction to radically decolonize and reframe Western narratives around happiness.

**Keywords:**

Affect; Decolonization; Happiness; Temporality; Slipstream.

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**Intertextual Narratives in Contemporary Pop Music: Reading Lyrics as Literature in Taylor Swift’s *Folklore* (2020)**

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Music, despite being assiduously consumed by all and being socially treated as an instrument of normalization, accompaniment and, in some way, of building resilience, is not considered subject of study beyond the field of musicology, and it is practically forgotten and dismissed in philological studies. While some theorists such as the renowned Allan F. Moore consider that music studies should never focus on the analysis of lyrics, but rather on the production or the melody, other theorists like Spanish professor Rubén Valdés consider that it is essential to create a critical theory that allows music researchers to develop a proper analysis of song lyrics. Concurrently, some studies have begun to value the great literary work of composition, comparing it to the writing of poetry, that exists behind songs. For instance, scholars like Mora-Rioja (2023) have started to compare lyrics and the process of song-writing to pieces of literature, but never taking into account the pop genre despite being the most consumed worldwide. This paper, thus, will attempt to fill this gap by considering pop music and its lyrics as a product that needs to be treated like the rest of the political, literary and cultural products we analyze: not only as a codifier of the current Zeitgeist but also as a rich body of work that holds to potential to be included in the literary canon. This will be proved by demonstrating the existence of intertextuality within literary works and pop music. Specifically, Taylor Swift’s *Folklore* (2020) will be analyzed so as to demonstrate how the album constitutes a redefinition of the Romantic tradition by not only paying tribute to Romantic poets and narratives, but also by relocating its themes and complexities in today’s panorama. Swift’s *Folklore*, written and produced during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown has been, since it was published, praised for its unique blend of dreamy folk-pop, storytelling, haunting melodies and harmonies and introspective lyricism, but it has not been considered subject of study in English Studies at all. And so, this study will attempt to inspire new discussions around this album, its importance, and pop music in general, in the literary field, possibly encouraging other scholars to consider this field worth studying.

**Keywords:**

Folklore; Intertextuality; Romanticism; Taylor Swift; Literature.

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**"The key doesn't have to be old, the language already is": Narrative and identity in Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves***

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"We needed to remember Story. It was his job to set the memory in perpetuity" (Dimaline, 25). Set in a future in which North America has succumbed to ecological disaster and the settler-colonist inhabitants have lost the ability to dream, Dimaline's characters use *Story* as a means of countering narratives of extraction and exploitation and the physical repetition of residential school traumas. The novel enacts what Warren Cariou identifies as an "Indigenized ethic of interpretation" as stories "come from the land" and are not merely generated by humans residing on the land (341). This unequivocal relationship to the land, or Place-Thought (Watts 2013), is enacted in Dimaline's novel, and the alternative to thinking and being *with* the land is the apocalyptic destruction and cannibalistic tendencies settler-colonists impose on Indigenous peoples. This paper will explore the way in which *The Marrow Thieves* works through the mode of Native slipstream and Indigenous futurism (Dillon 2012) to enact resistance to colonial modes of being and becoming through the recital of Story and the attention to the land.

Vanessa Watts' theorization of Place-Thought along with Warren Cariou's articulation of Terristiry (2020) form the methodological basis for an interrogation of Dimaline's novel that is attentive to the importance of ethical reciprocity both as a means of being of and with the land, as exemplified in the text, as well as part of an academic approach which moves beyond extractivist readings of Indigenous production. "Terristiry is a relation, or rather a plural and ongoing set of relations" through which "Indigenous people learn their responsibilities" and their identity (Cariou, 2020: 2). Throughout the novel, the question of Story, and its relationship to the characters' ability to see themselves not just in the past but also in the future, is key to the ability to work counter to settle colonial interests and move past a mode of survival towards a mode of thriving.

**Keywords:**

Indigenous epistemologies; narrative and knowledge; apocalypse.

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## Coding Latinx Identity in Contemporary American YA romance

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The ever growing presence of Hispanics in the United States –some 20 percent of the country's population, as of 2021 (US Census 2022)– has already resulted in changes in US society and culture. Latinxs nowadays have an unprecedented prominence as both creators and consumers in cultural industries, most notably music, TV, films and mass literature. This in turn translates into a greater visibility of Latinx characters in mainstream pop culture artifacts, yet Latinxs are still largely portrayed as uneducated immigrants, criminals and adherents to traditional values *vis-à-vis* respectable, well-to-do and politically progressive Anglos. However, many Latinx voices are looking for ways to counteract these prejudiced depictions, exemplifying what Frederick Luis Aldama (2016, 5) has referred to as the "will to style", i.e. the willingness to transcend stereotypical representations and expose the multifaceted identities coexisting under the label 'Latinx'.

This paper aims at understanding how Latina writers have exerted this "will to style" *Latinidad* and Latinx identity through one of the most profitable genres in the American literary marketplace: Young Adult romance fiction. It starts with an overview of the genre, considering its main features and relevance within the (romance) publishing industry, before moving on to a discussion of specific titles. This investigation analyses how, in books such as *The Poet X* (2018), *Don't Ask me Where I'm From* (2020) and *This Train is Being Held* (2020), critical reflections about *Latinidad* and individual identity are purposefully woven into romantic plotlines. Like all the teenage characters in YA fiction, the protagonists in these novels must confront issues associated with adolescence, ranging from social interaction to body image or the longing for independence, but here they must do so as racialised individuals. They often struggle with discrimination and even internalised racism due to their looks, their language, or their economic status, all of which affect the construction of their identity and complicate their integration in (white) society. In the protagonists' journey to selfhood, love stories play a pivotal role. In the novels under consideration, successful romantic relationships foster self-acceptance and encourage personal growth.

Ultimately, this paper shows that Latina writers have found in the YA romance genre a tool to code alternative forms of Latinx identity, at the same time they render Latinx characters desirable and worthy of (self-)love. Thus, it contributes to the development of Latinx studies, cultural studies and popular romance studies, insofar as it explores the ways in which Latina writers have appropriated romantic literary formulae to comment on sociopolitical issues and envisage social change.

### Keywords:

Latinx identity; *Latinidad*; Latina writers; YA romance.

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**“Terrorists are not born to love”, are they? Forging a new romance hero in Sara Naveed’s *Our Story Ends Here***

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The reductionist hatred-filled representation of the Islamic terrorist to be found in many post-9/11 novels, such as those by McEwan, Updike, DeLillo or Amis, has been contested by recent novels by Pakistani female writers such as Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire* (2017) or Fatima Bhutto’s *The Runaways* (2019). These novels feature terrorists as protagonists and provide a much more nuanced and humanised portrayal that highlights their passions and their ability to love even when the lovers’ only possible future is to blow up together. This reluctance to offer an alternative to such a romantic relationship seems to point to the thin line between humanising terrorists and condoning their actions, which leads to the question whether a terrorist-hero is compatible with a happily-ever-after ending in a romance novel.

According to Jarmakani, “contemporary mass-market romances focusing on the sheikh-hero engage readily with the specter of the terrorist figure” (2010, 998), but this spectral figure is fully fleshed in Sara Naveed’s *Our Story Ends Here* (2017). In fact, she does not only take up the challenge of turning the terrorist into the romance-hero but also goes the extra mile by pairing him with an army general’s daughter. As Philips observes, “[t]he pleasure of the popular text can often derive from the very restrictions of formula fiction and the play that can be made within their limits” (2014, 10) and de Geest and Goris argue that the formal and thematic constraints of popular romance “are not primarily intended as strict limitations but rather as creative stimuli for the artistic process” (2010, 82).

Considering this, this paper aims to discuss how Naveed manages to comply with the conventions of the genre and the ethical dilemma inherent to representing a terrorist-hero. To this purpose, I will discuss *Our Story Ends Here*, and particularly, Sarmad’s characterisation, to show how Naveed rearticulates the model of the sheikh romance in the context of Pakistan. Unlike other sheikh romance novels, orientalism plays a minor role: Mehar, the heroine, does not fit the trope of the submissive Muslim woman but her actions are always within the parameters of piety and honour; Sarmad, the hero, tries to seem ruthless but the chapters in which he is the intradiegetic narrator reveal an emotionally rich and caring character. All this contributes to a reformulation of the terrorist and ultimately enables the possibility of a narrative of reparation and even a simulacrum of a happy-ever-after ending.

**Keywords:**

Sheikh romance; terrorism; reparation; Pakistan.

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**The processes of acculturation and migration in Hispanic-Canadian writers**

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This study analyzes the testimonies of migration to Canada by Hispano-Canadian writers (Torres-Recinos y Molina Lora, 2013; ) and within them the role of women as active migrants in the new world, their adaptation and the reproduction of their national ideology of belonging both in the more closely familiar and in the social one from which the transfer of Hispanic morals and codes derives. What has been said will take place through the analysis of contemporary literary representations of these processes and the role of women as agents in the native land and in the new world, in the personal and social development of the protagonists and how their lives cross between the old and new world. In line with this research what was said through the study and analysis of primary and secondary sources. After a brief introduction on Canada and the reception policy, on migration theories and acculturation, some Hispanic-American stories whose central themes concern the different types of conflicts and the consequent survival, the memory and remembrance of political violence, the migrant and his multiple identity, gender roles and generational and cultural distance, the later adapt to the new place, will be analyzed. This approach will be based on the interculturality of the characters and their continuous confrontation with the journey.

In summary, this study clarifies the formulas of social and family organization put into practice by Hispanics upon their arrival in Canada and their subsequent adaptation. The results of this research open up new paths for exploring the origin and evolution of relations between the Hispanic world and Canada. From a literary perspective, it contributes to a better understanding of contemporary Hispanic-Canadian literature on migration (Boucher et al, 2019). From a gender perspective, this document provides useful mechanisms for understanding the social, political, economic, and moral dimensions of the diverse forces that have shaped Hispanic women, migrants to the new land, and agents in the family sphere.

As Hugh Hazelton (2007) states, this writing is expressed through different literary genres “from the novel and short story, to poetry, theatre, essay, testimonial writing, literary criticism, children's literature, autobiography, history, and journalism.”(3 ). Hispanic-Canadian literature has spread far and wide in recent decades and several authors, including Rocío Luque (2016), who provide an extensive bibliography on the writings and studies carried out in this regard. The relationships between the Hispanic and Canadian worlds will be highlighted and future research proposals centered on the memorial and the displaced perception of one's identity as a woman and her agency within personal and relational texts, in the family and non-family sphere, will be analysed.

**Keywords:**

Hispanic-Canadian literature; women; active migrants; personal and relational texts.

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**The gay coming-of-age novel (and its film adaptation) and the mainstreaming of LGTB+ romance**

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Historically, queer literature and cinema have been relatively subversive platforms for challenging societal norms and pushing boundaries. But this situation begun to change from at least the 2010s. In a 2016 article about American TV, Bridget Kier affirmed that “gay romance has succeeded in winning over audiences” and is becoming increasingly popular in mainstream programming (1). This presentation aims to analyze the context in which this evolution has taken place, as well as the effects of this progressive normalization of queer identities on the representation of Lgtb+ romance narratives in contemporary popular culture. In my case, I will focus on the analysis of two novels, *Call me by Your Name* (Aciman, 2007) and *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* (Albertalli, 2015), and their film adaptations, directed by Luca Guadagnino in 2017 and Greg Berlanti in 2018, respectively.

My presentation will begin by very briefly offering a contextual description of the evolution of the previous typical kinds of representation of gay couples in popular culture from about the turn of the Millennium, providing evidence from environments and media beyond TV series, to include slash fan-fiction (Busse and Lothian, 2017) and the popular romance novel (Barrot, 2016). From there, I will move on to offer insights into the representation of gay couples in recent novels and films such as the ones mentioned above, which are now able to reach wider audiences, and sidestep some of the more stereotypical past representations of gay men.

The exposition will then center on the two novels whose impact widened with their adaptation to film, and whose narrative focus, I will contend, changed in the process of adaptation in different ways that influence greatly the representation of each of their protagonists. As I will argue, the films fit into two quite distinct cinema genres, the teenage and the romance film respectively and in ways that challenge the standard structure of those genres. While Aciman’s text’s relatively crude intimate situations are softened into a milder romance experience, the young-adult-novel features of Albertalli’s text adapt to a renovated version of the American teenage film. The treatment given to the characters in each case has the power to show the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals in a more humane, normalizing way, in narratives that generate a position of empathy from more general audiences; who, in turn, whatever their own sexual orientation, are now better prepared to connect with the characters.

**Keywords:**

Gay romance, novel-to-film adaptation, Lgtb+ normalization.

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**Melancholic Meliorism in Todd Haynes’ *Mildred Pierce* (HBO, 2011): Challenging 21<sup>st</sup> Century *Mancession* Discourses through a Revision of the Past**

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The first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been characterized by multiple “crises”, which have constantly been echoed by the media. The financial crisis of 2008 actually revealed a crumbling system whose cracks had originated a few decades ago. According to Lawrence Grossberg (2015), this all-embracing and multifaceted crisis could be described as “organic”, involving a multitude of competing discourses within the socio-economic, political and cultural conjuncture. The

overwhelming presence of this comprehensive crisis has also entailed a paralyzing “state of crisis”, reinforcing the neoliberal “There is No Alternative” (TINA) discourse and revitalizing the implementation of neoliberal practices (Bauman and Bordoni, 2014, Crouch 2011). Simultaneously, during the post-2008 recessionary period, *mancession* discourses started to gain prominence, diverting the attention from other critical voices that condemned neoliberal practices as the main cause of the financial crisis and current economic distress (Peterson, 2012). A generalized harking back to the booming years of the US economy went hand in hand with a nostalgic longing for a traditionally patriarchal social structure in which the family was the pillar and refuge from economic problems.

In this presentation, I propose to analyze Todd Hayne’s mini-series *Mildred Pierce* (HBO, 2011) as a cinematic production that establishes a dialogue between the Great Depression era and the post-2008 recessionary period. Against the prevailing sense of hopelessness in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century “state of crisis”, the series reveals an incipient sense of melancholic meliorism which connects the tragedies and happy moments of the past, the resilience of the present and the radical hope in the blind spots of an uncertain future. In line with Hayne’s previous works, *Mildred Pierce* offers a re-vision of the past by evoking the nostalgic dimension of revisiting past times with an aesthetically appealing *mise-en-scène*; however, at the same time, it brings to the fore the inconsistencies and competing gender discourses of the past.

Basing my analysis on studies on gender in the post-2008 crisis conjuncture (Peterson, 2012; Negra and Tasker, 2014; Walby, 2015; Gill, 2017), and incorporating the concepts of meliorism and fundamental hope developed by Colin Koopman (2006) and Terry Eagleton (2019), among others, I will carry out a textual and cultural analysis of Haynes’ mini-series. My main objective is to illustrate how the series critical portrayal of the past actually challenges the gender backlash prevalent in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century *mancession* discourses. I will ultimately try to demonstrate that Haynes’ revisionist nostalgia does present alternatives which problematize the hegemony of the neoliberal “There Is No Alternative” (TINA) discourse.

#### **Keywords:**

Crisis; nostalgia; gender; *mancession*; hope.

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#### **The Physical Presence of Television and the Role of Screens in Noah Baumbach’s *White Noise* (2022)**

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Screens and media are key in *White Noise*, both in Don DeLillo’s novel (1985) and its recent adaptation (Baumbach 2022). In DeLillo the physical presence of electronic media influences

characterization, interactions between characters and their relationship with space (see Osteen 2000; Martín Salván 2009; Kavadlo 2022). For instance, we can see this very clearly in *White Noise* with descriptions of the interactions that the Gladney family has when watching television together and when interacting in spaces where they are confronted with the constant background of television sound.

This paper focuses on exploring the screens shown in Noah Baumbach's *White Noise*, which I would argue, become particularly interesting in a DeLillo adaptation, since it serves as an opportunity to turn screens (cinema and television) into explicitly intertextual commentary. I want to consider how different modes of screen presence might reframe the perception, criticism and integration of media in the characters' lives through their relationships to space. In order to do so, the ways in which screens are present in *White Noise* (Baumbach 2022) have been classified in three main types: *mise en abyme*, erasure of the frame within the frame (when the images extradiegetic audiences see in their screens correspond with the ones that character-audiences are watching) and screen aesthetics.

Considering these different types of screen presence along with Karen E. Kline's work on adaptation (1996), the central question of this study is what effects these various representations have on the filmic narrative, and if how screens are placed and represented works in service of reinforcing the plot and themes of the narrative in the same way that DeLillo's use of literary devices does in his works. To illustrate this line of inquiry I will delve into a couple of key scenes from the movie. In these we will see how throughout the movie there is an emphasis on the reflected image that signals an interest in the idea of simulacra and endless reproduction. However, the adaptation fails to genuinely deal with simulacra in its greatest expression, as reality and its copies never get confused in terms of the visuals. Even though there are explicit references to such blurred line between reality and simulation, they are all included in the form of dialogues that have been taken verbatim from the novel—i.e., Dylar's side effects and the symptoms caused by the toxic airborne event.

The screens are sometimes used to reinforce certain plot elements but often fall short to their purpose in the novel, lacking the additional impact that the very medium would allow for. Ultimately, this speaks to the movie being a mostly unsuccessful adaptation of a literary work that cares so much about media. By leaving aside some theoretical groundwork that brings the narrative together (Baudrillard 1994, McLuhan 1987) the adaptation misses the opportunity to better employ the formal aspects of the medium—that is, the screen—to adapt a novel that is very much about screens.

#### **Keywords:**

*White Noise*, Don DeLillo, movie adaptation, screens, simulacra.

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## **Abject Space, Abject Self: The Horrors of Post-Industrial Detroit in *It Follows* and *Don't Breathe***

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The term 'abjection' was coined by Georges Bataille in 1934 to describe an oppressed class that is treated with aversion and excluded from the community (2006). Bataille's social understanding of the term lost momentum after Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytical interpretation in *Powers of Horror* (1982). In the 1990s horror cinema was a fertile ground to explore abjection from a psychoanalytical angle, as is the case of Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous Feminine* (1993). For Creed, abjection in horror films is always connected to a rejection of the archaic mother. Alternatively, abjection has also been read as a bodily affect experienced by spectators when viewing visceral scenes (Aldana Reyes, 2016). In the social sciences some contemporary authors rely on Bataille's ideas. For Imogen Tyler, the abject citizens are "laid to waste by neoliberal economic, political and social policies" (2013). These groups produce disgust and disgust is political. A social consensus establishes which bodies are treated as disgusting. For Anne McClintock, the abject "inhabit the impossible edges of modernity: the slum, the ghetto, the garret, the brothel" and so on. They are excluded from society, but also a necessary part of it (1995). Yet, social abjection has never been used to explore horror movies.

This paper combines psychoanalytical and affective views on the term with social theories in order to explore the portrayal of abjection in the films *It Follows* (dir. David Robert Mitchell, 2015) and *Don't Breathe* (dir. Federico Álvarez, 2016). While *It Follows* tells the story of a young girl that becomes the victim of a sexually transmitted ancient curse, *Don't Breathe* is about three friends who rob the house of an old veteran who turns out to be more dangerous than he seemed. Despite their dissimilar plots, both films portray the experience of young adults growing up in post-industrialist Detroit and their struggle to escape material conditions of precarity. These films reflect the effects of the collapse of the auto-mobile industry in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and of the financial recession of 2008 on the city. As a consequence, Detroit is depicted as an abject city, relegated to the margins of global capitalism. The structural decay of the city, in both films, is directly linked to the threat to the protagonists' bodies and identities. Through an examination of the spatial dynamics in Detroit, together with textual analysis of the spaces depicted in the films, this paper aims to explore the portrayal of the post-industrial city as an abject space. As will be argued, abjection in the films *It Follows* and *Don't Breathe* emanates from the spaces of precarity and social exclusion that young adults occupy in post-industrial Detroit.

### **Keywords:**

Horror; film; abjection; space.

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## Back to a New Past: Rewriting the 1980s in James Gray's *Armageddon Time* (2022)

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James Gray's coming-of-age film *Armageddon Time* (2022) is set in 1980, a pivotal year—if there was ever one—in contemporary US history. Ronald Reagan won the presidency and the postwar liberal era, marked by hegemony of the New Deal, came to an end. The fact that the final scenes in the film take place on November 4, 1980, with TV broadcasters announcing Reagan's landslide victory, is but one of the many instances of the film's engagement with the 1980s as placeholder for melancholy and nostalgia but also for critical revision and a transformative view of the past. The film follows Paul Graff (Banks Repeta), an eleven-year-old kid living in Queens. Born in a Jewish family, Paul gets in trouble after he befriends Johnny (Jaylin Webb), a rebellious and poverty-stricken African American classmate of his. This forces the Graff family to deal with extraordinarily tough contradictions, both morally and politically. The Graffs are liberal-learning, second-generation immigrants and support the New York public school system, and yet, show anxiety and discomfort when it comes to racial integration. As a result, Paul's parents enroll him in a prestigious private school where blatant racism and classism are all-pervasive. This runs parallel to Paul's affectionate relationship with his grandfather (Anthony Hopkins), who fled anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe and feels concerned about the new social environment his grandson must now operate in. My structuring argument is that Gray's reconstruction of the 1980s reveals a clear will to unearth life experiences and political processes antithetical to the standard association of the 1980s with the rise of Reagan-era conservatism. In so doing, the film reenacts the year 1980 by focusing on class identity, antiracism, and the struggles to live by one's political principles when historical forces make it particularly challenging. I argue that such framing constitutes a political and moral intervention that seeks to reconstruct the historical context by mobilizing a different set of preoccupations and narratives other than the totalizing discourse of the 1980s as merely conservative or as the inception of the neoliberal age.

I rely on a critical framework that accounts for the strategies the film deploys in rewriting and reframing the past, in this case the 1980s in the US, as a complex space where we can foreground and reclaim unarticulated and not-yet-realized political energies and social forces. I draw on Ernst Bloch's notion of the "utopian surplus" (Bloch 1986; Kellner; Zipes 2019), which conceptualizes the past and its unrealized projects as means to imagine a better social contract. In a similar vein, my paper is informed by Fred Davies's concept of "reflexive nostalgia" (1979)—a helpful reading strategy to gauge how the past is open to constant reimagining and reconstructing in accordance to specific political agendas and ideological inclinations. Finally, my reading and historical context for the Reagan era is built on the work of historians such as John Ehrman (2005), Troy Gill (2004), Susan McGirr (2004), Rick Perlstein (2020), and Sean Wilentz (2008).

### Keywords:

Ronald Reagan; 1980s; conservatism; James Gray; Ernst Bloch.

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## **Intimate Geographies in the Western Frontier: Cosmopolitan Domestic Spaces in Kelly Reichardt's *First Cow***

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In contemporary transnational culture, space has emerged as an essential element in our experience and perception of the social world. The connections established between spatiality and human life in the social sciences (Soja, 1996) together with the definition of space as a multiplicity of stories that happen in a particular place (Massey, 2005) have informed the development of what has been labelled a 'spatial turn' within film and media studies. Given the intrinsic spatial nature of cinema as a means of representation of reality, films can be the perfect arena for the discussion of space theories and spatial criticism (Everett and Goodbody, 2005). As social space becomes part of the cinematic space and, therefore, of film form, real places should consequently be considered an ultimate object of study in film analysis (Deleyto, 2023).

Kelly Reichardt's *First Cow* (2019), a film within the generic boundaries of the Western but which has also been defined as an "anti-Western", will be considered as a case study to show how the geographical, the historical and the social are incorporated into the cinematic space. In a narrative articulated within the cross-cultural microcosm of the pioneers following the Oregon Trail in the 1820s, the open spaces of one of the largest mass migrations in human history are reconfigured to evoke the affective, intimate dimension of such an epic search for a new home. In this paper, I intend to explore how domestic spaces in the West frontier are constructed as unique sites for "cosmopolitan encounters" (Delanty, 2011) in which class struggle, cultural confrontations, emotional bonds and individual pursuits of success intersect in unpredictable ways.

The natural spaces of Oregon forests located along the Snake and Columbia rivers create a visual frame for a Western narrative in which nature is celebrated mainly through slow camera movement and silence. However, these magnificent open spaces conventionally identified with the Western genre ultimately work as the background for other more significant spaces in the film connected to a sphere of cosmopolitan domesticity. In *First Cow*, I will argue in this paper, the cinematic spatial imagination creates a significant range of spaces for intimacy that expand the catalogue of iconic settings in the Western genre. The home created by King-Lu (Orion Lee) and Cookie (John Magaro) in *First Cow*, I will conclude, is not just a generically unconventional cinematic space but it's also the protagonist of a story that will forever be part both of US history and of Oregon territory; a story about the vicissitudes of those first settlers belonging to different cultures, who were trying to find their place in a 'land of abundance' often through violence and domination but at times also by relying on a sense of hospitality and acceptance of the Other that two centuries later continues to be so necessary in a global era.

### **Keywords:**

Space; mise-en-scène; cosmopolitanism; Western frontier.

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## **Contemporaneity in Ruins: The Inheritance of the Romantic Landscape in Post-Apocalyptic Films**

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Space is one of the most distinctive elements of post-apocalyptic films. It is practically impossible to imagine a world after the end of time without a scenography marked by fallen buildings, collapsed bridges, and cracked roads that are relentlessly reclaimed by nature. These settings urge spectators to consider the transient nature of the great constructions of our civilization, the resilience of nature as it makes its way through the rubble, the passage of time, and the meaninglessness of mankind. All these elements and the evident pleasure audiences derive from their contemplation inevitably refer to some of the most iconic works of the beginnings of contemporaneity at the end of the eighteenth century. The nostalgia for the great collapsed civilisations that the Romantics captured through classical and medieval ruins seems to be repeated, albeit with a narcissistic tinge, in post-apocalyptic cinema with views of the great contemporary metropolises of our times such as New York or London almost entirely destroyed. So, it is with these large, overgrown buildings, now inhabited by just a few human beings, as seen in films such as *I Am Legend* (2007) or the acclaimed *The Last of Us* franchise, that films enter into a dialogue with the paintings of Carl Blechen or Caspar David Friedrich. These dynamics can be seen in the use of iconic monuments that appear metaphorically and literally buried as is the case of the *Statue of Liberty* in *Planet of the Apes* (1968) and Hubert Robert's imaginary *View of the Great Gallery of the Louvre in ruins* (1796). These parallelisms and conversations, along with many others, are the motivation for the research presented here.

It goes without saying that the context in which these artistic productions emerged couldn't be more different. And yet, the aesthetic similarities between the two movements urge us to examine how romanticism informs the way we interpret contemporary post-apocalyptic films. Thus, based on this initial hypothesis, the goal of this presentation is to analyze the complexity of the links between the pictorial landscapes of the beginning of contemporaneity and the scenarios of "after the end." This presentation proceeds in three parts. In the first I will briefly examine the scientific literature on romantic aesthetics and post-apocalyptic cinema. In the second I will review a selection of post-apocalyptic films produced in the last two decades in the US context and will examine how they manipulate the conventions in the representation of space found in some of the most emblematic creations of landscape paintings produced in the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. Finally, I will analyze how the dialogue these films establish with a pictorial tradition that sought to denounce the materialism, the individualism, and the imperialism of the age provides spectators with a keener understanding of the historical processes in which we are immersed in the present.

### **Keywords:**

Postapocalyptic cinema; Romanticism; postapocalyptic spaces; romantic landscapes; American cinema

## **Take Back the Walk: Trekking and Female Empowerment in Contemporary Film**

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In her book *Affirmative Aesthetics and Wilful Women*, Maud Ceuterick (2020: 2) sets out to explore how the “wilful” women that appear in the films she analyses strive to claim such public spaces as “the street, the house and the car” as their own. They do so both as an act of rebellion against patriarchal restrictions and as an affirmation of their female selves. Meanwhile, Uteng and Cresswell (2016: 2) argue that “acquiring mobility is often analogous to a struggle for acquiring new subjectivity.” Thus, my aim in this paper is to expand on Ceuterick’s argument by proposing the natural outdoors as a space for female agency and rebellious affirmation. In order to do this, I will focus mainly on the British film *Edie* (2017), even though references will be made to other films with female protagonists who trek or walk in the wild, such as *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002), *Meek’s Cutoff* (2010), *Wild* (2014) and *Tracks* (2014).

As Brian Taves (1993) demonstrated in his study *The Romance of Adventure*, the natural outdoors stands, by definition, as the space for action, adventure and exploration. This is, without a doubt, a setting from which women have traditionally been barred. While nature is usually coded as feminine in our culture, the wild is not considered to be a space where civilised women should be present as it is fraught with danger. In broad ideological terms, nature represents an untamed space that needs to be conquered solely by men (Plumwood, 2003). For this reason, even though female adventurers, explorers and walkers do and did exist, they have been culturally marginalised in favour of their better-known male counterparts, hence the parallel lack of adventure narratives headed by female characters (Thornham, 2019).

Ceuterick (2020: 5) affirms that certain films, such as the ones I propose to analyse, can produce “spatial imaginaries ... within which processes of change may occur” as the women protagonists decide to “occupy” a hostile environment in which they do not supposedly belong. In this paper, thus, I aim to vindicate outdoor spaces as sites for female adventure, survival and emancipation, though not necessarily for female solidarity, as the women in most of the films that I refer to willingly undertake their hikes on their own. Despite the initial patriarchal scepticism that is invariably present in these narratives and in society at large (Glotfelty, 1996), these women choose to take a double risk as what is potentially a dangerous activity in itself becomes even riskier for women walking alone, which increases the protagonists’ self-affirmation when all adversity is successfully overcome.

Finally, I propose to analyse this female empowerment process by referring to the cultural meanings that walking and trekking, as the most elementary forms of mobility, have accumulated over the centuries (Amato, 2004; Solnit, 2014) without losing sight of contemporary ideas regarding nature therapy as an effective route to healing and liberation (Williams, 2017).

#### **Keywords:**

Walking; wild spaces; female empowerment; nature therapy; *Edie* (2017).

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## Anglicismos en el campo de la bebida en la prensa digital española

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Los cambios lingüísticos reflejan cambios culturales y sociales. Se podría afirmar que la incorporación de voces anglicadas al léxico español europeo es fruto del proceso de globalización en el que vivimos. El campo de la gastronomía y la bebida, como otros tantos dominios, no es excepcional (Stajcic, 2013). Además, se vislumbra el surgimiento de una conciencia por la adquisición de nuevos hábitos alimenticios que permite entrever un intercambio cultural y gastronómico, resultado, en parte, del turismo y de las migraciones de la población. El mayor interés por la buena alimentación que ha surgido en Occidente ha provocado la proliferación de múltiples programas y canales televisivos que abordan el tema de la cocina y el buen comer. Este trabajo se centra específicamente en el campo de la bebida y analiza la creciente tendencia al empleo de anglicismos en este terreno. Los objetivos que se persiguen son dar respuesta a las siguientes preguntas de investigación:

¿Qué anglicismos o expresiones anglicadas se emplean para designar bebidas en español?

¿Qué función/es desempeñan estas unidades léxicas anglicadas en la comunicación?

¿En qué contextos comunicativos se emplean estas unidades léxicas anglicadas?

El método empleado consistió en el análisis de 22 medios españoles a través de “Observatorio Lázaro” (Álvarez Mellado, 2020), desde marzo de 2020 hasta febrero de 2023. Dicho seguimiento generó una muestra de 57 anglicismos puros o no adaptados. Los resultados demuestran que el empleo de anglicismos para referirse a bebidas tanto alcohólicas como sin alcohol está presente en la prensa digital española, lo cual permite deducir que estos términos también se emplean por parte de hablantes del español. Observamos que anglicismos como *ale*, *beer*, *cider*, *gin*, *sherry*, *smoothie*, *milkshake* y, por supuesto, *wine*, con numerosas variantes y combinaciones son empleados en la prensa digital. Se trata, en muchas ocasiones, de anglicismos y expresiones anglicadas que conviven con sus equivalentes en español. En otras ocasiones, se advierte un matiz de significado algo diferente en el término español, como en el caso de *cider* frente a sidra.

Con respecto a las funciones que desempeñan estas unidades léxicas anglicadas dentro de la comunicación, se podría confirmar que, al igual que en otros muchos campos, el término anglicado está provisto de un aire de modernidad y prestigio del que no goza el vocablo castellano. En ese caso, hablamos de una función expresiva que es, con diferencia, la más empleada en la muestra compilada. También se pueden observar las funciones referencial y textual en algunos ejemplos.

Desde un punto de vista cuantitativo, la aparición de estos términos es limitada, pues en muchos de los casos, se trata de un uso considerando el periodo analizado y el número de medios objeto de estudio. En un plano más cualitativo, sí que se da una variedad de anglicismos y expresiones anglicadas, especialmente, en torno al uso de *wine*.

### Keywords:

Anglicismos; bebidas; prensa digital española.

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## Folk etymology, 'lost' rhymes and rhyming slang

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The belief is widespread among scholars and laypeople alike that rhyming slang (henceforth RS) can be used as a master key to unlock many an etymological mystery. Some of the explanations they give are based on coincidence, whilst others rest upon the mistaken assumption that many words are, in fact, abbreviated RS terms. An example of the first type of explanation is the theory according to which *brass tacks* (as used in the phrase *get or come down to brass tacks*) originated as Cockney RS for *facts* (see Franklyn 1960; Dalzell 2018; Blake 2019: 155). Based on nothing more than a phonological link, this explanation ignores the fact that the term has a far longer history in American English than in British English. Furthermore, it seems to imply that the rhyme *tacks – facts* is more common in Cockney than in other dialects, which is not true. Another manifestation of the penchant for RS etymologies is to be found in the hypothetical full forms that have been concocted to explain the origin of certain words. Popular myth has it, for example, that *kettle* 'a wristwatch' is an elliptical version of *kettle on the hob*, rhyming on *fob* (see Alexandrowicz and Wilson 1999: 107; Sanger 2016: 55). To complicate things further, sometimes a term may be conjectured to be reduced RS even though its unabbreviated form is unknown. In the phrase *sling one's daniel* 'to leave', the word *daniel* has been said to be '? lost rhy[ming] sl[ang] referring to some form of pack' (Green 2016–).

Drawing on data from a range of primary and secondary sources, my purpose here is to offer a glimpse into two intertwined areas of lexical research which remain largely unexamined: the false etymologies of RS words and the role that folk etymology plays in the creation of new rhymes. Besides shedding light on some little-known aspects of etymology, this study seeks to provide a better understanding of the nature of RS as a word-making device in contemporary English. The explanations above bear witness to the folk tendency to create unsubstantiated associative links between words. No matter how false these explanations are, once they become strong enough through repetition, they can have an effect on the shape of existing non-RS words, which may be elongated to rhyme with a synonym and hence achieve RS status. A case in point is *bob* 'a shilling; thus, in the plural, money', which was folk-etymologised as *Bob Dylan* in the early noughties (Lillo and Victor 2017).

### Keywords:

Rhyming slang; folk etymology; lexical reinterpretation; word-formation.

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## Exploring the syntactic variation and the pragmatic multifunctionality of *no biggie* through a corpus-based taxonomy

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The phrase *(it's) no biggie* is lexicographically identified as a noun phrase (NP) that stems from the AmE expression *(it's) no big deal*, and which is extensively used in AmE “to indicate that something is not important or not a problem” (MWD11), as illustrated in (1). However, *(it's) no biggie* also operates as a discourse-pragmatic marker (DPM) expressing, for instance, apology acceptance, as in (2), or irony, as in (3).

- (1) His daughters (...) said the rapid test was **no biggie** because they get tested in school all the time. (<https://news.yahoo.com/>, Dec. 21, 2022)
- (2) “I’m sorry about earlier in the car, too.” “**No biggie**,” he repeats (...) (De Brea Brown 2019)
- (3) Breathing the same air as Rihanna, **no biggie**. (*Twitter post*, Feb. 22, 2023)

The above examples confirm that *(it's) no biggie* undergoes a process of pragmaticalization, through which some units, such as those in (2) and (3), lose their autonomy and shift to a “more strictly regulated grammatical level” (Lehmann 2002, 15). Understanding how grammaticalized constructions emerge is of help in identifying the syntactic and semantic ‘ingredients’ that are involved in the general framework of grammaticalization (Heine et al. 1991; Hopper and Traugott 1993; Roberts and Rousseau 2003), as well as in connecting the resulting generalizations with cognitive motivations (see, e.g., Lindquist and Mair 2004; Mair 2011; López-Couso 2016).

This study set out to explore the syntactic variation and the pragmatic multifunctionality of *(it's) no biggie* through a taxonomical and statistical examination of 3,000 hits, which are randomly extracted from the *English Web 2020 Corpus* (also known as *enTenTen20*). This examination involves (i) modelling a pilot taxonomy of *(it's) no biggie* by identifying its syntactic forms and pragmatic functions; (ii) annotating the parameters of frequency, syntactic loci (interclausal, initial, medial or final), and pragmatic focus of preceding/following clause, in real data; and (iii) determining, through the prototype approach (Aronoff and Fudeman 2005), how the pragma-syntactic types of *no biggie*, identified in (i), are both connected to the features identified in (ii) and integrated to each other as extensions of a prototypical construction.

The results show that there are ten subtypes of syntactic functions identified in the corpus, free-standing and interclausal DPMs being the predominant type. This pragmaticalized type conforms to the following construction: [X/*no biggie*/Y], where *it's* is omitted, X is the preceding utterance conveying the concept that is downplayed, and Y complements the semantic content expressed in X through the pragmatic values of addition, cause, result, apposition or contrast. While this research is still ongoing, there have been some findings that point to a rather extended usage of *no biggie* as a DPM expressing irony through the construction [X\_ *no biggie*], where X is an utterance denoting, for instance, a world-class celebrity or institution. Through the application of the prototype approach, our expected findings also suggest that grammaticalized constructions do not originate arbitrarily, but rather they pertain to a fluctuating system where the units are subject to regularized linguistic conditions.

### Keywords:

*No biggie*; pragmaticalization; syntactic variation; pragmatic multifunctionality; corpus-based analysis.

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## Interpersonal Value of Conditional Sentences in Women's Instructive Writing in the XIX century

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This paper analyses the possible interpersonal value of conditional sentences in a corpus of recipes called *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English, the 19th century sub-corpus (COWITE19)*<sup>1</sup>. Recipes, usually defined as a set of instructions aimed at preparing a dish, describe more or less complex preparation methods which require the use of subordinate structures, among which conditional sentences abound. Conditionals are thus employed for several functions such as specifying the steps during the cooking process, advising, warning, and even commanding. Conditional relations are broadly categorised into three types: (1) content or "real-world" conditionals which, if realised, make certain the truth of the proposition in the main clause; (2) epistemic conditionals, in which the knowledge of the truth of the hypothesis can be a sufficient condition for concluding the truth of the proposition in the main clause; and (3) speech-act conditionals, in which the performance of the speech act contained in the main clause is conditional if the state described by the condition is fulfilled (Greenbaum & Quirk 1985; Sweetser 1990; Warchal 2010; Links 2018). According to this classification, content conditionals are related to the ideational function of language, whereas epistemic and speech-act conditionals favour the interpersonal function.

For this study, the cooking books published between 1806 and 1849 have been selected. They have been written by British and American women and have been computerised and saved as plain text so that they can be used in linguistic software. The methodology conducted involves interrogating the corpus to find examples of the conditional markers "if" and "unless" by making use of the software CasualConc by Imao.

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The results of this research seem to indicate that epistemic and speech-act conditionals are more numerous than content ones in that the writers try to guide the reader towards an effective execution of the recipe. A subtle communication is thus established between the female who writes the manual and her apprentices, who should be capable of perceiving a more familiar address. The use of conditionals also entails argumentation from the consequences because the recipe writers refer to the good or bad effects of (not) following their indications (Walton 1999). This further interpersonal meaning is related to prolepsis, a rhetorical figure characterised by the prediction and foreshadow of certain events which are aimed, in this case, at the prospective outcome of the recipe (Mehlenbacher 2017). This study concludes that the use of conditionals in this instructive type of writing favours an interpersonal relation between the female writers and their readers, which also reflects its argumentative and possible persuasive value.

**Keywords:**

Women's instructive writing; recipes; conditional; prolepsis; interpersonal.

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**Exploring the Intralinguistic Determinants of Syntactic Variation in South-East Asian Englishes**

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In this presentation I provide an overview of my PhD research, with a focus on methodology and future directions. I examine the intra- and extralinguistic factors that determine variability in the clausal complementation patterns of the verb ADMIT in PostColonial Englishes (PCEs) - varieties of English that are products of an evolutionary process tied directly to their colonial and postcolonial past (Schneider 2007: 3). Specifically, the focus is on non-categorical clausal complementation, which refers to variants that are freely interchangeable (e.g., non-finite *they admit to cheating on the test* and finite *they admit that they cheated on the test*). Using internet data from the Corpus of Global Web-Based English (GloWbE), I compare the clausal complementation patterns of ADMIT in the two main Inner Circle varieties, American and British English, with the varieties used in India and Pakistan, which have a geographical and historical connection and intersecting substrate languages.

To provide a detailed account of the complementation patterns of ADMIT in each of the varieties, I extracted 23,710 examples from GloWbE. I pruned the database manually to eliminate duplicates and non-valid tokens, i.e., those that do not present variability, and I coded the resulting examples for complement clause type and for a list of predictors of syntactic variability derived from previous literature (Cuyckens 2015; Romasanta 2020). In this presentation I will focus on inter-varietal similarities and differences regarding predictors related to the Cognitive Complexity Principle (Rohdenburg 1996). This principle states that more transparent and isomorphic options

are preferred in cognitively complex environments, and this is especially relevant for PCEs, given that they are inherently learner varieties, subject to second language acquisition effects, and thus tend to exhibit increased transparency and isomorphism (Suarez-Gomez 2017; García-Castro 2020; Romasanta 2020).

The distribution of complement clauses in the data shows (i) that finite complement clauses - the more transparent and isomorphic option, explicitly marked for tense and agreement, modality and a complementizer - are preferred in cognitively complex environments, and (ii) that this preference is more marked in India and Pakistan data, in line with the previously mentioned Complexity Principle. A binary logistic regression analysis confirms that it is the predictors related to cognitive complexity (e.g., subject coreferentiality, negation) that significantly affect the choice between the finite and non-finite options. The presentation will discuss these preliminary results in detail and outline future steps to shed light on further determinants of morphosyntactic variation in L1 and L2 varieties.

### **Keywords:**

World Englishes; corpus linguistics; variation; clausal complementation; internet language.

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## **The role of relative clauses as markers of stylistic levelling in World Englishes**

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Studies in relativization have confirmed that relative clauses in English have recently undergone changes. It has been shown that traditional L1 varieties of English, more specifically British English and American English, have been changing over the last few decades, in both spoken and written language, and also in both informal and formal text categories (see, for instance, Mair and Leech 2005; Leech 2012; Xu and Xiao 2015). Regarding the choice of relativizers, invariable relativizer *that* and zero are increasingly favoured over *wh*- relative pronouns, especially *which*. In the case of relative markers functioning as complements of a preposition, structures with preposition stranding have increased, whereas pied-piping constructions have become less frequent. This rise in the use of relative clauses introduced by *that* and zero has been explained as a consequence prescriptivism, influenced by two rules: the anti-*which* 'rule' adopted by many word processors and style guides, and the 'sacred *that* rule' (Leech 2012: 60; see also Mair and Leech 2005). An increase in these relative markers, *that* and zero, together with the higher frequency of preposition stranding, has also been seen as a consequence of colloquialization, "whereby written language becomes more colloquial or speech-like" (Leech 2012: 54; see also Mair and Leech 2005; Xu and Xiao 2015: 821). These changes have been found to evolve



similarly in different registers in British and American English, and appear to change more quickly in informal text types (Leech 2012; Xu and Xiao 2015).

My aim in this paper is to confirm whether such changes are also occurring in World Englishes, through an analysis of relative clauses in three text-categories which are taken as representative of different register levels: spontaneous conversations, illustrative of spoken language, plus popular science writing and academic writing, these latter two illustrative of written language. My data source will be the *International Corpus of English* (text-types S1A for spontaneous conversations, W2A for academic writing and W2B for popular writing) and I will focus on Asian varieties. Preliminary results of a sample drawn from the Hong Kong English (HKE) variety (ICE-HK) show that the stylistic shift found in British and American English is only partially observed in HKE, in that both *that* and zero are clearly dominant in spontaneous conversations and popular science, but not in academic writing, which might be motivated by the informationally-dominant way in which academic writing is typically produced (Xiao 2009: 431). Examination of a larger sample of HKE, and comparable samples of other Asian varieties, will confirm whether the expected stylistic levelling observed in relative clauses in L1 varieties of English is also taking place in World Englishes.

**Keywords:**

Stylistic levelling, colloquialization, prescriptivism, relative clauses, World Englishes.

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**We MUST be careful because MAYBE this is the beginning of the extinction of the human species: Persuasion and hedging across English(es) during the pandemic**

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The convergence of socio-cultural and linguistic change is a well-documented phenomenon, particularly as far as power relations are concerned. Notably, Myhill's (1995) study illustrates how, around the American Civil War, changes in socio-cultural norms promoted solidarity and the avoidance of unequal power markers, resulting in a reduction in the frequency of specific modal verbs expressing strong deontic meanings (e.g. *shall*, *must*). A similar association between societal shifts and language use was observed by Baker (2010), who explored the decline of gender bias in language during the latter half of the 20th century, exemplified by the decreased usage of gendered pronouns in the Brown family of corpora. Furthermore, social crises often give rise to distinct communication techniques, particularly within the media landscape, characterized by power dynamics between writers and readers, as highlighted by Seoane and Loureiro-Porto (forthcoming). Motivated by research on crisis communication and language variation, this paper explores the linguistic implications of the coronavirus pandemic across different varieties of English. The unprecedented circumstances brought about by the pandemic necessitated the implementation of social measures that, on one hand, restricted individual freedoms, while, on the other hand, demanded public cooperation. Prior studies have already provided valuable insights into discourse dynamics concerning attitudinal markers (Dong, Buckingham, and Wu,

2021) and stance nouns (Curry and Pérez-Paredes, 2021). In this paper, my focus lies in analysing the use of assertive and non-assertive linguistic markers across Inner Circle and Outer Circle varieties of English (GB, US, NZ, SG, and ZA) within the Coronavirus Corpus (Davies 2019-). The central hypothesis posits that crisis communication necessitates an unambiguous style. Accordingly, it is anticipated that under urgent and critical circumstances, the frequency of assertive markers will increase, while non-assertive markers will decrease. The variables considered encompass assertive markers, including suasive verbs, conditional subordination, and necessity modals, identified within Biber's (1988) Dimension 4 ('overt expression of persuasion,' as illustrated by *must* in the title). Additionally, non-assertive markers, such as hedging strategies, downtoners, and concessive subordination, as outlined in Biber's (1988) Factor 7, are taken into account (as shown by *maybe* in the title). The findings yield distinct patterns across the five varieties of English under scrutiny, which correspond to (i) variations in the timing and intensity of COVID-19 waves in different regions, and (ii) diverse containment measures implemented by individual countries. Interestingly, the results challenge the conventional dichotomy between Inner and Outer Circle varieties of English in terms of persuasive expression. Instead, the main influencing factor in crisis communication appears to be localized strategies employed to mitigate the spread of the virus.

**Keywords:**

Persuasion; hedging; Biber's multi-dimensional analysis; crisis communication; World Englishes.

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**On the Eighteenth-century Devonshire Dialect: New Evidence from “A Dialogue About the Hairy Man” (1785)**

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The nineteenth century witnessed thriving commerce and social mobility to business towns in the wake of the Industrial age which accommodated workers from different parts of the United Kingdom, facilitating social interaction and dialect awareness. This situation was greatly represented in literature in many forms and shapes, where dialect found a special place in the interest of readers (see Hodson 2016). Shorrocks (1996) refers to two types of literary representation of dialects, namely *dialect literature* and *literary dialect*. He defines the former as

“aimed essentially, though not exclusively, at a nonstandard-dialect-speaking readership” whilst literary dialects are “aimed at a general readership” (386).

Whilst varieties of Northern English have gained a remarkable amount of literary attention when it comes to their written representation (see e.g. Wales 2006; Honeybone and Maguire 2020), other dialects have been considerably neglected due to the scarcity of material. Such is the case of Devonshire, where early specimens are rare and mostly confined to *An Exmoor Scolding* and *An Exmoor Courtship*, both published in 1746 as contributions to *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, showing how early dialect specimens found their way into periodicals that contributed to their dissemination. As is known, they are virtually the only sources with information about eighteenth-century Devon speech (see Wakelin 1986) alongside a few isolated glossaries like the unpublished *Horae Subsecivae* (1777-78) (see Ruano-García 2021). There is, however, another literary representation of the dialect in the form of an obscure dialogue with humorous overtones that appears to have been overlooked: “A Dialogue About the Hairy Man” (1785), published in an Exeter newspaper.

This paper explores the dialectal data documented in “A Dialogue About the Hairy Man” (1785). It undertakes a qualitative analysis of the features employed in this short text (614 words), which are explored against the descriptions and metacommentary on the dialect circulated in later works such as Chope (1891) and Hewett (1892), as well as the catalogue of south-western traditional features provided by Ihalainen (1994) and Wagner (2004). Attention is paid to phonological features such as the voicing of fricatives (e.g. *vath* ‘faith’) and metathesis (e.g. *gurt* ‘great’), and morphological aspects including uninflected *be* (e.g. *es be* ‘he is’) as well as lexical items such as *linhay* ‘shed’, whose only attestation prior to the nineteenth century can be found in *Horae Subsecivae* (1777-8) according to the *EDD* (see Ruano-García 2022). This paper thus aims to situate “A Dialogue About the Hairy Man” (1785) alongside *An Exmoor Scolding* and *An Exmoor Courtship* as an early instance of the literary representation of the dialect, thus improving our knowledge of Devon speech during the 1700s. At the same time, the paper seeks to highlight that local newspapers were relevant vehicles for the dissemination of such texts in Devonshire during this time. Though being often forgotten, these minor forms of publication provide us with valuable linguistic specimens that remain to be further investigated given their interest for the history of dialects.

#### **Keywords:**

Devonshire dialect; 18<sup>th</sup> century; dialect literature; newspapers.

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## Stylistic Practices and Identity Strategies in Political Contexts: Boris Johnson vs. Donald Trump

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The social meaning of sociolinguistic variation has been approached from different perspectives in the form of three different generations or waves of theoretical assumptions and analytic practices (Eckert 2012), being current third wave assumptions – with their socio-constructionist perspective – the most up-to-date studies on language variation and change in Sociolinguistics. These practices are focusing on the sociolinguistic behaviour of the individual, moving away from collective approaches within stylistic variation research, emphasising in this sense the central role of speaker agency in the proactive usage of language. Precisely, individuals operate as active agents that engage in stylistic practices when it comes to the transmission of meaning through language. These practices take the form of persona management strategies as well as social positioning and stance-taking movements under the motivation or influence of identity and ideological aspects, being the indexical mutability of linguistic features of outmost importance for such meaning transmission (Silverstein 2003; Eckert 2008, 2012; Schilling 2013; Soukup 2018; Coupland 2007).

The present study aims to contribute to the understanding of style-shifting phenomena in political contexts from a multidimensional and third-wave approach to the study of the social meaning of stylistic variation in Sociolinguistics. In fact, the main objective is to account for potential differences in terms of persona management strategies that may arise from comparing the sociolinguistic behaviour of Boris Johnson and Donald Trump across similar political contexts. Mass media sources were employed as instruments for the obtention of the informants' speech style, which was analysed within a Speaker Design and third-wave framework. Then, qualitative and quantitative methods – i.e. inferential statistics – were applied, as both approaches have proven to be crucial in the provision of valuable information about style-shifting phenomena. Results suggest that, although to a different extent, both Johnson and Trump engage in self-construction processes under the motivation or influence of identity and ideological aspects. That is, stylistic choices made by both politicians take the form of bricolage processes in which they engage in order to position themselves in society through language use. Precisely, these stylistic choices may be influenced by the different meanings that a given linguistic variable may index. Further factors may condition such strategic choices, such as geographical or socioeconomic aspects. Thus, we take the position that identities and ideologies are enacted in social interaction, being the understanding of identity and ideological foundations of stylistic practices crucial for a proper account of how speakers strategically design their speech style in order to position themselves in communicative contexts.

### Keywords:

Social meaning; style-shifting; persona management; indexical mutability; identity.

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## Satirising Patriarchal Hypervigilance? Brontëan Imaginings and Neo-Victorian Doubles in *Mrs March*

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Virginia Feito's debut novel *Mrs March* (2021) explores its unnamed protagonist's inner turmoil as she navigates the success of her celebrated husband's latest book and the oppressive social and gender dynamics of her role as a housewife on the Upper East Side. Upon the revelation that George March's main character, Johanna, an undesirable prostitute that everyone pities, might have been based on her, Mrs March seems to become increasingly paranoid of her surroundings and her husband's integrity. Determined to discover whether her husband is guilty of murdering a young woman or not, Mrs March's apparent paranoia is reinforced and complicated by how the protagonist views herself and others—which is conspicuously directed by her internalised male gaze and past traumatic experiences. Feito's narrative is brimming with literary references, amongst which Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) stand out not only in regard to their status as rewritings of the Bluebeard tale, which arguably sits at the centre of Feito's story, but also due to their concern with their protagonists' implied doubles. In fact, it could be said that Mrs March's paranoia is initially fuelled by her relationship with the character of Johanna, which could be argued to be her *undesired* double, and which eventually reveals Mrs March's desired and imaginary selves. Taking into account Sandra Bartky's feminist approach to Michel Foucault's theory, among other gender and neo-Victorian scholars, the aim of this article is to determine the extent to which *Mrs March* might be satirising patriarchal hypervigilance and psychosis by drawing on the discourses that *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre* elaborate around notions of women's bodies, transgressive femininity and patriarchal oppression. Moreover, this analysis sets out to examine the dialogue established among these three novels in order to discern whether *Mrs March* subverts or reinscribes patriarchal discourses present in du Maurier' and Brontë's fiction and articulated through their protagonists' relationships with their doubles and the changing perceptions of desirability and gender performance. In this sense, though the time frame of Feito's novel is unclear, the article will also explore the idea that *Mrs March* could be considered a neo-Victorian narrative in that it revisits nineteenth-century cultural discussions at the same time that it reflects on our own time's insidious ways of disguising oppressive power structures.

### Keywords:

*Mrs March*; Gender Studies; Neo-Victorian Studies; *Rebecca*; *Jane Eyre*.

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### **Exploring the Interplay of Female Agency and Irish Wilderness in Elizabeth Griffith's *The History of Lady Barton* (1771)**

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This paper endeavors to establish a correlation between the portrayal of female characters and Irish wilderness in Elizabeth Griffith's novel, *The History of Lady Barton* (1771). By drawing upon Nicole C. Dittmer's scholarly exploration of *Monstrous Women and Ecofeminism in the Victorian Gothic, 1837–1871* (2022), although the novel predates the period of this study, it can be argued that the fear surrounding women's potential to corrupt society through their rejection of social norms is intrinsically linked to their association with nature. In this context, nature is interpreted as a "female phenomenon utilized by patriarchal institutions to redefine and exert control" (Dittmer, 1). Within the confines of biased beliefs perpetuated by authoritative societal structures, women find themselves confined within boundaries of repression and chauvinistic ideologies. Deprived of agency and independence, some women's defiance of conformity results in their depiction as monstrous, as characterized by the society of the time and echoed by Dittmer. They are often represented as peculiar figures such as madwomen or criminals seeking to escape from patriarchal constraints, ultimately choosing madness, death, or exile over submission to repression. Consequently, women and nature are portrayed as wild, uncontrollable, and subordinate forces.

Based on this premise, the primary objective of this paper is to delve into the interconnection between female agency and nature experienced by the female characters in Elizabeth Griffith's *The History of Lady Barton*, with particular focus on Louisa Barton and Delia Colville. These characters embody rebellion and resistance against social norms, largely influenced by their traumatic encounters with male figures in the novel, namely Sir William and Colonel Walter. Moreover, through their resolute actions, Louisa Barton and Delia Colville exhibit a profound inclination towards embracing death and exile as preferable alternatives to enduring the suffocating grip of social conventions. Their choices signify a fierce determination to escape the constraints imposed upon them, serving as a testimony to the indomitable spirit that thrives within them. Related to this issue is noteworthy to see how the Irish landscape is presented in terms of mystical strangeness, foreignness, and wilderness, which serves to reinforce the central argument of the study. In short, this analysis significantly enhances our understanding of the historical correlation between women and nature. Through an exploration of the intricate nuances in the relationship between female characters and Irish wilderness, this study enriches our comprehension of the intricate dynamics involving women, nature, and society within eighteenth-century Irish literature.

#### **Keywords:**

Ecofeminism; Elizabeth Griffith; gothic; Ireland; nature.

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### “Let’s Absorb and Drip”: Relating Narratives of Rape and Precariousness in Myriam Gurba’s *Mean*

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The #MeToo movement follows a decade-long, elusive genealogy in the testimonial work of many non-white and working-class subjects whose bodies were systematically excluded by the state and other institutions (Gilmore *#MeToo*). Yet its development as a large-scale cultural phenomenon in October 2017 took place at a particular historical moment of multidimensional crisis, after a series of transnational economic and political events evidenced the vulnerability of many women – and some men – in first-world countries (Halldórsdóttir). Despite the short-sightedness of many mainstream #MeToo discourses, the movement points to the intersectional nature of sexual violence (see e.g. Berg) and to the ethical responsibility of adopting a “representative” voice that speaks for a particular community (Gilmore *Limits* 4) without obscuring the intersections between sexual, racial, institutional and socio-economic systems of oppression (see e.g. Davis 173).

In this line, some authors have rethought their experiences of sexual violence through the notion of vulnerability, understood as an unevenly distributed yet common condition that raises awareness about the need for solidarity and collective resistance against the pervasiveness of violence (Butler 15). This paper examines how Myriam Gurba’s memoir *Mean* (2017) explores how sexual violence is produced across different experiences of vulnerability in the context of the cultural, political and institutional crises of North America. Following the notion of “relational selfhood” (Eakin 43), I look at how Gurba combines multiple voices and subgenres to narrate her traumatic experiences as a young Chicana in California, including both her ancestors’ sexual victimization and her rape by a man who would later rape and murder a homeless Mexican woman. I argue that Gurba’s experimentation with the limits of trauma, genre and selfhood seeks to reconcile the tensions between intersectional perspectives and universal and mythical histories of sexual violence, mobilizing a politics of vulnerability, solidarity and resistance that reminds us of the ethical need to situate #MeToo as part of a response to a constant, multidimensional global crisis.

#### Keywords:

#MeToo; feminist life-writing; Chicana literature; vulnerability; relationality.

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**In, Out and In-Between: Intersectional Space in *The House of Impossible Beauties*, by Joseph Cassara**

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In *The House of Impossible Beauties* (2018), American novelist Joseph Cassara writes that Angel Xtravaganza “was angry that space existed” (117). Set against the backdrop of New York City between 1976 and 1993, this novel portrays the lives of the queer Latinxs who live in the House of Xtravaganza – participants of the ballroom scene of NYC – in the age of the HIV crisis. Based on real people, the novel follows Angel, Hector, Venus, Daniel, and Juanito as they interact with the space around them, which alienates them in diverse ways. The main characters are not just oppressed as transgender or queer people, but also as Latinx, low class, sick individuals. This paper will take an intersectional approach to space and consider all these dimensions. It will conceive the outside, inside and in-between spaces as interdependent, and situate the Xtravaganzas interacting with society inside them. It will argue how there was no space in society for these people at the time, and they still lack a place among the rest nowadays. Cassara both voices these “prohibited and forbidden” (Anzaldúa 2012, 25) people, and denounces that the 21<sup>st</sup> century still alienates them.

Space inevitably surrounds us. The outdoor space can theoretically be conceived without the indoor space, but the latter is always situated within the former. In the same line of thought, outdoor spaces are only defined as outdoor in an opposition to indoor spaces, so they cannot really be defined without taking them into account. These spaces are naturally separated by borders, and borders themselves constitute a third type of space, situated within the parameters of liminality. The fact that Angel expresses her anger at space for simply existing, when there is nothing she can do about it, summarizes this novel. As long as people exist, space will surround them; but sometimes it is space which will prevent them from existing as they want to. This paper will consider the inside space first, namely the house, where it will build from Bachelard’s poetics; it will continue to analyze the outdoor space of New York City, and the position of transgender individuals in society in light of Butler’s ideas; and it will finally delve into the in-between space, the borderland that Anzaldúa theorized. Within this last part, it will consider two liminal spaces: the cars and the subway, both inextricably linked with transgender identity. The beauty of the reality that the novel portrays lies in the paradox of these people being both beautiful and impossible, and in how they keep persevering in the impossible but unstoppable quest of finding a space for themselves in this society. This paper will study how these spaces are related to the main characters’ identity traits in an intersectional approach, considering gender, sexuality, race, class and health.

**Keywords:**

Gender; queer; Latinx; space; intersectionality.

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## **Navigating Sexuality in the Catholic School: The Representation of Lesbian and Bisexual Protagonists in a Catholic Context in Irish YA Fiction**

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Irish Young Adult – YA – literature has seen a remarkable increase in recent years (see Cahill 2020). Initially, Irish YA literature was slow to address certain topics and issues that were considered controversial for an adolescent readership (see Kennon 2020). However, today it is possible to find YA texts that approach a broad range of themes, including those that had previously been considered taboo such as sexuality, abortion, teenage pregnancy, violence, drug abuse, child abuse, homelessness, and rebellion, as identified by Pádraic Whyte (71-2). For this particular study, I would like to focus on two specific topics: sexuality and religion. Regarding the topic of sexuality, this has always been – and continues to be – one of the most challenged subjects in Irish YA literature. Nevertheless, since the success of the same-sex marriage referendum in 2015, Irish YA literature has experienced a slow but steady increase in its recognition and representation of queer identities and sexualities (Kennon 139). On the contrary, the topic of religion is lacking in Irish YA literature, as this is rarely approached in texts for young adults despite the significance of this marker of identity in Irish life (see Coghlan 2011). Through this paper I aim to analyse how Irish YA literature approaches the negotiation of lesbianism and bisexuality within a religious context, particularly the catholic school. The methodology that will be followed in order to do this is based on critical and comparative readings of critical studies and analyses on YA literature and LGBTQ+ narratives, as well as it will build on queer theories and studies on religion and sexuality, as these offer the necessary perspective to approach this research. I focus on four contemporary Irish YA novels that depict lesbian or bisexual protagonists who attend catholic schools: Claire Hennessy's *Like Other Girls* (2017), Moira Fowley-Doyle's *All the Bad Apples* (2019), Adiba Jaigirdar's *The Henna Wars* (2020) and Ciara Smyth's *Not My Problem* (2021). These four novels can be divided into two groups: those where the catholic school directly influences the protagonists' experiences and where this is specifically addressed; and those where the protagonists' attendance to a catholic school does not directly impact their sexuality but rather appears as a background element. In exploring how catholicism does or does not influence the protagonists' homosexuality or bisexuality, I aim to look at how contemporary Irish YA literature represents catholicism and its influence on the lives of Irish adolescent girls in order to demonstrate how this literature can examine the relationship between religion and sexuality through different approaches.

### **Keywords:**

Irish literature; religion; sexuality; Young Adult fiction; LGBTQ+ literature.

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### **Suffragettes Fight Back: Edith Garrud and the Art of Suffrajitsu**

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Recent literary and media productions about the women's suffrage movement in the UK have been devoted to recovering and revisiting the forgotten figure of Edith Garrud, who taught self-defence techniques to some members of Emmeline Pankhurst's union of suffragettes through the martial art of jujitsu (Callan et al. 2019, 7). Publications on Garrud and her suffragettes' trainees include Tony Wolf and João Vieira's graphic novel trilogy *Suffrajitsu: Mrs. Pankhurst's Amazons* (2015), Kathrynne and Tony Wolf's documentary *No Man Shall Protect Us: The Hidden History of the Suffragette Bodyguards* (2018), and Lisa Evan's work of historical fiction *Old Baggage* (2018). Other examples are Netflix's *Enola Holmes* films (2020 and 2022), directed by Harry Bradbeer, and the graphic novel *Jujitsufragistas: Las Amazonas de Londres* (Xavier et al. 2023), which has just been published attesting to the popularisation of Garrud's life and the growing interest to remember and pay tribute to this icon in other contexts and languages. Departing from this array of titles, in this paper I shall focus on *Old Baggage's* and *Enola Holmes's* references to Garrud and her army of "jujitsu-suffragettes", also known as the Amazons (Kelly 2019, 14). As the bodyguard of the Women Social and Political Union (WSPU), the Amazons were in charge of protecting Mrs. Pankhurst and the other main leaders of the organisation through jujitsu. As a result, the term "Suffrajitsu" started to be used to refer to suffragettes' deployment of this Japanese martial art for self-defencing purposes (Callan et al. 2019, 2). *Old Baggage* tells the story of Mattie Simpkin, a middle-aged Londoner suffragette who in 1928, when universal suffrage is about to be approved, creates the Hampstead Heath Girls' Club. Inspired by suffragettes' practices and principles, Mattie bases her pedagogy on the martial art of jujitsu and trains her pupils, known as the Amazons, in the necessary fighting and ideological skills for their new lives as enfranchised subjects. *Enola Holmes* films focus on Sherlock Holmes' little sister, Enola, who is trained in jujitsu by her mother, Eudoria Holmes, a member of Pankhurst's union. The movies also include references to Garrud herself, since the figure of Edith Grayston clearly alludes to and is modelled after the suffragettes' jujitsu trainer. Grayston is presented as a self-defence instructor and her dojo frequently features in different scenes in which a group of women is represented practicing the sport. I attempt to prove how these works challenge existent misrepresentations of the suffragette providing more realistic and faithful versions of this symbol by emphasising the courage, bravery, and empowerment associated with this female icon through a real-life suffragette. In turn, I seek to explore the commemorative ends behind these products. Both Evans' novel and Netflix's filmic productions pay homage to unknown or silenced female voices and thus contribute to make visible the *herstory* of Garrud and those suffragettes who learnt and practiced jujitsu.

#### **Keywords:**

Suffragette Movement; Edith Garrud; Jujitsu; The Amazons; Suffrajitsu.

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**Beyond the Red Lights of the West End: Unveiling the Portrayal of Women's (S)Exploitation in Roland Vane's *Vice Rackets of Soho* (1950) and Edgar Wright's *Last Night in Soho* (2021)**

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From the post-war years onwards, the UK underwent a transformative process that profoundly impacted women's rights. Alongside the kitchen sink drama of the 1950s, which introduced a new realistic and working-class portrayal of female characters, the social and political changes of the 1960s served as significant turning points in women's history. These changes paved the way for the emergence of the second wave of feminism, characterized by notable milestones such as the Equal Pay Act of 1970, the reform of divorce laws in 1969, and the legalization of abortion in 1967, which were among the unprecedented changes of the time. These events nurtured a sense of women's liberation, often reflected in the popular image of the so-called swinging sixties, and which has been perpetuated and romanticized in subsequent decades. However, despite the improvements in women's situation brought about by these changes, recent studies revisiting the 1960s urge us "to demythologize the decade of Spectacle, and the images it burned into our collective memory" (Groes 1). Edgar Wright's film, *Last Night in Soho* (2021), is one of the most recent artistic works to follow this trend. In the film, Wright portrays "not simply the glamour of its colourful glory years but also the darker, seedier and more dangerous elements—especially for women" (Ritman). The audience is introduced to the story of Sandie, an aspiring young singer trapped in the web of prostitution that was prevalent in London's West End. This plot bears similarities to the story presented by Roland Vane in his novel *Vice Rackets of Soho* (1950). In fact, Vane's novel was described as "a tale which ruthlessly tears aside the veil of hypocrisy which has for long been allowed to conceal the truth about sinister night life of London" (Vane 130). Despite pioneering an insightful and critical portrayal of the exploitation of women in this part of London, *Vice Rackets of Soho* (1950) remained a forgotten and pulp work that ceased to be published after 1953.

Therefore, the aims of this paper are to offer a comparative study of the portrayal of women's sexual exploitation in Soho and to vindicate Roland Vane's forgotten work. More than seventy years before Wright's film, Vane's production delivered criticism and focused on a side of London that was less glamorous and egalitarian than the one portrayed by mainstream media. To accomplish this, I will analyse and compare both works using historical criticism and textual analysis. The conclusions drawn from this study will help shed light on the darker aspects of these years and, as Sebastian Groes aptly stated, 'demythologize' the 1960s. Simultaneously, it will demonstrate how this issue had already been brought to attention by lesser-known authors like Roland Vane in the previous decade.

**Keywords:**

Film; pulp literature; feminism; the 1960s; London.

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## **Inhuman Encounters of the Voyeur Kind: Narrating and Configuring a Posthuman Controsexuality**

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Recent advances in robotics, computer science and biotechnology, and the increase in the presence of artificial intelligence in our everyday lives have placed AI back into the academic and popular culture spotlight. Previous research has been directed mostly towards the cyborg and the alien, relegating AI systems to a secondary focus. However, there has been a shift within the realm of critical posthumanism—a branch of posthumanism that explores the benefits and downsides of posthumanity and question what it means to be human, problematizing transhumanist discourses of technological perfection and humanist ideas that privilege the mind over the body. This shift involves focusing on current AI systems' impact on our lives and the possibilities they offer to our conceptualization of the posthuman. Can this type of posthuman subject help us to redefine our concepts of being, feeling and sensing? What emerges from the intersection of posthuman “human” bodies with the inhuman? A branch within queer theory has been exploring the possibilities that arise from the association of the queer with the inhuman. Dana Luciano and Mel Y. Chen (2015) claim that the encounter with the inhuman makes us question what sex and gender might look like apart from the human and present the interrelation of the human/nonhuman binary as something that collides and generates friction and leakage. They believe that queer must not pursue being considered human but the possibilities that the inhuman offers instead.

The theoretical frameworks on which this paper is based are Critical Posthumanism, Trans and Queer Theory and the concept of the inhuman outlined by Luciano and Chen. They are used to explore the possible relations that may arise from the association of bots and other types of AIs with trans and nonbinary identities in the novel *Autonomous*, written by non-binary author Annalee Newitz. This paper attempts to conceptualise a new kind of controsexuality, analysing the way *Autonomous* imagines alternative ways of perceiving sexuality that go beyond the human, and the mechanisms used to present it. Thus, it focuses on the figure of biobots in the novel and their way of perceiving the world, and on the relationship between one of them and an augmented human. This paper ultimately suggests that the interaction of human bodies with the inhuman produces a sort of leakage in the reader's conception of sex, enabling the visualisation of alternative ways of sensing and feeling that may help us to get rid of humanist regulations of bodies and desires.

### **Keywords:**

Transgender; sexuality; posthumanism; AI; sci-fi.

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## Animal Ethics and Zoopoetics in the Poetry of Alice Fulton

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In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein famously noted that "if a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand it" (1986, 235). As can be easily deduced, this impenetrability lies not in the lion's *language* but in the lion's perception of the world, which is necessarily *different*, inaccessible from a human perspective. However, the existence of such an epistemological impasse—often pointed out by critical animal studies—does not mean the absence of relationality or "response-ability" (Haraway 2007) between human and nonhuman animals. On the contrary, it has led thinkers such as Marta Segarra to delve into a "humanimal" ethics based on difference rather than on sameness, that is, a transcending of binary thinking through plurality rather than (only) continuity. In *Humanimales* (2022), Segarra explores the areas of contact between human beings and nonhuman animals, arguing for the emergence of a "humanimalbeing" that succeeds in opening the borders of the human and questions the classic, Cartesian subject. Ultimately, I contend in this paper, this move goes hand in hand with the dispersion of the poetic self and the return to the body in contemporary poetry by women. In recent years, postmodern poets such as Rachel Blau Duplessis or Bernadette Mayer have sought to escape the limits of oppositional pairs such as self/other, text/body or nature/culture through a return to materiality—and perhaps also, animality—that compromises the authority of the lyric "I." Similarly, poets such as Alice Fulton have examined the animal question in terms of the existent affinity between "animal thinking" and "poetic thinking" (Driscoll and Hoffmann 2018, 3), creating texts that are not necessarily "about" animals, but rather "predicated upon an engagement with animals and animality (human and nonhuman)" (4). In this line, this paper argues for the complexity of Fulton's engagement with nonhuman animals, approximating her poetic stance to Segarra's arguments, but also to what Kári Driscoll and Eva Hoffmann have termed "zoopoetics" (2018), an innovative approach to poetry and animals that recognizes the latter's agency and voice without engaging in anthropocentrism. I here read Fulton's animal poems as zoopoetic texts, forms of discourse that may be considered exercises in Derridean "limitrophy" (2002, 29), feeding "the limit" and thus succeeding in "complicating, thickening, delinearizing, folding, and dividing" humanimal entanglements. In fact, although Fulton may not completely blur the ontological boundaries between humans and other animals in her poems, she does merge animal and human poetic voices and bodies, placing both under her confusing textures. This allows her to foray into new concepts of textual embodiment and subjective voicing, recognizing not only human voices and bodies back into experimental poetry, but also nonhuman ones.

### Keywords:

Zoopoetics; women; animals; poetry; nonhuman.

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## “Weird Girls”: Sexual Desire and The Female Gaze in *I Love Dick*

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*I Love Dick* is an American TV series created by Joey Soloway and Sarah Gubbins, released in 2017 on Amazon Prime Video. Composed by 8 episodes, the series is an adaptation of the cult novel of the same name written by Chris Krauss in 1997. The story centers around the character of Chris, a filmmaker who drives her husband to Marfa, Texas, where he is going to have a residency in an Art Institute. The institution is run by Dick, a celebrated and enigmatic artist who lives in a ranch and impersonates the cinematographic idea of the lonely cowboy. Chris, about to be forty and, frustrated by her lack of success as an artist and a marriage without sex, becomes obsessed with Dick. Moreover, she turns him into the object of her sexual and creative frustrations. The narrative, while in a comedy tone, is a deep and thorough reflection about the creative process and the possibility of a female gaze. In the 5<sup>th</sup> episode, entitled “A brief history of Weird Girls”, Soloway proposes a journey through multiple ideas of womanhood, as well as the germen of sexual desire and a creative mind. The episode, key to the understanding of the whole narrative, functions as a sort of audiovisual collage: the monologues of the protagonists staring at the camera are intertwined with shots of their background life stories and the pieces of art they relate to. According to Jane Ussher, lessons of femininity start for all women at an early age through different cultural channels. Ussher understands femininity here within the “relation to the fictions and fantasies that underlie so much of what is dominant and positioned as truth in the phallogentric sphere” (Fantasies 5).

The aim of this paper is to explore the representations of “woman” in this episode through the different female characters, and discuss sexual desire and creativity as articulated in it. Within the theoretical framework of Ussher’s “Fantasies of Femininity” and using gender as a tool of analysis as proposed by Vivero Marin (2016), this study intends to show how these female characters re-interpret and subvert what Jane Usher describes as “the script of femininity”, this is, sex, romance and beauty as the conceptual triangle upon which femininity is built.

### Keywords:

“I love Dick”; Female Gaze; Femininity; Sexuality; Phallogentrism.

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## The ‘Kingdom of the Sick’ in Lucy Caldwell’s “Multitudes”

Máximo Aláez Corral

Giving birth in the clean and protecting space of a hospital has become an almost mandatory requirement for women to ensure that the newborn baby will enter the world in the safest and soundest conditions, even if “home” is still regarded a space of comfort and warmth, and the hospital a sterile, cold and controlled space (Rothman 2005, 58). In some cases, however, all is not well after birth and the child must remain in the safe environment of the “institution”. What is the mother expected to do in such cases, and how should she confront the fear and anxiety resulting from the very possibility of losing her child in an alienating medical setting? How do/can mothers manage the emotional disturbance caused by a life-threatening sickness in her child right after giving birth?

This is the situation that Northern-Irish author Lucy Caldwell (Belfast, 1981) sets up in her short story “Multitudes” (from her 2016 short-story collection of the same title). A woman who has given birth to a baby boy is given the “not good” news that her baby is suffering from some unspecified serious illness, and this circumstance will require that the infant remains under observation/treatment of the medical team in hospital. Through a sequence of short vignettes (each introduced by its own title), the reader will bear witness to the different facets of anguish, fear and doubts the mother has to face as she strives to understand the situation — why her child has been unlucky to be born with a diseased condition, and whether he will still be part of the lucky “fifty percent” of those who survive the condition. At the same time, the story dissects her efforts to come to terms with her own conflicting feelings about the alien new setting she and her husband have been suddenly pushed into: a world riddled with a new language (the medical jargon), new furniture and objects (beeping machines, intravenous tubes and all sorts of medical equipment), and the ambivalent — both comforting and frightening — uncertainty of numbers, percentages and survival rates.

When the baby is finally discharged, the mother no longer recognizes the solace of “home” and still longs for the restricted yet reassuring safety of the hospital ward, until she realises the only home left is the family: herself, her husband and their child, perhaps the only domain where she may effectively fight the effects of untreated post-natal depression (Lee 2003, 185-186).

By close-reading Caldwell’s portrayal of a mother’s reflections upon the troubled situation she has to face after giving birth, I intend to analyse under the light of the Medical Humanities framework the ways in which motherhood makes its way through the constraints of a medicalised environment and the fear of losing the baby. The inadequacy in responding to the mother’s anxieties on the part of the medical practitioners will also be tackled in my analysis.

**Keywords:**

Motherhood; medical spaces; short story; women writing; illness.

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**“I didn’t own the robin– he owned me”: The Representation of Animals and Nature in Frances Burnett’s *A Little Princess* (1905), *The Troubles of Queen Silver* (1906) and *The Secret Garden* (1911)**



The name of Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924) is well known to those familiar with children's literature. Her works have been of great relevance in this genre, with Burnett being one of the Late Victorian authors who changed the narrative of childhood in English Literature. Among her achievements, she developed a unique representation of the natural world that awakes the interest and curiosity of the characters and, one assumes, the implied readers. Through this representation, and following some of the Romantics' ideas about childhood, Burnett explores the relationship between nature and children. However, she goes a step further in the study of this relationship; in her oeuvre, Burnett deals with the connection between the lack of care and respect for the natural world and children. In a subtle but powerful way, this author identifies a social and cultural system ruled by a hierarchy that considers humans as superiors to nature. Moreover, this hierarchy also places certain individuals over others. Burnett is aware of this order, yet she challenges it by giving protagonism to nature and children, whose relationship is portrayed as one of coexisting in harmony and equality. Given these considerations, it is possible to acknowledge that Burnett has advanced ecofeminist concerns (Opperman 28). Framed in the aforementioned notions of Burnett's interest in nature, as well as her subversive portrayal of her characters' relationship with it, the following paper discusses three of her works: *A Little Princess* (1905), *The Troubles of Queen Silver Bell* (1906) and *The Secret Garden* (1911), through the lens of feminist ecocriticism. Without restoring only to anthropomorphism as in more traditional fables, the natural world gains symbolic and evocative power, recalling some of the overall themes of her novels: healing and restoration. Thus, when humans take care of nature, balance is recovered in the world and this benefits both parts. Burnett's novels provide multiple examples of this interdependent relationship, which is produced by the new perspectives introduced, such as that of considering animals and plants as siblings to humans. Also, these works challenge the conception of women as the perfect caretakers of nature, which has long been addressed by ecofeminist and ecocritics. In the context of this discussion, Burnett's depiction of a new form of masculinity in communion with nature, far from the colonizing and urban Victorian ideal, becomes of a particular interest. Thus, the reading of these novels will provide a necessary insight of Burnett's corpus, with examples of how a fair relationship between humans (notwithstanding their gender) and non-human beings is possible.

**Keywords:**

Ecofeminism; ecocriticism; animal studies; children's literature; nature.

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**“I ended with a family tree that looked more like a barbed-wire fence”: Queer Kinship and Diasporic Survival in Ocean Vuong’s *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (2019) and *Time Is a Mother* (2022)**

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“We often we see queerness as deprivation,” Ocean Vuong explains in a recent interview, “But when I look at my life, I saw that queerness demanded an alternative innovation from me” (Louisiana Channel, 2022). It is indeed by the means of queerness, and thus by deviating from dominant heteronormative scripts, that Vuong provides a potential alternative route for survival and resistance for queer diasporic subjects in his latest two works. In his debut novel *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (2019), Vuong draws on his own experience as a Vietnamese refugee and situates a Vietnamese American queer protagonist at the center of his non-linear narrative, which excavates the protagonist’s family history, blurring the boundaries between past and present, to trace the multiple histories of displacement informing who he is today. The novel’s non-teleological, queer formulation of time foregrounds the protagonist’s—and his family’s—fractured and fleeting recollections, thus allowing Vuong to create a relational structure of remembrance that recovers the voices of those effaced by Western representation. Yet, queerness does not only offer disruptive narrative strategies in Vuong’s writing; rather, I argue that it also permeates the forms of kinship, community, and solidarity which the novel envisions: from the multigenerational, interdependent, “polymaternal family” (Park 2013, 10) situated at the core of the protagonist’s life after resettlement, to the inter-diasporic networks of alliance and solidarity that he forges in order to survive the precariousness of contemporary America.

Whilst the most iconic theories articulated on Queer Kinship have mostly focused on mapping “other modes of relating, belonging, caring, and so on” that serve as alternatives to the traditional heteronormative family (Halberstam 2007, 316), I argue that navigating kinship relations becomes an even more scrambled process for racialized queers, especially in the face of myriad oppressions prompted by social, spatial, and/or economic displacement. For this reason, I believe that the possibilities for queer relationalities “are not exhausted in the move away from normative kinship; they also arise in movements within, across, and between it” (Freeman and Bradway 2022, 13). In this light, both Vuong’s novel and his recent poetry collection *Time is a Mother* (2022) interrogate how queerness may reformulate the practices of intimacy, care, and support that constitute kinship relations to usher in strategies of survival and resistance in the diaspora (Rodríguez 2014). Similar to the novel, *Time is a Mother* examines Vuong’s familial ties—both scarred and adaptive, troubled and nurturing—hence exposing what Freeman and Bradway understand as the “kincoherence of kinship” (3). It is by tracing this affective structure of belonging that Vuong imagines possibilities for healing and joy in the face of violence and loss, a paradox encapsulated by the fragmented lives of queer diasporic subjects in contemporary America.

**Keywords:**

Queer kinship; diaspora; contemporary literature; survival; belonging.

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## **“I have many names”: Of Dácil, Pocahontas, and Bibis in Western Imagination and the Reconstruction of (Postcolonial) Female Identities**

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Mixed marriages have been instrumental practices for developing and settling colonial powers overseas, especially wherever profitable outcomes result from such matrimonies. There have been uncountable instances of these interethnic unions across the globe, from the contact zones in North and South America to those in India and South Asia, constituting a transcultural pattern that repeats itself regardless of the typology of the colonial project that had been established in those territories. This thesis departs from the field of ethnography and aims to look into how such “liaisons” have been inscribed in Western literature, for it was required to create a narrative that would not only justify European desire for the Other, but also that would legitimize such marriages in a historical period in which sexuality was closely scrutinized.

The main purpose of this paper is to explore the romances imagined by Europeans to unravel the symbolic construction of their idealized “object” of desire: the beautiful “princesses” that had to be saved from their “savage” kind. By applying Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination*, this thesis demonstrates that such desire for the Other overlooks racial issues if colonized women belong to higher classes, be it an actual class distinction, already found in the conquered societies, as it occurs with the Bibis in India; be it an “imagined” class status created for such purposes, as it occurs with Pocahontas in North America and La Malinche in South America, or even with Dácil in the Canary Islands. Moreover, this paper is also interested in approaching these “fantasies” from the scope of affect theory, for they have narrated how “Love” serves as a colonial instrument. Thus, the first section of this paper examines James Nelson Barker and Montrose Jonas’ *The Indian Princess; Or, La Belle Sauvage* (1808), John Dryden’s *Amboyna; Or, The Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants* (1973), focusing on the symbolic construction of their protagonists and of the relationships established.

Moreover, as this essay considers that such representations have established a series of stereotypes that have persisted over time, the last section of this paper will consider contemporary women’s voices such as Monique Mojica’s *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (1991) and Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* (1989), who challenge such narratives, not only by addressing these stereotypes but also by elaborating a transformative subject that defies any colonial/patriarchal clustering.

### **Keywords:**

Bibis; Masculine Domination; Mixed Marriages; Romance; Pocahontas.

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## Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's Advocacy for Women's Homeownership in 19th-century America through Her Writings

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Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844-1922) was a ground-breaking nineteenth-century woman in many fields, which were not limited to her literary skills. While she received the well-deserved acclaim and recognition as an exceptional author, with a remarkable body of work encompassing over fifty books, hundreds of articles, poems, and short stories published in prestigious magazines, she has gradually been marginalized in the study of American literature. This is unfair — as acknowledged by esteemed scholars like Mary Angela Bennet as far back as 1939—, from her tireless efforts to promote gender equality across various aspects of women's lives, a cause that was far less common during her time than it is today. This phenomenon was indeed of such magnitude that one of her main biographers, Carol Farley Kessler, begins her book with this assertion: “Elizabeth Stuart Phelps was a writer with a central cause: women.”

From the many aspects related to the “woman question” that she addressed with immense interest, for the present proposal, the focus will be particularly on her advocacy for women's ownership of their own homes, a proposition that sharply contradicted the prevailing feminine ideal of her era. In her autobiography, she overtly recommended this uncommon “experiment at home-making” and especially to unmarried women (*Chapters*, 192) and she put into practice one of her firm beliefs, “that women should own the houses they lived in” (Kessler 1982, 58).

Nevertheless, writing about this was not very profitable at a time when editors and reviewers promoted instead literary works that portrayed heroines who incarnated the role of the True Woman (Coultrap-McQuin 12), who was supposed to be what Virginia Woolf called the “Angel in the House”, but not as its owner or possessor.

In previous studies, I have concentrated on how Elizabeth Stuart Phelps not only defended, but also portrayed with her own example her conviction of the benefits derived from the ownership of their own houses by women. In the current one, my objective is to illustrate how she reflected it also in her writings. In this present work, my objective is to demonstrate how she conveyed these ideals through her writings. To achieve this goal, I will employ a qualitative analysis of Phelps' literary works where this subject is most effectively explored, employing a Feminist Critical Approach. My ultimate goal is to contribute to situate Elizabeth Stuart Phelps among a wider range of nineteenth-century American women writers whose efforts to become both successful artists and reformers have already been recognised worldwide.

### Keywords:

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps; Women's Homeownership; 19-century American feminist writers; women rights.

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## Exploring Henry Blake Fuller's *At Saint Judas's* as a Queer Morality Play

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Henry Blake Fuller's name is notably absent from any comprehensive exploration of American literary history. While Fuller's work was highly acclaimed during his lifetime, decades later, it was slowly forgotten. Yet in recent years, some academics, particularly those involved in LGBTQ+ studies, have directed their attention towards him. In 1896, after experiencing a series of ups and downs in his career, he released a collection of twelve short plays titled *The Puppet Booth*, drawing inspiration from European symbolists like Maurice Maeterlinck and Henrik Ibsen. Among these pieces, *At Saint Judas's* stands out for its exploration of homosexuality within the confines of a society bound by conventional mores. This revolutionary one act-play revolves around a bridegroom who, just moments before his wedding, uncovers multiple attempts by his best man to undermine the imminent union. Filled with fury, the bridegroom demands that the best man take his own life. This paper aims to delve deeper into the play's narrative, shedding light on its rich subtext and examining this piece as a queer morality play. Through a close examination of the characters, plot dynamics, and thematic elements, the paper explores the interplay between morality and queerness. To rescue his characters from the grim world of public scrutiny, he employs a deliberate strategy of enveloping the melodrama with religious imagery. Each encounter between the two male protagonists unfolds against an allegorical backdrop, infused with symbolic significance. This artistic choice elevates the narrative, allowing it to convey a profound message about the unattainability of complete and fulfilled love between men in a society that rejects it. By applying the lens of queer theory, the analysis thoroughly explores the nuances of the text, considering how the author employs the traditional structure of a morality play to illuminate the struggles faced by gay individuals in a restrictive society. The findings of this study not only contribute to understanding the author's internal conflicts and their reflection of broader societal debates and prejudices of the time, but also shed light on the way in which he confronts the reader with thought-provoking questions regarding the legitimacy and consequences of same-sex love. This nuanced portrayal suggests that Fuller was wrestling with his own understanding of the subject matter, reflecting the complex and evolving attitudes of the late 19th-century America towards homosexuality and his willingness to challenge societal norms. As a result, the play's ambiguity emerges as one of its most captivating qualities.

### Keywords:

Henry Blake Fuller; *At Saint Judas's*; queer literature; morality play; LGBTQ+ identity.

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## **‘A sort of play among the Yorkshire boys’: Dialect words in Benjamin Langwith’s annotations to Skinner’s *Etymologicon* (1671)**

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This paper explores Benjamin Langwith’s (1684-1743) manuscript notes to a copy of Stephen Skinner’s *Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae* (1671) that is housed at the British Library (now 825.kk.20). A Yorkshire antiquary and clergyman, Langwith supplemented the *Etymologicon* in 1715 with copious annotations that not only offer alternative conjectures (e.g. s.v. *a warth* ‘a ford’) and additional entries to Skinner’s compilation (e.g. *pintada* ‘a guinea-hen’). They also provide us with substantial material quoted from different dialects, among which items ascribed to Langwith’s native Yorkshire are particularly abundant. Even though Langwith acknowledged that a significant proportion of his dialect words derive from printed sources like Ray (1691), Meriton (1695) and Thoresby (1703), his contribution to the history of eighteenth-century provincialisms is worth exploring, especially because printed compilations of Yorkshire words are few enough for additions like Langwith’s annotations to be well received (see e.g. Marshall 1788).

This presentation looks at the dialect element of Langwith’s notes, paying special attention to the vocabulary quoted from Yorkshire. My aim is twofold. On the one hand, I seek to ascertain what it can tell us about lexical variation in the early eighteenth century, for which purpose I shall focus on (1) items that Langwith cited to illustrate etymological derivations within the entries (e.g. *to high* ‘hasten’); (2) additional words that he marked to be listed in the compilation (e.g. *heugler* ‘a cheat’); (3) as well as spelling variants that he proposed to lemmatise in some cases (e.g. *a trowan* ‘truant’). On the other hand, I attempt to determine the impact of Langwith’s material on the history of dialect vocabulary by exploring how he contributed to his printed sources (e.g. with additional senses), while showing that some of his words and senses can be taken to antedate the record of the *English Dialect Dictionary* (1896-1905): *sawl* ‘a moth’, first recorded in 1788. The analysis indicates that forgotten evidence like Langwith’s manuscript annotations can be useful in our collaborative endeavour to reconstruct the history of English dialect words, one that remains fragmented and poorly understood.

### **Keywords:**

Yorkshire dialect; eighteenth century; dialect lexicography; dialect vocabulary; manuscript annotations.

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## **The English Language of Seventeenth-Century Ireland: A Corpus Analysis of the 1641 Depositions**

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The earliest recorded use of English in Ireland, apart from personal names, dates from 1250, in an entry of the records of the Dublin Merchant Guildsmen (Irwin 1935: 28). But before the seventeenth century English was spoken only by small numbers of settlers, chiefly in the towns on the east coast (Hickey 2007: 123).

From the mid-16th century onwards, however, Ireland was aggressively colonised by Protestant settlers from England and Scotland. These population movements, collectively known as *plantations*, were devised by the English monarchs and saw Irish landowners dispossessed to make way for the settlers.

During 1641, Irish resentment against the Protestant settlers was exacerbated by a poor harvest. This, in part, led to the Irish rebellion of 1641 and the ultimate defeat of the rebels in 1649 (Kallen 1994: 156). A commission was then appointed by the lord justices of Ireland to record testimonies, mainly by Protestants, but also by some Catholics, concerning their experiences of the 1641 Irish rebellion. These testimonies, known as the 1641 Depositions, document the loss of goods, military activity, and the alleged crimes committed by the Irish insurgents.

Between 2009 and 2010 the 1641 Depositions were digitised by historians at Trinity College, Dublin, and were subsequently made available online. The data consist of 6,338 individual text files (<https://1641.tcd.ie/>). Such a body of material is unparalleled anywhere in early modern Europe; it provides a unique source of information not only on the social, cultural, religious, and political issues of seventeenth-century Ireland but also, most crucially for present purposes, on the history of the English language in Ireland in the early stages of the gradual shift from Irish to English as the most widely spoken vernacular. This shift then culminated during the nineteenth century (Kallen 1994: 148).

Despite the digitisation of the 1641 Depositions meaning that they can now be analysed using computational linguistic methods, linguistic research on the Depositions has so far been limited to only a handful of studies, mostly conducted from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (e.g., Van Dijk 1991), as is the case of MacLeod & Fennell's (2012) exploration of recurrent patterns in the Depositions concerning descriptions of women. This paper will focus instead on morphosyntactic features considered to be characteristic of Irish English (see, e.g., Filppula 2004: 73–101), as opposed both to Standard British English and to other regional or social dialects of English. For instance, usage and functions of the verb *do* (cf. [1]), or its absence [2] in contexts where it would now be required:

(1) I found my brother gathering up some letters of mine which I directed to him, [...]. They **did containe** much of what came into my knowledge of the present state of things as they lay in my way;

(*Letter from Henry Jones, 14/12/1641, Dublin; Volume IV: 450*)

(2) One Art mcPatrick [...] speaking to this Examinant in Irish she desired he would deliver himselfe in English for she **vnderstood not** Irish;

(*Deposition of Martha Culme, 14/02/1642; Leitrim; Volume I: 231*)

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### **Automatic parsing of an Old English corpus with SpaCy. Performance evaluation and fine-tuning**

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This paper deals with the automatic parsing of an Old English corpus. To be more precise, the aim of the paper is to describe and assess the automatic parsing of a corpus of Old English with Universal Dependencies (Nivre et al. 2016; de Marneffe et al. 2021). Universal Dependencies is a framework of morphological annotation and syntactic parsing specifically devised for linguistic comparison, language acquisition, translation and natural language processing. The tagset of Universal Dependencies comprises UPOS (universal part-of-speech tags), XPOS (language-specific part-of-speech tags), Feats (universal morphological features), lemmas, and dependency heads and labels. An Old English corpus of 25,000 words has been manually annotated for Universal Dependencies. This corpus has been extracted from *ParCorOEv2. An open access annotated parallel corpus Old English-English* (Martín Arista et al. 2021). The same corpus has been annotated with SpaCy, an open-source library for advanced natural language processing in Python programming language. SpaCy has been selected because of its ability to create and use custom models for specific tasks of natural language processing. For the task of automatic parsing, three training corpora and three training procedures have been used. The training corpora comprise, respectively, 1,000, 5,000, 10,000 and 20,000 words. For some parts of the task, larger corpora of Old English have been required, including *The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (Taylor et al. 2003) and *The Dictionary of Old English web corpus* (Healey et al. 2004). The training methods have comprised a SpaCy pipeline with default configuration, pre-training of tok2vec stage and a model of language based on transformers. The stages of the pipeline include a tokeniser, which divides the text into tokens, a Tok2vec / Transformer, which transforms tokens into vectors that represent proximity between words numerically, Morpho, which assigns UPOS (universal lexical category) and FEATS (morphological features) to each token, Lemmatiser, which attributes lemma to each token, and Parser, which assigns HEAD (head

of dependency) and DEPREL (dependency relation). SpaCy can decide whether to share the tok2vec stage with the next stages or not. Given that the training corpus is small, this stage has been shared, as this option reduces the number of trainable parameters of the system, which ultimately should yield more accurate results. Basic training corresponds to the standard training in SpaCy (<https://spacy.io/usage/training>). During the training process, SpaCy displays a series of metrics calculated with the evaluation set. The main result of the evaluation of the task is that part-of-speech and dependency annotation with larger corpora turns out better results in all the stages of the pipeline (up to 90%). The main conclusion of this work is that the model can be fine-tuned by simultaneously processing the Old English and the English parallel texts.

**Keywords:**

Old English; Syntactic Parsing; Universal Dependencies; Automatic Annotation.

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**Nominal syncretism in the Old Northumbrian glosses**

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It has been shown (Blakeley 1948/1949; Ross 1977, 1978; Fernández Cuesta and Rodríguez Ledesma 2020) that there is an ongoing process of accusative/dative syncretism in the Old Northumbrian gloss to the Lindisfarne Gospels (MS Cotton Nero D. IV) in masculine and neuter *a*-stems and root nouns, but that this process is much less apparent in the gloss to Durham Cathedral library MS A IV 19 (Fernández Cuesta 2018), although the general consensus is that both glosses were penned by the same scribe.

The aim of this paper is to assess whether the alleged neutralization of these two oblique cases is also found in the Northumbrian section of the gloss to the Rushworth Gospels (MS. Auct. D. 2. 19), usually known as Rushworth2. To this end I have carried out a quantitative and qualitative analysis of twenty nouns belonging to the *a*-stems, both masculine (*cynning*, *dæg*, *gast*, *stān*, etc.) and neuter (*cynn*, *folc*, *fȳr*, *hus*, *lond*, *þing*, etc.), root nouns (*burh*, *mann*, etc.) and kinship *r*-stems (*fæder*, *modor*). I have also considered heavy feminine *i*-stems that may have an endingless form in the accusative singular (*dǣd*, *miht*, *tīd*, etc.). All the relevant forms have been analysed taking into account their syntactic function (direct object, indirect object and adverbial), frequency of occurrence and whether they are modified by a demonstrative and/or an adjective. The possible influence of the case of the Latin lemma on the Old English form has also been considered, especially in cases where there is no automatic correspondence between source and target languages as regards prepositional complementation. The data have been retrieved using the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* (2007) and Tamoto's recent edition of Rushworth2 (2013).



Given the inaccuracies detected in standard editions of the Lindisfarne gloss, all instances have been checked against the digitized manuscript in order to detect possible errors, both in the editions and in the *DOEC*.

Preliminary results show that there is an almost total lack of accusative /dative syncretism in Rushworth2. Unlike in the Lindisfarne gloss, there are no cases of syncretism with the function of direct and indirect object and very few with the function of adverbial (i.e nouns following the prepositions *æt, from, mið, of, to*, which govern dative in Old English). Moreover, analysis of the cases of apparent syncretism in the context of the Latin original and the manuscript layout reveal that at least some of them may have other explanations. The results found for Rushworth2 are more in line with Durham Cathedral library MS A IV 19, for which the percentage of accusative/dative syncretism in this syntactic context does not exceed 10%. This absence of syncretism is particularly evident in the case of the complementation of *in/on*, which in classical Old English (like in vulgar Latin and present-day German) takes accusative when indicating movement and dative (the local case) to express location. In contrast to the Lindisfarne gloss, this distinction is maintained in Rushworth2.

#### **Keywords:**

Old English dialectology; Old Northumbrian; glosses; nominal syncretism; morphological change.

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#### **Reimagining Manuscripts: Hypertext and the Future of Digital Versions**

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The dissemination of written texts has been a subject of interest in the field of historical linguistics. The emergence of software tools has resulted in the materialisation of technological supports. Consequently, there has been a gradual evolution from traditional supports, such as facsimile versions and printed editions, to more contemporary ones, online versions. In addition to the issue of defining the notion of "text", which has been extensively analysed by scholars like Troxel (2016), another problem arises concerning imitation and replacement. This paper concentrates on the relevance of philological research, contemporary technologies and their application to English Medieval manuscripts. Reflecting on the process of digitisation and creation of facsimile, the purpose is to possibly establish a distinction between the notions of digital and digitised. I have followed an inductive and quantitative process within a philological framework. Based on a comparative analysis, I will approach riddles 47, 48, and 49 from The

Exeter Book in three dissimilar versions: their facsimile features from *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry* (1933), *The Online Exeter Book* (2023), and three posts by the researcher Megan Cavell (2020). Due to the qualitative nature of my findings, I have compared them in terms of colour, possibility of interaction, commentaries of theoretical background, and with respect to a linguistic approach, the presence of transliterations and translations into Present Day English. Following the sustained framework of *Digital Scholarly Editing* (2016), the distinction between digital and digitised have been elementary to conduct a proper analysis of each case. Thus, my analysis illustrates, despite the limitations of the sample size, that a digital nature cannot be applied to the online version of The Exeter Book. This conclusion possibly underscores the academic necessity for the development of digital supports through the implementation of digital tools that involve hypertext features, defined as links employed to achieve a new interactive level, transcending the limits of the pages (Gassim 2023, 353-354). Even though *Electronic Beowulf* can be categorised as a digital version, the imperative remains for future research to address this issue with a more extensive sample size. Our ambition as researchers ought to be to foster an environment concentrated on the enhancement and expansion of possibilities for the examination and preservation of medieval manuscripts, transcending the limitations of paper. Therefore, with a broader horizon, our objective is not simply the compilation of studies and examination in an authentic digital version, but the effective utilisation of software tools to analyse English Medieval Manuscripts.

**Keywords:**

Digital; digitised; The Exeter Book; hypertext.

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**Where might a line be drawn (...)?: Locating Late Modern Derbyshire Dialect**

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In discussing the Derbyshire dialect, one cannot help but highlighting that the county is the epitome of borders. At the heart of Britain, it marks the separation between not only the East and the West Midlands, but also the Midlands and the North of England. Across the centuries, and given the county's peculiar location, much ado has been made in trying to assign it to a specific linguistic area, as exemplified in a letter sent by James Murray to Thomas Hallam in 1873: "where might a line be drawn across [Derbyshire]", the celebrated lexicographer enquired of the Derbyshire-born dialectologist, "dividing the northern from the Midland or typical English speech?", "can you give me any idea of the county of Derby as a whole?" (Bodl. MS Eng. lang. d. 42, 11). Murray's concerns were shared by contemporary linguists, among whom

Derbyshire's linguistic location generated interest and controversy in equal measure. Some described the dialect as a variety whose pronunciation partook "more of the North than of any other [region]" (Holloway 1838, xviii); others, however, contended that it belonged to the "Midland part of England" (Pegge 1896, xix), while scholars like Prince Lucien Bonaparte qualified Derbyshire speech as "transitional" (Viereck 1992, 20). This transitional, hybrid nature of the Derbyshire dialect does increase its linguistic value and interest, yet this variety remains to date virtually unexplored.

This paper investigates late modern Derbyshire dialect by means of the analysis of dialect writing, which provides "potential evidence of the degree of salience of specific features that writers consciously choose to represent" (Sánchez-García and Ruano-García 2020, 54). It draws on instances of dialect literature and literary dialect (Shorrocks 1996) in order to (1) identify the main linguistic features associated with this variety in the public imagination, while (2) determining if such features may inform us about the linguistic classification of the Derbyshire dialect, and whether they correlate with contemporary perceptions about the variety's transitional nature reflected in non-literary evidence.

To do so, a corpus-based quantitative and qualitative linguistic analysis of the data extracted from the texts has been performed by means of which a clear set of phonological, morphological and lexical features has been identified. In line with non-literary metadiscourse, such repertoire includes traits which have traditionally been associated with both more northerly regions (e.g. unsplit [o], [a]-type realisations of FACE) and the West Midlands (e.g. *-na* negation, *hoo* 'she'), as well as others that seem to be characteristic of this dialect alone (e.g. [a:] realisations of MOUTH), which reinforces the linguistic portrait of Derbyshire as a hybrid variety. In this sense, the analysis has also unveiled divergences in the way the dialect's transitional nature was represented depending on the author's degree of familiarity with Derbyshire speech, which suggests that the dialect was understood and classified differently by native and non-native speakers.

#### **Keywords:**

Late Modern English; Derbyshire dialect; linguistic classification; dialect writing.

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#### **Editing Iberian Chivalric Romances in English Translation: *The Fift [sic] Booke of Amadis de Gaule***

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In the year 1578, the first Iberian chivalric book in translation, Diego Ortúñez de Calahorra's *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood*, translated by Margaret Tyler (STC 18859), was published, and the corpus of Iberian romances available in English subsequently kept expanding in size and popularity. For a long time, however, these texts were largely neglected. Only over the last decades have literary scholars turned their attention to them and remedied the scarce

attention they had hitherto received: in particular, the figure of Anthony Munday has stood out for being responsible for producing English versions of both the Amadis and the Palmerin cycle. Thanks to this growing interest, twenty-first-century readers can now access critical editions of Munday's translation of the first four books of Amadis de Gaule (Moore 2004), Palmerin d'Oliva (Sánchez-Martí 2020), and Palmendos (Álvarez-Recio 2022), among others. This paper will discuss the process of producing a critical edition of the Iberian chivalric romance *The Fift [sic] Booke of Amadis de Gaule*, whose forthcoming publication will create a sense of continuity with the already edited first four books of the Amadis cycle and will make the sixteenth-century English version of the fifth part of Amadis de Gaule accessible for the first time ever since it was reedited in the seventeenth century.

The fifth volume of the Iberian Amadis cycle, *Las Sergas de Esplandián*, was originally composed in Spanish by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo and published by Jacobo Cromberger in 1510 (IB 16416). It enjoyed great success, being reprinted nine times in Spain by the end of the sixteenth century, and it disseminated across Europe. In 1544 Nicolas Herberay des Essarts translated *Las sergas de Esplandián* into French under the title *Le Cinquiesme Livre d'Amadis de Gaule* (FB 675-681) (see Duché and Arnould's (2009) edition of this work). This book was then translated from French into English, probably by Anthony Munday (1560-1633), and there are two extant editions: *The Fift [sic] Booke of the Most Pleasant and Electable [sic] Historie of Amadis de Gaule* (STC 542.5), printed by Adam Islip in 1598, and the second edition, *The fifth book of the most pleasant and delectable history of Amadis de Gaule*, printed by "T.J." (most likely Thomas Johnson) in 1664 (Wing L2731). I will examine its rendering not only from Spanish into French and from French into English, but I will also consider the history of this Iberian chivalric book within a broader European context, with its translation into languages such as Italian, Dutch and German.

#### **Keywords:**

Iberian chivalric romances; textual editing; *Fift Booke of Amadis de Gaule*; early modern England.

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#### **Country vs. Court in Robert Howard and George Villiers's *The Country Gentleman***

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Restoration comedies were largely written by and for the fashionable gentility of London and drew on notable feelings of rejection of the supposedly inelegant, *inurbane*, dull life of the countryside. These plays often relate country life and people to ignorance, coarseness, and backwardness, and ridicule them for that reason. This tendency started to change in the reign of William and Mary, when dramatists such as Thomas Shadwell, for example, presented a more positive view of the country as an appropriate place for the gentry to escape from the hedonistic, artificial, unhealthy, and dishonest life in London, and thus become exemplary subjects of the new regime. However, there is a very noteworthy precursor to that new trend which is *The Country Gentleman*, written mostly by Sir Robert Howard but with some consequential contributions by George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham. This comedy was prepared for production in 1669 but it was eventually banned from performance and publication, due to a major political and personal scandal involving Buckingham and Sir William Coventry, who is ruthlessly satirised in the play. Apart from the explanation of the reasons behind this censorship, there are very few studies about this text, although it is no doubt a very remarkable, amusing and well-crafted comedy.

The aim of this paper is to study the representation of the eponymous protagonist of this play: Sir Richard Plainbred, an exemplary country gentleman who likes plain dealing, good will, English food, and the healthy aspects and traditional values of country life. He detests London because it is environmentally and morally polluted, full of foul air and noise on the one hand, and of double dealing, prodigality, and French fashions on the other. Although a serious and respected patriarchal authority in the play, he is not the typical whimsical, self-interested blocking agent, but a benevolent and understanding father who accepts his daughters' choice of husbands, who are also landowning country gentlemen and significantly called Worthy and Lovetruth. This is certainly a notable exception in the comedies of the 1660s and 70s, in which members of the provincial gentry are frequent laughingstock because they are shown as gullible, boorish, and unfashionable. I will analyse this characterisation in the context of other comedies of the period and of Howard's political interests. He was one of the leaders of the Country party opposition in the second half of the 1660s. This political group intended to defend the interests of the landed gentry against both London upstarts and certain policies of the Court. The Privy Council attempted to increase taxation in order to finance the Second Dutch War but the motion was defeated in Parliament, Howard having a prominent role. Besides, he was also concerned with England's commercial interests and argued for the control of the importation of French wine, for instance. All these political issues lie behind the characterisation of Sir Richard Plainbred as a praiseworthy country gentleman.

**Keywords:**

Robert Howard; George Villiers; *The Country Gentleman*; country; Restoration politics.

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## A New Source for Centlivre's First Comedy: Jasper Mayne's *The Amorous Warre* (1648)

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In volume 2 of *Some Account of the English Stage* (1832), John Genest notes that many of Mrs Plotwell's speeches in *The Beau's Duel: or, A Soldier for the Ladies* (1702) are copied verbatim from Jasper Mayne's comedy *The Citye Match*, printed in 1639 (2: 262). In the course of the analysis of Centlivre's work a new source has been found: Mayne's other known play, the tragicomedy *The Amorous Warre* (published in 1648). In spite of his thorough research, Genest failed to note that Centlivre borrowed from this play, although he was aware of its existence and plot (Genest 10: 71).

*The Citye Match* was moderately successful: it was acted at court for Charles I and Henrietta Maria in 1637/8 and in the following year by the King's Men in Blackfriars' theatre. In 1639 it was also printed in folio at Oxford, which is exceptional and shows Mayne's importance in the university. Attesting to its importance, this comedy was revived at least once in the Restoration: Samuel Pepys attended a performance of *The Citye Match* on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1668. However, *The Amorous Warre* was probably never staged. Since records pertaining to drama during the Civil War and the Protectorate are scant given the fact that theatres were closed and dramatic activity was limited, it is not surprising that no proof regarding a performance of *The Amorous Warre* by any London theatre has been discovered thus far. Its history is so obscure that scholars cannot date its composition to a specific date and have instead suggested a very broad timespan: 1628-1648 (Bentley 844; Harbage 140; Traversi 86).

In spite of the uncertainty relating to the early history of *The Amorous Warre*, it is not surprising that Centlivre used not only one, but both plays as sources for her text. This was likely made possible by the fact that Mayne's plays were sold bound together either in quarto or octavo. As Echegaray-Mitar has argued, Centlivre did not merely copy words verbatim from *The Citye Match*; instead, she adapted the words and certain plot elements to the sensibilities prevalent in her own time as well as to her political allegiances. By focusing on *The Amorous Warre*, this paper seeks to analyse the connections between Mayne's tragicomedy and Centlivre's first comedy in depth and to consider whether this connection is in any way comparable to the similarities formerly identified between *The Beau's Duel* and *The Citye Match*.

Apart from identifying the exact sections Centlivre borrowed from Mayne's tragicomedy, the focus of the paper will be on the changes she made to adapt the words to her plot and time particularly in view of the type of characters and settings in *The Amorous Warre*. Furthermore, the paper will also consider whether there are any differences in the way she addressed these changes in comparison to *The Citye Match*, considering the dissimilar natures of Mayne's works.

### Keywords:

Caroline drama; Restoration comedy; Jasper Mayne; Susanna Centlivre.

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## The Actress's Two Bodies and the Restoration Female Piece

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When theatrical activity resumed in England with the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the most significant innovation was undoubtedly the appearance of women on the stage. The emergence of the professional female performer had profound effects both on the development of generic models and theatrical practice. Their increasing celebrity gave rise to a distinctive dramatic form: the so-called “female piece” (Danchin 1981, xli). This was an outspoken, suggestive prologue or epilogue delivered by an actress who built on her public persona to tease the audience.

Restoration scholars usually take it for granted that actresses spoke these pieces from the very moment they were permitted to act (Bower 1884, 15; Wiley 1940, 42). However, a review of the extant prologues and epilogues produced in the 1660s tells a different story: the conquest of this liminal theatrical space was a slow, gradual one. In this early period the epilogues given to women are scarce. Before the hiatus imposed by the plague and the Great Fire (1665-1666), the few female epilogues preserved were written to be spoken in character. It was not until the late 1660s that a celebrity actress like Nell Gwyn began to deliver pieces *in propria persona*, as in the landmark epilogue to Dryden's *Tyrannick Love* (1669). Female prologues were virtually non-existent throughout the decade, and the first to be recited onstage (again, in 1668-1669) were presented as exceptional, transgressive pieces.

This paper will build on Danchin's edition of the prologues and epilogues of the Restoration to offer a thorough review of the female pieces written for the English theatres in the 1660s. A careful examination of these texts will serve as the basis to trace the actress's conquest of this territory and analyze the way in which these texts negotiated gender issues. The gradual process by which actresses claimed the liminal spaces of prologue and epilogue can be best explained by invoking the concept of the actress's two bodies: the virtual body of the character she played onstage and her own actual body as a flesh and blood individual (King 1992, 80; Nussbaum 2005, 150). The fact that actresses begin by delivering pieces in character and only years later speak *in propria persona* suggests that the moral prejudice that banned women from the stage in the age of Shakespeare was still in force and that the female piece was more acceptable when the actress was not actually speaking for herself, but as her character.

### Keywords:

Restoration drama; the Restoration actress; the female piece; prologues and epilogues.

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## A Middle English Witness of Guy de Chauliac's *On Bloodletting*

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As Keiser fittingly remarked, the “full extent of the translation of learned medical treatises into the vernacular in later medieval England has only begun to be recognized” (1998, 3645). This idea still resonates twenty-five years later: while the last decades have witnessed a growing interest in vernacular scientific texts with the compilation of historical corpora, specific studies and digital editing projects, there is still much work left to be done. The present paper tries to contribute to the knowledge of vernacular learned medical texts in English by focusing on a witness of the treatise *On Bloodletting* by Guy de Chauliac, a fourteenth-century French physician and author of the work *Chirurgia magna*. This was one of the most influential medieval surgical texts and was translated from Latin into several vernacular European languages. The treatise under consideration is housed in folios 165v-166r of Glasgow, University Library, MS Hunter 307. This manuscript constitutes a fine example of a Middle English medical compendium: it is a compact codex in one volume containing (i) an anonymous Middle English treatise on humours, elements, uroscopy, complexions, etc. (ff. 1r-13r); (ii) the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus (ff. 13r-145v); (iii) an anonymous Middle English treatise on buboes (ff. 145v-146v); (iv) the treatise *The Sekenesse of Wymmen* (ff. 149v-165v); (v) the treatise *On Bloodletting* by Guy de Chauliac (ff. 165v-166v); (vi) and a Middle English version of the *Circa instans* (ff. 167r-172v). The whole manuscript has been labelled *System of Physic* (Young and Aitken 1908, 245-46; Cross 2004, 24-25). It dates from the first half/middle of the fifteenth century.

The objectives of this paper are the following: first, to investigate the transmission of the text; second, to assess the main codicological and palaeographical features of the treatise; third, to explain the principles followed in the edition of the text, which remains hitherto unedited; and finally, to examine the language of the text in order to locate it geographically. The physical analysis of the codex will be carried out by close, first-hand inspection of the manuscript as well as of its digitised images. The edition of the text will adjust to the semi-diplomatic tenets, which postulate faithfulness to the original witness. As for the linguistic analysis, it will be based on the methodology put forward by the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English (LALME)* (McInstosh et al. 1986). The appraisal of all the aspects mentioned above will help to yield a complete picture of the treatise and to place it in its material and cultural context.

### Keywords:

GUL MS Hunter 307; Guy de Chauliac; bloodletting; medical prose; Middle English.

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“*The holwe rokkes answerde hire agayn*”: Sea Imagery in “The Legend of Good Women”

Beatriz Hernández Pérez



The representation of space has become a recurrent motive in gender-perspective critical approaches to literature. In the study of early medieval discourses, special importance has been granted to the process whereby the hagiographic tradition provided the alternative figures of *viragoes* and *virgoes*, associated to a particular set of symbolic landscapes and spaces. In the early Christian centuries, martyrdom would soon become one of the means to identify with Christ through imitation of his suffering and death. The classic male heroic model based on action and war was replaced by one leaning on the passive stance offered by Christ. Notwithstanding this, early martyrs would not perceive their choice as a victim's sacrifice, but as an active responsible undertaking. Women, mostly perceived through their bodily values and roles, and given a subordinate place in the social and ideological configuration, were from the beginning clearly attracted to the Christian subversive model. Among the female martyrs, a heroic Christian stance was imitated through the figure of the *virago*, who would act in accordance with manly conditions and qualities; or else through that of the *virgo*, personified by the holy maiden, herself a symbol of the integrity of the new religion. By the late Middle Ages, these and other saintly models were deeply rooted in popular attitudes and frames of mind. In hagiographical records the saintly body is usually anticipating and awaiting its deadly lot, a passive stance which would affect late-medieval reception and interpretation of some classical stories where passiveness was best presented against the sea imagery as a backdrop or foreground from which the stories' complexity derived. In some of these accounts, the waiting attitude of the person by the shore or on a boat became the motif which best expressed the tension between nature and the human being. The main objective of this paper is to prove the role of sea imagery in the Chaucerian adaptation of pagan female types to Christian ones. Some of the underlying motives shared by these classical female characters and the ones in hagiography will be analyzed, and special attention will be granted to the motive of sea landscapes as a narrative device stressing the features of the female characters in both genres. With the theoretical framework derived from René Girard's theories on the relationship between violence and the sacred, and with insights from Gender Studies, the Chaucerian treatment of sea imagery will be assessed, especially in regard to "The Legend of Good Women".

**Keywords:**

Sea imagery; "Legend of Good Women"; violence; Ovid; Chaucer.

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### **Exploring Religious Exile in Shakespearean History Plays: *Richard II's* Transgression and Consequences**

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Shakespeare's *Richard II* presents a complex and challenging exploration of the theme of religious banishment, which poses significant interpretive difficulties for actors, directors, audiences and readers. While banishment is a recurrent motif in Shakespeare's oeuvre, its intellectual conceptualization as 'religious banishment' often intertwines with notions of sin and punishment. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the portrayal of the monarch in the first part of the second tetralogy, where Richard II is compelled to abdicate his throne, subsequently exiled, and ultimately meets his demise. This recurring theme of banishment as a consequence of sin not only permeates *Richard II* but also echoes throughout other dramatic works by Shakespeare, underscoring the religious beliefs of the time.

In *Richard II*, the exploration of religious banishment takes center stage, presenting a profound examination of the consequences of transgression in the context of divine retribution. The play's central character, *Richard II*, embodies this theme as his own actions and moral failings lead to his downfall. By delving into the religious implications of banishment, Shakespeare delves into the prevailing beliefs and moral frameworks of the time.

Furthermore, Richard II's portrayal sheds light on the interconnectedness of religious banishment, sin and punishment. The character's forced abdication of the throne and subsequent exile can be seen as divine retribution for his perceived sinful actions. Through Richard's journey, Shakespeare prompts audiences to contemplate the relationship between spiritual transgressions and their earthly consequences, emphasizing the religious context within which the play unfolds. Moreover, and as has been signalled, the motif of religious banishment extends beyond *Richard II* and can be found in other dramatic works by Shakespeare. Thus, the playwright consistently explores the notion of exile as a means of punishment for moral transgressions, highlighting the prevailing religious beliefs of the era. This thematic continuity underscores Shakespeare's

engagement with the broader cultural and religious discourse of his time, providing insight into the social and intellectual milieu in which his plays were performed.

In conclusion, religious banishment serves as a significant thematic element in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, intertwining notions of sin and punishment. The portrayal of banishment illustrates the consequences of moral transgressions and reflects the religious beliefs prevalent during the era. Moreover, this theme reverberates throughout other works by Shakespeare, highlighting his nuanced exploration of the interplay between spiritual transgressions and earthly repercussions. By examining the motif of religious banishment in *Richard II* and its broader significance, we gain valuable insights into both the play itself and Shakespeare's engagement with the cultural and religious milieu of his time.

**Keywords:**

*Richard II*; Shakespeare; religious banishment; sin; retribution.

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**Ghostly Manifestations and Engagement with Theological Ideas in *Sir Amace* and *The Awntyrs off Arthur***

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The present paper aims at exploring the weight that Medieval theological ideas represent in two Middle English romances: *The Awntyrs off Arthur* (c. 1375) and *Sir Amadace* (c. 1400). Although these two romances tell very different stories, they present some similarities as well: both are part of the Arthurian matter, both feature a ghostly figure as one of their main characters, the plots of both works are rooted in the exemplary tradition, and both texts have challenged critical interpretation for a long time.

In the case of *Sir Amadace*, its plot constitutes a variant of the *Grateful Dead* family (e.g. Harkins, 1994). However, interpretative efforts have tended to place emphasis on the work's employment of commercial language and ideas, to the point that it has been defined by Foster as a "commercial romance" (2007). As regards the *Awntyrs off Arthur*, the poem presents a bipartite structure, the first part of which has been recognised by Klausner (1972) as being based on the exemplum known as *The Trental of St Gregory*. The lack of an obvious connection between this exemplary episode and the courtly challenge of the second part has been the main concern in critical discussions of the poem. Spearing's (1981) interpretation of the work as a diptych enjoys general acceptance; however, the actual message of the poem does not seem so clear (see, for example, Hahn, 1995).

A common issue in the interpretations of these poems is that they have tended to consider both romances in isolation. However, recent scholarship has pinpointed the importance of interpreting texts in the light of the contexts where they are found, that is, of reading works in their "manuscript contexts" (e.g. Smith, 2021). The witnesses of the poems under scrutiny in this paper are part of miscellanies constituted by a variety of texts, except for a copy of *The Awntyrs* circulating in isolation. This raises questions about the reasons why the compilers of the different miscellanies

–or of the individual text– at issue decided to include *Sir Amadace* and *The Awntyrs*, at the same time that the texts surrounding these works may shed light on the meaning that they must have had for their audiences. Although the necessity of studying the manuscript contexts for these works has been stressed (e.g. Wright-Bushman and Zdansky, 2014, 59-60), little work has been done in this direction.

Thus, this paper intends to provide a reading of *Sir Amadace* and *The Awntyrs* in terms of their manuscript contexts. In order to do this, particular emphasis will be placed on the way in which the ghosts appearing in these romances engage with issues at the centre of the theological concerns of their time, including the notion of purgatory and the employment of a language coined as “the lingua franca of the market-place” (Watkins, 2007, 180).

#### **Keywords:**

*Sir Amadace*; *The Awntyrs off Arthur*; ghosts; manuscript contexts; romance.

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#### **Desire as a Structuring Principle in Donald Barthelme's *Come Back, Dr. Caligari* (1964)**

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Donald Barthelme (1931-1989) was, above all, a writer of short fiction, much of which was published in *The New Yorker* and all of which has been recently collected in a single volume by The Library of America. Barthelme was quite happy with the adjective “postmodernist” as a suitable label to classify his work (McGrath 2021, xix). *Come Back, Dr. Caligari* (1964), his first collection, does exhibit many of the defining features of postmodernist short fiction (Korte 2003, 149; March-Russell 2009, 222–234), yet the stories collected therein call enough attention to themselves on account of their striking originality and disparity. All in all, they express the sense that life is meaningless and futile, hence Barthelme’s categorisation as a writer of the absurd (Gavins 2013, 43–60). The feeling of sadness or anguish is, however, often counterweighted in his absurdist narratives by (black) humour founded on prevailing incongruity (often through a string of *non-sequiturs* packed in single paragraphs), on the decentring break of logic and violation of readers’ expectations, on the frequent use of collage, pastiche and parodic intertextuality (his prose may often be read as a form of socio-political satire that intends debunk

all forms of subjugation, control and authority), or on the presentation of fantastic or dream-like surreal situations. All these postmodernist features need not always provoke mirth or laughter in the reader. Rather, confusion and a sense of loss are permanently elicited, engaging readers in the task of making up a puzzle of pieces that do not fit. The feeling is certainly one of playfulness, but the hermeneutic game readers play with the text remains inconclusive. This paper proposes to show how many of the pieces in *Come Back, Dr. Caligari* feature characters driven by a desire or need that runs like a thin thread and operates like a centripetal force that confers on these stories a degree of unity in what are otherwise assemblages of fragments with little logical coherence and textual cohesion. It will examine the structuring role of desire in different stories of the collection. In the opening piece, “Florence Green Is 81”, the wealthy, capricious and narcissistic title-character proclaims “*I want to go to some other country*” (Barthelme 2021, 3), a phrase repeated with slight alterations towards the end (Barthelme 2021, 11 and 13); in “Hiding Man”, we find I. A. Burlingame desiring to escape from a Catholic priest who wanted him to play sports to avoid sin; in “Marie, Marie, Hold on Tight”, three male characters go out on the streets with the desire to “demonstrate against the human condition” as something imposed top-down by Power (75); in “For I’m the Boy Whose Only Joy Is Loving You”, three male characters desire to feel again some emotion in their empty lives; Buck wants to escape from his lover, Nancy, in “Up, Aloft in the Air”, while Peterson in “A Shower of Gold” wants money because he is penniless and accepts to participate in the pseudo-existentialist talk show *Who Am I?*

**Keywords:**

Donald Barthelme; *Come Back, Dr. Caligari*; desire; postmodernism; the absurd.

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**Human-Animal Transformation and the Politics of Female Choice and Agency in Sarah Hall’s *Mrs Fox* (2013)**

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In an article entitled “Tales of Femininity and Sexuality: Competing Discourses and the Negotiation of Feminisms Today,” Emma Young brings to the fore the recent controversy on the discourses of women’s choice and agency generated by the different significance granted to them by critics representing “the *postfeminist* approach to gender and sexuality which alights itself with postmodern and poststructuralist thinking” and those representing “the *post-feminist* tendencies more commonly affiliated with backlash theories and notions of women’s sexual liberation” (85). The centrality of these tropes in these two strikingly opposed feminist approaches shows that, in the twenty-first century, “women are required to work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and to present all their actions as freely chosen” (Gill, qtd. in Young 85). From this, Young goes on to argue that there is a significant number of British women short story writers currently attempting to “negotiate the competing discourses of contemporary feminisms through their exploration of women’s femininity and sexuality” (85); and that, by so doing, they are engaging in a “politics of choice and agency” most frequently made “manifest on the female body” (85). Young substantiates her assertion through the analysis of short stories by Kate

Atkinson, Helen Simpson, Michèle Roberts, Kalbinder Kaur and Sarah Hall. In the case of Hall, she chooses “The Agency” (2011), a short story about the importance of women’s sexual gratification. A female friend, Anthea, hands Hannah, the protagonist, a card for an Agency where she can fulfil all her sexual preferences by simply writing them down on the admission form. Thus, the short story seems to assert that “women are agents of their sexual lives” (Young 99). However, the fact that the Agency “is run by a man (Alistair) complicates this initial sense of escape from heteropatriarchal norms” and, what is more, Hannah’s sexual choices are “predetermined by the options on the form” (99). Therefore, Young concludes, “even a seemingly empowered woman who is acting with agency is still unable to make autonomous choices” (99). Young finds similar effects of ambivalence in the other short stories she analyses, evincing a common attempt “to complicate, rather than remain complicit with post-feminist and neoliberal discourses in which individuals are ‘entrepreneurial actors who are rational, calculating and self-regulating’ (Gill 2008: 436)” (Young 101). Drawing on this, the essay seeks to establish the politics of female agency and choice underlying Sarah Hall’s *Mrs Fox* (2013), a novella that symbolises the bodily effects of this struggle through the trope of woman-fox transformation. It argues that, while in heteropatriarchal fictions like the novella’s intertext, David Garnett’s *Lady into Fox* (1922), the woman’s bodily transformation into a fox symbolises her cunning and betrayal, in *Mrs Fox* Hall complicates and ambiguates this use of the trope through a wealth of allusions that both acknowledge indebtedness to Garnett’s novel and demand an eco-feminist interpretation.

**Keywords:**

Agency; David Garnett; *Mrs Fox*; Sarah Hall; transformation.

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**Manifold liminality in Doris Lessing’s short story “Through the Tunnel”**

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Victor Turner defines liminality as an in-between, transitional, or ambiguous state of being that occurs when individuals or groups are in a state of transition from one social status or position to another. In this state, people may feel as if they are in a limbo or threshold, “neither here nor there”, between the known and the unknown, the old and the new, “between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial” (*Ritual Process* 95). Jochen Achilles (2015) argues that liminality attempts to portray the inevitability of transitions as well as the existential and cultural ramifications of such destabilisations. In other words, liminality attempts to explain change by describing boundary crossings in great detail (35). In the same vein, liminal spaces in literature typically refer to physical or psychological areas that exist in a state of transition or between two distinct entities. These spaces often represent a threshold between

reality and the imaginary, the conscious and the subconscious, or even life and death. They can be symbolic settings within the narrative or the liminal state can be conveyed through the characters' experiences. The concept of liminality is mirrored in short stories on "psychological borderline states" as well as in important transitional moments that signal change (Brosch 2015 101). Therefore, the short story's generic liminality (between fable, sketch, essay, and *novella*) favours the depiction of transitional events and ephemeral periods of crisis or decision-making. My contribution will explore the notion of liminality on different levels in Doris Lessing's short story "Through the Tunnel" (1955) where the many layers of the concept are vividly represented. I am using stylistic analysis to identify distinct levels of liminality, whereas the methodology comprises comparing and studying the notion in light of the theoretical framework. As a result, by deconstructing the short story's structure and carefully examining key passages, I will discover the liminal stages present in the narrative. Works by Victor Turner, Jochen Achilles, Renate Brosch, and Dara Downey *et al*, among others, will be useful at this stage in reflecting on how Lessing depicts the characters' transitory times of transformation. The phases of the rite of passage developed by van Gennep- 'separation - transition -reincorporation into the social structure' - are highlighted in the young protagonist, his mother, and the spatiality that surrounds them. The analysis is divided into three sections that depict the different levels of liminality: social, temporal, and spatial present in the narration which encompass the state of transition the author wants to convey. Therefore, in conclusion, my findings demonstrate that, years before the concept of liminality entered literary studies, Doris Lessing, once again ahead of her time, brought the notion of liminality to the forefront to confront her readers with another layer in the construction of her narrative.

**Keywords:**

Liminality; short story; spatiality; Doris Lessing.

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**The Epiphany after Modernism: Some Notes on the Afterlives of the Literary Illumination**

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Life-altering moments of deep significance have long played a significant part in literary movements' aesthetic imagination of themselves. Writings that could be vaguely grouped under the label manifesto, destined to put forth a synchronic understanding of the purpose of art from a self-conscious standpoint, have attested to this tendency throughout the past two centuries. This feature can be readily observed in the many art manifestos of the avant-garde, but is, too, at the heart of the literary ambitions of both romanticism and modernism, the countless differences separating their creative endeavours notwithstanding. William Wordsworth, to name but an

example, defined the deeds of the contemplative romantic poet as capable of “[describing] objects and utter sentiments of such a nature and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves [...] must necessarily be in some degree enlightened” (Wordsworth 1802/2008, 175). In the context of modernism, James Joyce’s *Stephen Hero* greatly contributed to the iconicity of the literary illumination, describing the epiphany as a “sudden spiritual manifestation [...] the most delicate and evanescent of moments” (1944, 211). He was not, however, the only modernist to pay it significant mind, with several of his contemporaries making of the notion—by means of its polyonymous afterlives—one nearly omnipresent in modernist texts (look no further than to Virginia Woolf’s “moments of being,” Walter Benjamin’s “shocks,” or Ezra Pound’s “magic moments”).

The centrality of these revelatory moments, often critical to the imagination of artistic *movements*, has been recurrently appropriated by the short story *genre*—especially following Joyce’s introduction of the “epiphany” as a key notion to its literary project—as a potentially distinct feature that can be married with brevity most effectively. This paper aims to explore how these two intersections—the link tying the revelation with the self-conscious imagination of literary movements, on the one hand, and that connecting the polyonymous epiphany with the short story, on the other—have informed postmodernism’s literary configuration, briefly drawing on a range of short stories to venture an examination of the epiphany’s afterlives that accounts for the movement’s cultural idiosyncrasies. In so doing, it aspires to shed light on how the short story genre has developed a language within postmodernism that is distinctive and often entirely its own, even in its natural reinterpretation and reappropriation of, as well as conversation with, the aesthetic agenda(s) of modernity.

**Keywords:**

Short Story; Postmodernism; Epiphany.

**References:**

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**“To Ride on the Coattails of Anger over Brexit and the Border?”: The Northern Ireland Question through Rosemary Jenkinson’s “The Night They Shot the Journalist”**

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This paper aims to explore, first of all, the role the Brexit has played in the revival of political conflict and the widening of social divisions in present-day Northern Ireland. Said tensions had always been latent since the provisional establishment of the county through the delineation of an artificial border that separated diverse Irish groups. The territory, even if first conceived as a temporary solution to the question of Ireland’s independence, started to build an identity of its own following the partition of the island, exacerbating differences across Irish communities: “the more trenchantly Ireland was identified as Gaelic, Catholic and rural, so almost by default, Northern Ireland was seen as a land of the planter, Protestant and industrialised. The casual use of such indiscriminate markers [...] gave the new political boundary the status of an ‘ethnic’ divide” (Hayward 2021, 63). From that moment onwards, the question whether Northern Ireland should continue to be part of the United Kingdom or be reintegrated into Ireland became a constant matter of dispute, triggering both the Irish Civil War and the period of hostilities known as the Troubles. Northern Ireland’s in-between position will be analysed in this paper from the perspective of liminal studies, which help explain not only the current post-colonial context of the place, but also the importance of the Irish border in the negotiations to leave the European Union. It was precisely the entrance of both Ireland and the United Kingdom in the European Communities in 1973, and especially in the subsequent European Union (UE) in 1993, which



prompted a new and egalitarian space for dialogue between both nations that ultimately led to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. This was the first step in the peace process, which entailed a negotiation of multiple Irish identities as well as the softening of the Irish border. According to O'Toole, the sense of belonging to the common space of Europe helped create a "third identity that was neither Irish nor British but that could be equally shared" (2019, 68). Leaving the UE, however, demanded the reestablishment of a separation or border that was not only physical, but also mental, which reopened the question of whether Northern Ireland should continue to be part of the UK.

In this respect, literary production in Northern Ireland is attempting to provide a fair contextualization of the political situation by depicting different ideologies in conflict and recent events that exemplify the reassumption of hostilities between sectarian groups. Such is the case of Rosemary Jenkinson's collection of short stories, *Marching Season* (2022), which offers a clear post-Brexit setting in stories such as "The Night They Shot the Journalist", inspired by the shot of journalist Lyra McKee during the riots that took place in Derry in 2019. Therefore, this paper is also intended to explore the way that literature, and the genre of the short story in particular, can serve as an immediate response to historical events and thus provide a space for reflection and negotiation of identities.

**Keywords:**

Brexit literature; Rosemary Jenkinson; Northern Ireland; short story; Irish border.

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**"It is a strange thing, the first time you realize you have become a fiction": Boundaries and Liminal States in Kat Howard's "Once and Future"**

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The short story has often been praised as a genre particularly suitable for those living in the margins to convey their experiences of such marginality. Curiously, for a genre which itself remained for a long time in the margins of academic and critical thought (though hardly ever in the appreciation of the public), fantasy tends to express itself and to be most often found in the much more hegemonic, dominant form of the novel. It seems to be other genres which cross boundaries between different modes — thus becoming peripheral to both realism and fantasy — that have most commonly expressed themselves through the short story, magical realism being a prominent example.

In spite of this prominence, there are a great many fantasy writers who have turned to the short story in their exploration of secondary worlds, in Tolkien's terminology (52). The short story seems, nonetheless, to lend itself to the exploration of the intersection between secondary worlds and our primary one, as suggested by Kat Howard's — rather long — short story, "Once and Future". This retelling of Arthurian mythology focuses on a group of postgraduate students taking a seminar on the many versions and iterations of the myth, where they are asked to take on the role of one of the characters of the Arthurian epic in order to test its capacity for repetition. As the myth begins, inevitably, to repeat itself, the students become progressively entrapped in a liminal state — between past and present, between fantasy and reality, and even between their own, personal identities and those of the Arthurian characters whose roles they play.

As such, this paper explores the different liminal states represented in Howard's short story by examining her use of the features of fantasy (relying especially on Mendlesohn's and Tolkien's typologies), as well as the formal and stylistic features of the short story. The separation between the fantastic and the real, the fictional and the nonfictional, becomes increasingly unclear as a sword appears at a character's doorstep, the protagonist develops magical abilities, and other supernatural wonders begin to manifest, bordering almost on the uncanny against the mundane background they occupy. The characters' performances of self before others also begin to adapt to the roles they are assigned within the Arthurian legend, perpetuating the sense of entrapment in an ever-repeating cycle. This exploration of how the short story complicates the separation between fantasy and reality thus serves to explore how other boundaries are also continually crossed and/or blurred as the tale unfolds.

**Keywords:**

Fantasy; short story; boundaries; liminal states; fiction and reality.

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**Sexual Liberation in Middle Age: An Intersectional Analysis of Non-Heterosexual Women in Jackie Kay's Short Stories "The First Lady of Song", "Physics and Chemistry" and "Grace and Rose"**

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The ageing experiences of non-heterosexual women are frequently overlooked and undervalued in contemporary society. Negative and stereotypical depictions of ageing impose significant constraints on women's capacity to explore their identities and redefine themselves. Consequently, the prevailing perception of middle-aged women predominantly revolves around their roles as heterosexual partners or mothers. As a result, some non-heterosexual women may feel compelled to conceal their sexual orientation, only revealing their identity later in life as they age. Researchers are increasingly moving beyond simplistic notions of ageing and adopting an intersectional approach to explore the complex relationship between ageing, gender, and sexuality, enabling a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics of social division and identity (Calasanti and King et al., 2019). However, the majority of women's ageing narratives primarily assume heterosexuality, thereby neglecting the diverse experiences of non-heterosexual individuals. This creates a significant research gap, hindering our comprehensive understanding of how patterns of successful ageing may diverge among various subgroups, including older female adults who identify as non-heterosexual (Cruikshank and Van Wagenen et al., 2003, 2013). Nevertheless, through the immersive realms of literary narratives, alternative worlds are unveiled, offering us a valuable opportunity to explore the nuanced lives and perspectives of non-heterosexual women in their ageing journey.

This paper explores the intersection of sexuality, gender, and ageing in non-heterosexual women through an analysis of three short stories by the prominent Scottish writer Jackie Kay. The stories challenge social expectations regarding middle-aged women and sexuality. The character of Emilia in "The First Lady of Song" (2012) is a truly captivating protagonist that engages readers as we accompany her on a magical journey of self-discovery. This transformative voyage culminates in a profound sense of fulfillment during her later middle age, as Emilia fearlessly

embraces her authentic sexual identity. Similarly, the stories “Physics and Chemistry” (2002) and “Grace and Rose” (2012) vividly portray couples that navigate the complexities of non-heterosexual relationships for middle-aged women and strive for recognition. By examining Jackie Kay's highly symbolic narratives of female middle age, this paper exemplifies how her women characters contemplate their ageing journey as challenging but liberating, freeing themselves from social expectations to discover joy in their later years by embracing their sexual orientation. These characters boldly claim their rightful place in a society that marginalizes them. Through an intersectional narrative analysis, this paper provides a thorough understanding of the challenges these women face as they navigate the ageing process and emphasizes the need for a greater recognition of their experiences.

**Keywords:**

Ageing narratives; Gender; Sexuality.

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**A pilot study of the syntax-information structure in Puerto Rican codeswitching**

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Studies on the origins of Antillean Caribbean Spanish (ACS) and its grammatical properties have been characterized by the possible influence that other languages, mostly English, have had on this variety (Ortiz López 2016); Code-switching is a widely used strategy in situations where bilingualism is prevalent and languages come into contact. In Puerto Rico this topic has not received much attention, but studies on code-switching in this Caribbean variety from different perspectives are beginning to emerge (Clachar 2016; Guzzardo Tamargo & Vélez Avilés 2017; Balam et al. 2020). These studies on code-switching have focused mainly on issues other than those belonging to the syntax-information structure interface.

Our main goal in this work is to examine Topic Preposing in the grammar of Puerto Rican bilingual speakers in situations of English/Spanish code-switching. We analyze (Clitic) Left Dislocation both in matrix and embedded sentences. Our starting hypothesis is that, when English is the matrix language (i.e. English provides the morphosyntactic frame), preposed topics will be less accepted than when this matrix language is Spanish, due to the rigid SVO order in English in contrast with Spanish.

To carry out this (pilot) empirical study, a total of 21 bilingual Puerto Rican speakers completed an acceptability judgement task, based on a 4-point Likert scale (Stadthagen González et al. 2017) and a questionnaire about their linguistic background. Both surveys were built and run by using *Qualtrics*. The test included 35 tokens containing examples where the matrix language was either English or Spanish (see examples 1-5) and examples where there was no code-switching. It also

contained 6 sentences to control the informant's attention to the precise task that they were asked to fulfill.

1. El arroz con habichuelas Ana hated as a child, but she liked pasta.
2. Antonio said that el arroz con habichuelas he hated as a child.
3. El arroz con habichuelas Antonio said that he hated as a child.
4. El rice and beans Ana lo odiaba de pequeña, pero le gustaba la pasta.
5. Antonio dijo que el rice and beans lo detestaba cuando era pequeño.

Regardless of whether the matrix language was English or Spanish, the statistical analysis revealed that the bilingual informants tended towards a slightly acceptable position in regards to the code-switched examples, with means between 2.14 and 3.38. Furthermore, when the matrix language is English and the example is fully in English, the mean lowers to 1.90, which is expected due to the rigid word order in English (as opposed to the Spanish examples, with means between 2.8 and 3.88, also to be expected because of the flexibility of the language; Jiménez-Fernández & Miyagawa 2014).

Our preliminary conclusion, concerning the syntax-discourse interface, is that code-switching is acceptable independently of the matrix language (cf. Stadthagen González et al. 2017 for similar results in the nominal domain), despite the rigidity/flexibility distinction, contrary to our initial hypothesis. This pioneering study opens a research line about the connection between syntax and information structure in code-switching in ACS, and bilingualism in general.

#### **Keywords:**

English-Spanish codeswitching; Puerto Rican bilingual speakers; topic preposing; experimental work; syntax-information structure interface.

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#### **Deictic Inversion in English: an evidential strategy in a non-evidential language**

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**Goal.** To offer a novel analysis of Deictic Inversion in English as a grammatical strategy to encode evidentiality, that is, the speaker's source of information for the content of the proposition.

**Facts.** Evidential meanings are grammatically realized in some languages as evidential markers, in the form of autonomous particles or (lexical or covert) morphemes fused with some other syntactically projected feature, normally tense or aspect (see Willett 1988 and Aikhenvald 2015, among others, for a description of the different types of evidentiality and their structural

realization cross-linguistically). English, as most European languages, lacks evidential markers of this sort and expresses evidentiality lexically, basically through adverbs (*reportedly, allegedly...*), or complex sentences headed by certain verbs (*I hear, I can see, they say...* see Mélac 2022). To these lexical strategies I would like to add Deictic Inversion (DI), a syntactic construction which, to my knowledge, has not been explicitly approached this way in the relevant literature.

Sentences such as (1) are examples of DI in English. They are used for the speaker to point at a proximal or distal location and bring the addressee's attention to an entity related to that location (see, among others, Lakoff 1987). The speaker therefore asserts the truth of the proposition based on direct perceptual evidence:

- (1) Here comes the bus.  
 Here comes Max with his new girlfriend.  
 There goes Mary.  
 There goes a beautiful car.

As the examples in (1) show, DI is restricted to the verbal predicates *come* and *go* and has a deictic adverbial in initial position. It exhibits full inversion, is not subject to any definiteness constraint (2) and can never appear in the negative form (3). Besides, it does not allow for any type of embedding (4), and the verbal predicate must be in the simple present, even if it expresses simultaneity with the moment of speech (5):

- (2) Here comes a bus/my bus/Max.  
 (3) \*Here does not come my bus.  
 (4) \*It seems that here comes my bus.  
       \*Here seems to come my bus.  
 (5) \*Here is coming my bus.

Properties (4) and (5) crucially distinguish DI from Locative Inversion (LI), a construction with which it has much in common:

- (6) It seems that on the opposite corner stood a large Victorian mansion.  
       On the opposite corner seems to have stood a large Victorian mansion.  
 (7) Under the tree are playing a group of dirty children.

**Proposal.** I argue that the grammatical properties of DI follow from its status as an assertive speech act which marks direct perceptual evidence. I assume a layered articulation of speech acts that projects above CP the discourse participants, Speaker and Addressee, and an Evidential which encodes illocutionary evidentiality (see Speas 2003, Speas and Tenny 2004, or Miyagawa 2022 for proposals along these lines). EvidP in the construction is headed by the  $\delta$ -feature [visual] (or, more markedly, [sensory]), which expresses that the information source for the content of the proposition is direct visual evidence on the part of the speaker; it is encoded as a covert morpheme. The (simplified) derivation of DI will be as follows:

- (8) [<sub>SAP</sub> Spk<sub>i</sub> [<sub>sAP</sub> Addr [<sub>EvidP</sub> *here*<sub>i</sub> [<sub>Evid[visual]</sub> *comes*<sub>i</sub> ] [CP [TP *my bus* [T [-past] *comes*] ] [VP *comes my bus...*]]]]]]]

The deictic adverbial *here/there*, coindexed with the speaker, projects in Spec-EvidP to mark the visual reference-point; it should be noted that the construction is compatible with the expression of directional complements in VP (*Here comes a bus into the terminal*), which shows that the adverbial is not an argument of the unaccusative verb (i.e., it is E-merged in the evidential projection).

Then the  $\delta$ -feature of Evid triggers I-merge of a verbal predicate, full inversion following. For the verbal predicate to be an adequate goal for this feature it must satisfy a double condition: it must refer deictically to the speaker, and it must be morphologically inflected as present. The first condition restricts the predicates in the construction to *come* and *go* (which include a component path towards/away from the speaker in their meaning); and the second implies that visual evidentiality will be eventually fused in the construction with the present tense, a situation cross-linguistically attested, particularly in the case of direct first-hand evidence (vid. Aikhenvald 2015).

As I will show, the otherwise unpredictable properties (2)-(5) of DI, and its differences with LI, find a natural explanation under this analysis.

**Keywords:**

Deictic Inversion; Evidentiality; Speech Act; Speaker; Locative Inversion.

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**Complementiser Language Preference in English-Spanish Code-switching in Canarian Bilingual Students**

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Research in intrasentential code-switching (CS) has focussed on a number of syntactic issues in an effort to approximate proposals to an integrated model of bilingual grammar (López, 2020). Amongst others, investigations concerning switches between main and subordinate clauses have been a focal point in this area, with research indicating an impossibility of switches between these two elements (López et al., 2017: 8-9). Other investigations point toward preference of the most discourse neutral option which, in the case of EN-ES CS, would generally favour Spanish subordinators (complementisers) over English equivalents (Torres Cacoullós, 2020; cf Jiménez-Fernández et al., 2023). This notion is based on Poplack's (1980) theory which states that, when conflict arises in switches, the speaker shows preference toward the least difficult option. The present study furthers research in this field through acceptability tests in bilingual adolescents in the Canary Islands.

**Objectives:**

- To establish acceptability and preferences between English and Spanish subordinators in relation to the language of the main and subordinate clause in intrasentential CS.
- To advance investigations in CS syntax regarding integrated proposals of bilingual grammar.
- To reflect upon the effect of English immigration in the Canary Islands in relation to bilingual speakers' proficiency and use of Canarian dialects.

**Hypotheses:**

- That subjects will prefer sentences containing Spanish complementisers.
- That slight preference will be shown toward complementisers in the same language as the subordinate clause.
- That recent rises in English immigration has produced a decline in the use of Canarian lexical items in EN-SP bilingual students.

An acceptability test with 20 sentences in English Spanish CS was used. 10 of these sentences consisted of English main clauses with Spanish subordinates, with another 10 corresponding to

main Spanish clauses with English subordinates. In each group, 5 sentences had a Spanish complementiser and 5 had an English equivalent. All sentences were based on variations of the same 5 situations and 10 fillers were included. Sentences were randomised and presented to the 29 subjects —with varied linguistic backgrounds— to be assessed through a 4-point Likert scale. Subjects were previously familiarised with CS through activities designed to neutralise perceptions. A second survey was conducted regarding knowledge and use of Canarian lexicon. A control group of 10 bilingual subjects was utilised for contrastive purposes.

Although the hypotheses were generally proven to be valid, subjects also showed a higher level of acceptance toward CS sentences than predicted (71.64 %). This complicated interpretation regarding complementiser language preference, as all 4 combinations were accepted to a degree. However, results did show preference toward complementisers in the same language as the subordinate clause (75.61 % compared to 67.66 %). The most preferable combination was Spanish main clauses with English subordinator and subordinate clause (80.86 %). This puts Torres Cacoullós's (2020) theory on preference toward Spanish complementisers into doubt — which would be the most logical research line to further investigate given these results. Questions regarding Canarian lexical items show a decline in the use of this variant, coinciding with the hypothesis.

### Keywords:

Code-switching; Bilingual grammar; Syntax; Complementisers; Canarian varieties.

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### Scalarly Focused Object Preposing: A Contrast between English and Mandarin Chinese Based on Feature Inheritance

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This paper is mainly concerned with scalarly focused object preposing (SFOP) in English and in Mandarin Chinese. It is noted that in English, a scalarly focused object occurs in situ as in (1-a), or in sentence-initial position as in (1-b), while in Mandarin Chinese it appears in an intermediate position between the subject and the verb as in (2-b), in addition to the in situ option (2-a).

#### (1) English

- a. He is incapable of answering even [this simple question]<sub>scal-foc</sub>.
- b. Even [this simple question]<sub>scal-foc</sub> he is incapable of answering.

#### (2) Mandarin Chinese (clf = classifier, exp = experiential aspect)

- a. Zhangsan shenzhi du-guo [zhe-ben shu]<sub>scal-foc</sub>.  
Zhangsan even read-exp this-clf book.
- b. Zhangsan (shenzhi) (lian) [zhe-ben shu]<sub>scal-foc</sub> dou/ye

Zhangsan even       lian       this-clf   book       dou/ye  
du-guo.  
read-exp  
'Zhangsan has even read this book.'

To address such a contrast, this study adopts Chomsky's (2008) Feature Inheritance theory, as well as its extension to discourse( $\delta$ )-features explored in Jiménez-Fernández (2010; 2020), Miyagawa (2005; 2010; 2017), among others, and assumes that some unvalued  $\delta$ -features are inherited by T from C in Mandarin Chinese, but are retained by C in English; in consequence, T in Chinese and C in English are active probes that search for goals with the corresponding interpretable  $\delta$ -features. In the case under discussion, it is proposed that the scalarly focused object may carry a [+Focus]-feature when first merged as the complement of V, for which the object would be a suitable goal for T in Chinese and for C in English; after the probe-goal feature valuation, the focused phrase may eventually move to [Spec,TP] in Mandarin Chinese and to [Spec,CP] in English, respectively. Following Shyu's (1995) analysis based on syntactic effects such as Weak Crossover (WCO), reconstruction, and Subjacency, the proposed scalar focus (object) is proved to manifest A-movement properties in Mandarin Chinese and A'-movement properties in English, which is in favour of the above proposal.

Furthermore, this analysis suggests multiple specifiers in TP in Mandarin Chinese: assuming the subject occupies [Spec,TP], Mandarin Chinese is expected to allow multiple specifiers in TP for the scalarly focused object to be able to move to the specifier of the same projection. From the point of view of the present study, such a phenomenon may be accounted for by arguing that, apart from the  $\delta$ -features, the  $\phi$ -features undergo C-T inheritance in Mandarin Chinese as well, so that in its SFOP constructions, T would probe two goals simultaneously, one with the [+Focus]-feature, and the other with the corresponding interpretable  $\phi$ -features, that is, the subject. By contrast, in English only the unvalued  $\phi$ -features are inherited by T from C, so only the subject occupies [Spec,TP] and no multiple specifiers are present.

This study aims to offer a systematic explanation for SFOP in English and in Mandarin Chinese, so as to contribute to a better understanding of the information structure of the two languages.

#### **Keywords:**

Scalar focus; object preposing; feature inheritance; English; Mandarin Chinese.

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#### **Syntactic Alternations with Verbs of Emotion: Profiling and Defocusing Phenomena in the Discourse of Fe/Male Novelists**



This paper examines Richardson's *Pamela* and Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* from a purely linguistic perspective. Particularly, we follow a functional-cognitive approach to analyse whether a male/female-writing standpoint implies any differences in terms of the process of topicalization in the transitive model (*cf.* Givón, 1993, 1995). We focus on the argument structure of these two novels, that is, the type of entities that are profiled/defocused in discourse (*cf.* Langacker, 2008, 2013), when a restricted set of verbs of emotion are employed, namely, the so-called 'amuse-type psych-verbs' (Levin, 1993).

In doing so, we explore whether the canonical action chain is preferred over its syntactic alternations (*cf.* Levin, 1993), or not, and whether this is influenced by the author's gender. The prototypical action chain involves an agentive subject and a patientive object, whereas a less archetypal structure entails any syntactic alternation to this canonical action chain. This project also aims at comparing the communicative effect that both authors want to convey with their texts and the use of verbs of emotion.

The research hypothesis states that the type of nominal entities profiled/defocused in a given discourse entails different perspectives, and thus, distinct purposes on behalf of their writers. Therefore, gender-based perspectives may also imply different goals by the authors, since they construe syntactic structures as pragmatic options (*cf.* Hendrikse, 1989). In contrast to the postulates of transformational generative grammar on syntactic derivation, in this paper we apply the notions of basicness and prototypicality (*cf.* Taylor, 1995; Langacker, 2008, 2013) from a functional-cognitive perspective to refer to the underlying semantics/pragmatics of constructions. The research hypothesis is tested here by means of corpus analysis of contextualised examples taken from the two novels in question. We created our own corpora in the Sketch Engine software by uploading the texts of the two novels separately in PDF format. Then we examined each corpus by using the Concordance tool and filtering the search by typing the verbs of emotion under study one by one in the two corpora. Finally, we analysed the frequency of occurrence of both prototypical and non-prototypical syntactic alternations of transitive events that incorporated any of the verbs of emotion selected in this study that were found in the two novels.

The results of the data examined show that a male-writing perspective is related to the chiefly use of the canonical transitive event in which the subject is identified with the agent and the object coincides with the patient. On the other hand, a female-writing view entails a largely subversion of the prototypical order of the discursive elements by means of the extensive use of syntactic alternations to the canonical action chain that involve a process of patient-profiling and agent-defocusing. That is, the most salient participant in this case is not the carrier of the action but the affected entity. This implies an attempt on behalf of the female author to also subvert the canonical, patriarchal, human-agent-based, and even egocentric view on women and their place in society as traditionally portrayed by men in literature.

**Keywords:**

Argument structure; Syntactic alternations; Canonical action chain; Profiling/defocusing; Verbs of emotion.

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## Non-argumental datives

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Cuervo (2020) sets out to analyze most datives as a class of applicatives, introducing a non-core argument whose interpretation builds upon the structural environment in which they appear. The semantics of the Appl functional head is loosely specified as possessive, as it should be able to relate the non-core argument with its complement and yield a whole range of vaguely related interpretations. Crucially, the Appl projection in this type of analysis always introduces an argument. A relevant example would be ethical datives in Spanish (1), which introduce a non-core argument that can be topicalized or expressed by a full NP (Cuervo 2003):

- (1)a. Por estas tonterías se *te* va a ir la inquilina. (Teomiro 2019: 29)  
b. Este niño no se *me* ha leído ningún libro este verano. (Teomiro 2019: 33)

However, in this talk we argue that some datives cannot be analyzed as non-core arguments; in fact, they do not introduce any argument at all. Personal datives in Southern American English (2) convey affectation but do not introduce any new argument as they are obligatorily bound by the subject (Conroy 2007, Horn 2008):

- (2)a. I'm gonna write me/\*you/\*he<sub>i</sub>/\*them a letter to the president<sub>i</sub>. (Conroy 2007: 67)  
b. I bought me/\*you/\*him<sub>i</sub> a coat for my friend<sub>i</sub>. (Conroy 2007: 79)

Boneh & Nash (2011) differentiate between coreferential datives, similar to (2), and benefactive datives like (1) in French, both introduced by a functional head that conveys affectation. The difference between them is that only the latter introduce an extra argument while the former do not.

A broader range of cross-linguistic data provide further support to the claim that some datives cannot be analyzed as non-core arguments. Thus, in Spanish and Russian, datives in certain contexts trigger a shift in the illocutionary force so that the sentence is interpreted as a request (3), as an order (4) or even as a threat (5) (Filiminova 2021, Carretero García 2017). However, no argument is introduced as the dative refers to the speaker, which is not involved in the propositional content of the sentence.

(3) Datives (request):

- a. ¿*Me* limpias los zapatos a tu hermana?  
b. Se *me* siente aquí.

(4) Datives (order):

- a. Me limpias los zapatos a tu hermana ahora mismo. (Carretero García 2017: 178)  
b. Ty mne bros' duraka valjat!  
you me.dat throw fool drag  
'Stop fooling around (on me)!'

(5) Datives (threat):



a. Ty mne pogovorish' esčo!  
you me.dat talk still  
'Yeah, keep talking!' (a threat)

The datives (2-5) fail to obligatorily convey possession between the referent of the dative and any of the arguments. They also do not require the verb to be transitive for their licensing, which sets them apart from low-applicatives. Nor can they be passivized or topicalized, which indicate that they do not introduce a real argument that can be manipulated by those constructions. Furthermore, the datives in (3-5) require a special kind of illocutionary force interpretation (exclamative or imperative), in line with Tsai's (2018) "outer affectives" in Mandarin.

We will focus on datives (3-5) and defend that they not introduce any argument but they modify the illocutionary force by reinforcing or introducing the commitment of the speaker to the goal of making the proposition expressed by the sentence true (Geurts 2019). This is achieved by an agree relation between the dative and the com(mittive) head proposed by Krifka (2023), which modifies the propositional function that encodes the commitment of the speaker, defined as relations between speakers, hearers and propositions (Geurts 2019): in statements, the speaker (s) is commitment (C) to the hearer (h) to act on P: C(s,h)P. In commissives, the speaker (s) commits (C) to the hearer (h) to the goal (G) of making the proposition true him/herself: C(s,h)G(s,P). In directives, the speaker (s) commits (C) to the hearer (h) to the goal (G) that the hearer (h) make the proposition true: C(s,h)G(h,P) (Geurts 2019). In commissives and directives, the only function of the dative is to make the goal of the speaker explicit. Syntactically, all this information has to be encoded in the left periphery of the clause (presumably in Krifka's ComP or ActP), in the part devoted to encoding speech act information and speaker attitude/intensions, rather than the truth conditional content of the utterance. This explains why standard sentential operations (stress, passivisation, etc.) cannot operate on them. Presumably, this part of the structure is also absent in indirect speech (embedded commissives/directives are not really the same as 'real' ones), which explains all the properties of the datives (3-5).

### Keywords:

Datives; commitment; force; directives; applicatives.

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## Arguments in conjoined *wh*-questions in English and Spanish

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In the literature on conjoined *wh*-questions, it is claimed that English and Spanish are adjunct languages (Lipták 2011), which basically means that native speakers only accept the coordination of *wh*-adjuncts, as in the data in (1). For an overview of the construction, see Gračanin-Yuksek (2017) and the references quoted there.

- (1) a. When and where did the Industrial Revolution begin?  
b. ¿Cuándo y dónde empezó la Revolución Industrial?

However, corpus searches conducted on the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the Spanish reference corpus CORPES XXI show that the picture is more complex and that these languages cannot be neatly classified as adjunct languages. The results reveal that, although with limitations, both English and Spanish allow for the presence of *wh*-arguments in conjoined *wh*-questions.

A more accurate description of the facts will therefore have to acknowledge some degree of interspeaker variation in the acceptability of the coordination of a *wh*-adjunct with a *wh*-argument (so-called mixed coordination), as illustrated in (2), and the marginality (up to unacceptability) of the coordination of two *wh*-arguments, (3). In this respect, Spanish differs from English in that it is easier to find conjoined *wh*-questions with two arguments in this language, most often a subject and a direct object, as in (4).

- (2) a. #What and where did you eat yesterday?  
b. #¿Qué y dónde comiste ayer?
- (3) a. \*What and to whom did Peter give?  
b. \*¿Qué y a quién dio Pedro?
- (4) ¿Quién y qué compró? ¿Quién y qué vendió?  
*who and what bought? Who and what sold?*

(Rojas Nieto 2016)

I will offer a contrastive analysis of the results of the corpus searches and will provide evidence that the two conjoined *wh*-phrases cannot originate in the same sentence in the two languages under study. This fact will be shown to be responsible for at least some of the constraints imposed on the presence of *wh*-arguments in this construction; for instance, the ban on obligatorily transitive predicates in sentences like (5), whose ungrammaticality can be put down to the lack of an obligatory internal argument in the question in brackets. In connection with this, I will also examine critically some of the evidence put forward in the literature in support of a bi-clausal analysis.

- (5) a. \*What and [where did John fix]?  
b. \*¿Qué y [dónde arregló Juan]?

I will finally show that the higher frequency of occurrence of *wh*-subjects in conjoined *wh*-questions in Spanish, as opposed to English, is due to the fact that the former but not the latter is a pro-drop language. As a consequence of this difference, it is easier to find *wh*-subjects coordinated with adjuncts (as well as with other arguments) in Spanish than in English, at least in sentences headed by predicates other than *be*. The coordination of the two internal arguments of ditransitive predicates will be shown to remain marginal in the two languages.

### Keywords:

Conjoined *wh*-questions; *wh*-argument; *wh*-adjunct; bi-clausality.

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## English and Spanish Minimizers and their Relation to Gradable Predicates

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This paper explores the relation between English and Spanish minimizers and different gradable predicates. Minimizers are nouns designating small entities or portions of matter that are regularly used as scalar reinforcers of negation. Here, I adopt the position that the scalarity of minimizers is due to the presence of an abstract focal particle (*even* in the case of English) in the syntactic architecture of the minimizer phrase (Tubau 2016), but contrary to widespread assumptions regarding the features of focal particles (Karttunen and Peters 1979; Chamorro 2008) I side with Greenberg (2018) and contend that *even* does not generate likelihood scales. Rather, scale defining gradable properties are found in the verb phrase. Consequently, I explore the scalar behavior of minimizers with a modified version of Rappaport Hovav’s classification of scalar verbs (2014) that includes change of state verbs, directed motion verbs, and incremental theme verbs, with the addition of verbs which do not lexicalize a scale, but may extract a degree argument sub-compositionally (Löbner 2012), which I have labeled *v-deg verbs*. The interaction of gradable predicates with minimizers can be summarized in the following three points:

- a. If a verb lexicalizes or extracts a scale and is used intransitively in a sentence, the minimizer can saturate the degree argument appended to these verbs.
- b. If a verb lexicalizes or extracts a scale and it is used transitively in a sentence, the minimizer can access a gradable property encoded in the object of the verb and return the measure of the event by measuring its thematic argument.
- c. If a verb neither lexicalizes nor extracts a scale and it is used transitively in a sentence, the minimizer can access a gradable property encoded in the object of the verb and return the measure of the event by measuring its thematic argument.

Concerning (a), inherently scalar verbs such as change of state and directed motion verbs were found to only accept semi-transparent minimizers (e.g., *an iota*), while *v-deg verbs* (e.g., *estudiar*) accept semi-transparent items and contentive items (e.g., *una palabra*) with which they have a close semantic relationship.

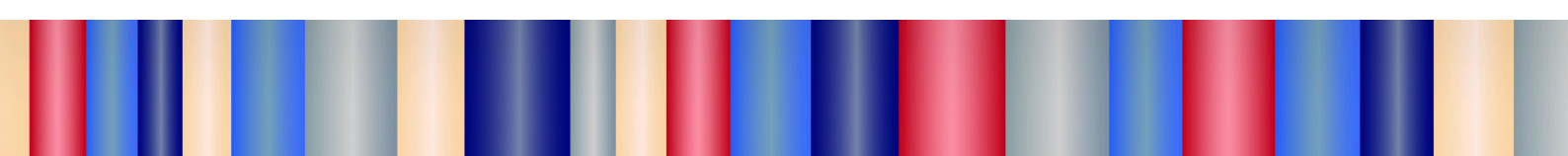
Regarding (b), the kind of minimizers inherently scalar verbs and *v-deg verbs* accept when these verbs are used transitively is defined by the nouns in object positions. Inherently scalar verbs tend to collocate with semi-transparent items but contentive items (e.g., *a drop*) are acceptable if they have a semantic relation with thematic argument (e.g., the argument designates a liquid substance).

Finally, (c) mostly concerns non-scalar verbs such as incremental theme verbs and items. These predicates accept both semi-transparent and contentive items, but they are never used intransitively; gradable properties are defined by the thematic argument, so that semi-transparent and contentive minimizers are possible in partitive constructions, with the latter being available as an adverbial phrase as well.

## Keywords:

Gradability; minimizers; negation; NPIs; scalarity.

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### **Translation through telecollaboration: the challenges and opportunities of machine translation to foster intercultural competences**

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Telecollaboration has become a valuable tool for promoting internationalization in higher education, providing opportunities for intercultural exchange and collaboration that can enhance the learning experiences of students and contribute to the development of new knowledge and competences. As such, telecollaboration creates a space in which students must negotiate cultural and linguistic variances across borders, helping them to develop intercultural competence, a skillset that is increasingly important in a globalized world.

In the field of professional translation, telecollaboration has become more widely used as a result of the expansion of the global translation market. This allows clients and translators to collaborate remotely, regardless of where they are located, and allows for more flexible work schedules and cost savings for both parties. The use of a variety of digital tools for telecollaboration also gives translators the chance to cooperate with other translators and language experts from across the world as well as grow their clientele.

The context described here above led the authors of this paper to set up a telecollaborative course between trainee translators at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain) and pre-service teachers at Karlsruhe University of Education (Germany), using translation to expose students to different linguistic and cultural perspectives whilst helping them develop a more nuanced understanding of the diversity of human experience. This main objective was divided into further secondary objectives: to work together with students from different university settings; to provide chances for collaboration on translation projects so that a shared outcome can be produced; to realise the significance of translation as a means of cross-cultural communication; to use translation to advance one’s proficiency in the foreign language; to understand the benefits and drawbacks of using machine translation as a tool for language acquisition and translation; to experience the use of English as a lingua franca for negotiation of meaning in contrast to languages employed for the translation.

After contextualising the issues surrounding translation competence and the challenges of translation in the university educational environment, particularly those regarding telecollaboration and machine translation, the paper proposes to present the telecollaborative translation course which took place between October 2022 and January 2023. Furthermore, it



demonstrates how the telecollaborative translation activity and the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) may create a synergy that enables students to develop their technological, linguistic, and intercultural skills while preparing them to more effectively meet market demands and work as productive professionals. The factors that guided the instructors' choices in the construction of the modules are also explained, along with the accompanying research design employed to investigate students' perceptions of competence development. Preliminary findings are then presented, drawn from the qualitative content analysis of two sets of data gathered from both student cohorts based on their responses to the reflection questions that followed the telecollaborative sessions and one recorded semi-structured focus group interview conducted at the end of the course. The reflection questions centred on the development of the students' ICC through telecollaboration and the translation process using machine translation.

**Keywords:**

Internationalization; telecollaboration; machine translation; intercultural communicative competence.

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***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for Twenty-First Century Spanish-speaking Young Readers**

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Since Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was published in 1865, the novel has been analysed and interpreted in many different manners, being one of the central contentions among scholars and critics the main addressees of the text. Carroll himself created three different versions of the text for diverse readers: for Alice Liddell (1864), for a general audience (1865) and for children (1890). Just after its publication, the text started to be translated so profusely that it has been deemed to be one of the most translated books in the world (Ibanez, 2021). Although the first translation into Spanish dates back to 1927, a first wave of Spanish translations of *Alice* took place in the 1950s and 1960s, mainly addressed to young readers, while a second one, from the 1970s onwards, included also editions for an adult target audience (López Guix, 2015). In recent years the fashion for new translations or retranslations of classic texts has characterised the literary market, particularly in the case of literature for young readers. Interestingly, the new versions for children do not only pursue an updating of the text, but also educational, literary and commercial goals (Lathey, 2012).

This study aims at examining various adaptations of Lewis Carroll's novel for children and young readers in the contemporary Spanish publishing market in order to observe the diverse challenges that translators have faced to and how they have addressed them. As a general rule, they are child-friendly translations and adaptations which involve such strategies as summarising and adapting the original text for such an audience. Rather than descriptions and introspections, they normally concentrate on dialogues and actions, the plot follows a chronological order, and finally, one of their key features is the presence of illustrations and images accompanying the text (Oittinen, 2005; Lathey, 2015). Moreover, the already difficult task of translating and adapting texts for children increases when cultural differences play a crucial role (García de Toro, 2014), as occurs in this particular case. An additional key issue is the age of the target readers, as the modifications and adjustments tend to be more or less substantial depending on this factor. Hence, two different set of books will be taken into consideration in this study: the first one addressed to children and the second one to teenagers. The analysis will be conducted using such criteria as book format and design, structure and content, language and style, and additional instructional materials. The conclusions showcase that, although the original text is recognizable, it is also true that the updating, omissions and abridgements to which *Alice* has been subjected have effectively converted it into a more attainable text for young readers.

#### **Keywords:**

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; translation; adaptation; literature for children.

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#### **Retranslating Women for the Theatre: Gender Roles in English Versions of *Fuente Ovejuna***

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In the last two decades, studies on literary retranslation have gained significant prominence in Translation Studies (Zaro & Ruiz 2007, Deane-Cox 2014, Cadera & Walsh 2017, van Poucke 2017, Zhang & Huijuan 2018, van Poucke 2017, Berk Albachten & Tahir Gürçaglar 2019, 2020, Peeters & Van Poucke 2023). However, there remains a dearth of research concerning the relationship between retranslation and theatrical texts (Aaltonen 2003), that is, how linguistic, contextual, personal and performative factors facilitate the rendering of a source play that has already been translated (and staged) in a particular language and culture. This is especially relevant in the realm of the performing arts, which are highly sensitive to historical periods (shifting political or social contexts), linguistic aspects (the need to update the play's language), literary discoveries (a new interpretation of the source), or personal views (a practitioner's own appreciation of a text).



This paper aims to illuminate the textual, paratextual and social agents that influence the retranslation and reception in the UK of one of the most internationally recognized Spanish plays, Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna*. Specifically, it seeks to examine how women's roles in the source text are portrayed in the target plays, and to what extent female characters are depicted with increased empowerment and agency. This is most noticeable in the case of Laurencia, the peasant woman who, after supposedly being raped by the village Commander, rallies the townsfolk to collectively kill him.

For illustrative purposes, four British retranslations of this classic have been selected: Allan Sillitoe & Ruth Fainlight's *All Citizens Are Soldiers* (1967), Adrian Mitchell's *Fuente Ovejuna* (1988-9), Daniel Goldman's *Fuente Ovejuna* (2010) and April De Angelis's *The Village* (2018). The analysis focuses on how translators and directors approach the topic of sexual exploitation, and the prominence that Laurencia is given as the victim of the Commander's sexual abuse. This can be perceived through the emphasis she receives in the translations and the portrayal of her attitude towards sex and honour. Thus, political (in)correctness, reaction to male domination, moral squeamishness and the adoption of a contemporary idiom emerge as significant aspects to consider. Additionally, a paratextual examination of the retranslations shows substantial alterations provoked by the play's relocation across spatial and temporal boundaries, hence influencing how English audiences witness women's behaviour in the resulting texts.

The findings illustrate a gradual shift from political readings in *All Citizens...*, a consequence of the political climate of Spain at the time (Breden 2019: 194), to other interpretations that place women at the heart of the action, with the theme of sexual empowerment prevailing over that of collective justice. The conclusions highlight the relevance of these four productions at a specific period, thereby being deemed "necessary" for the British theatrical scene. Furthermore, they argue for the need for a broader definition of the notion of "literary retranslation" that encompasses the specificities of the dramatic genre, while showcasing the potential of (Spanish) theatre classics as agents that trigger (feminist) retranslations for the Anglo-Saxon stage.

#### **Keywords:**

Theatre Retranslation; Agency; Women's roles; *Fuente Ovejuna*.

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### **On the translation of swearwords in the Spanish versions of Scorsese's *Casino* and *The Wolf of Wall Street***

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The translation of swearwords in audiovisual texts has often been considered a delicate issue. The presence of swearwords in films poses a translation problem which has lately received scholars' attention. As stated by Jay and Janschewitz (2008), the main pragmatic function of these words is to express emotions, such as anger and frustration. However, swearing may also be used to reinforce social bonds, responding, thus, to the phatic function of language. In those cases, in Brown and Levinson's (1987) terms, swearwords are employed as a positive politeness strategy. Moreover, when uttered in film dialogues, they also have an obvious characterization function. In this sense, as Greenall (2011) indicates, swearing generates social implicature.

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the translation of swearwords in the Spanish dubbed and subtitled versions of two films by Scorsese, namely *Casino* (1995) and *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013). All in all, 1381 swearwords have been identified in the original versions of both films. Since both the subtitled and the dubbed versions have been focused on, 2762 target-text tokens have been analyzed altogether. As put forward more than once (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014; Han and Wang 2014), swearing tends to be toned down in audiovisual translation due to several reasons. Three hypotheses are the point of departure of this study: 1) swearwords will be subjected to a certain degree of sanitization, 2) the degree of sanitization will be higher in the subtitled version than in the dubbed version, since the impact of swearwords is stronger when they are written than when they are uttered, as suggested more than once (Han and Wang 2014; Santamaría Ciordia 2016), and 3) swearwords will be used more profusely in the target versions of *The Wolf of Wall Street* than in the target versions of *Casino*, as in recent years audiovisual translators seem to have got rid of their fears regarding the use of swearwords.

Considering the sample as a whole, the most frequent solution for the rendering of swearwords has been pragmatic correspondence –or the translation of the term as a TL counterpart with an equivalent tone (e.g., translating *shit* as *mierda* or *fucking* as *puto/puta*)–, followed by the omission of the swearword, softening –or the use of a milder swearword in the TL (e.g., rendering *I fucked up* as *la he cagado*)–, and de-swearing –or the translation of the swearword by a non-swearing textual fragment (e.g., *bullshit* translated as *mentiras*)–. All in all, in 42.3% of the cases swearwords have been subjected to a certain degree of sanitization. A comparison of the two modalities of audiovisual translation reveals that this tendency to sanitize taboo words is higher in subtitling than in dubbing. Clearer divergences emerge between the treatment of swearwords in the target versions of the two films which constitute the corpus of this study, as the above-mentioned tendency represents 49.8% in the target versions of *Casino*, whereas it descends to 37.3% in the case of *The Wolf of Wall Street*.

#### **Keywords:**

Swearwords; subtitling; dubbing; *Casino*; *The Wolf of Wall Street*.

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## **Cognitive Effort and Machine Translation Post-Editing of Medical Content: A Study on COVID-19 Information Websites**

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Machine translation post-editing (MTPE) refers to the editing and correction of machine translation (MT) output (ISO 2015). This phase within the translation process plays a vital role in refining translation quality. Moreover, MTPE is a modality which has emerged so strongly in recent years that has sparked discussions about a paradigm shift in the translation sector (Sánchez-Cárdenas and López-Rodríguez 2020). There is no MT system with an output which can be qualified as equal to the output of human translation and, therefore, the final quality of the translation output still depends on human translators and, for this purpose, their competence in post-editing (ISO 2017).

This study focuses on the cognitive effort expended during the post-editing of medical texts from English to Spanish, specifically related to COVID-19 information websites. The aims of the study were (i) to assess the advantages of using two MT tools, Google Translate and DeepL, when translating medical content from English to Spanish; (ii) to classify the changes implemented during the MTPE phase based on the cognitive effort they required, and (iii) to compare if the implemented changes aligned with existing guidelines on MTPE from English to Spanish.

For this purpose, we selected a set of texts in English from institutional websites providing COVID-19 information and compiled a monolingual corpus by using Sketch Engine. A sample was extracted and translated via Google Translate and DeepL. Next, the DQF-MQM error typology was used to classify the errors detected in the machine-translated content. The resulting translations were then post-edited using the MateCat online platform.

The findings of the study revealed the cognitive effort involved in post-editing medical texts from English to Spanish. Post-editors expended significant mental energy due to the complexity of medical terminology and the necessity for accurate translation within the context of COVID-19 information dissemination. The MTPE process revealed that errors related to terminology and style needed careful revision. Moreover, while MT tools facilitated the initial translation process, the MTPE phase was crucial in rectifying errors and ensuring translation accuracy. MT served as a valuable aid, but human intervention was necessary to produce high-quality translations. After analyzing whether the changes implemented during the MTPE phase were reflected on existing guidelines on MTPE from English to Spanish, we concluded that the existing publications did not provide sufficient guidance to address all the modifications performed during the MTPE phase. This highlights the need for more comprehensive guidelines tailored specifically to the medical domain.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the cognitive effort exerted during the MTPE of medical content related to COVID-19. The findings emphasize the importance of accurate translation in the medical domain and the limitations of existing guidelines in addressing the nuances of this specialized field. These insights contribute to the development of more comprehensive guidelines on post-editing medical content. Lastly, recognizing the cognitive effort required in post-editing specialized content is crucial for the improvement of MT systems and the development of translator training programs.

**Keywords:**

Machine Translation; Machine Translation Quality Assessment; Post-Editing of Machine Translation; Cognitive Effort; Specialized Translation.

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**Lenguaje claro y perspectiva de género en la traducción de espacios culturales**

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En tanto que servicio de accesibilidad, el horizonte del lenguaje claro, de la lectura fácil, se ha ampliado desde sus orígenes (cuyo destino primero era un destinatario con discapacidad cognitiva o intelectual) hasta el presente, en el que se ha dejado ya demostrada su utilidad para otros receptores: personas mayores, personas extranjeras con bajo dominio de la lengua, entre otras, que se benefician en gran medida del lenguaje claro.

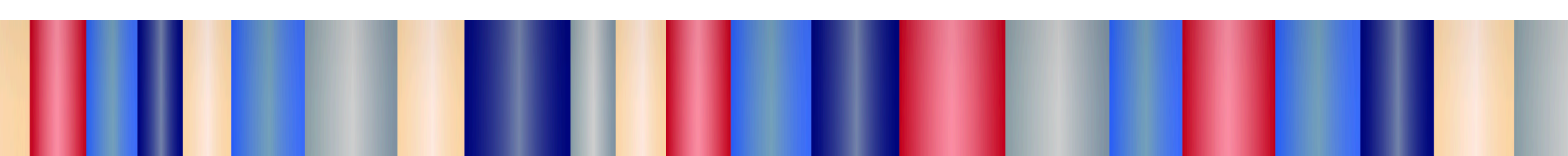
Contemplamos esta realidad social con relación a la necesidad, cada vez más apremiante por parte de la sociedad (y del mercado), de incorporar un lenguaje no sexista, o inclusivo, a la ecuación. Nos preguntamos hasta qué punto es posible, y de qué manera, combinar ambos planteamientos alternativos (claro e inclusivo) del lenguaje. Tal vez, de hecho, haya que plantear una jerarquía de necesidades si de lo que se trata es de que el lenguaje sea accesible para todas las personas, según los dictados de la Agenda 2030 de las Naciones Unidas en lo relativo a sostenibilidad, igualdad e inclusión.

De este modo, siempre en relación con el lenguaje inclusivo, en nuestra propuesta se abordarán diferentes cuestiones relativas al lenguaje claro, o fácil de comprender, en tanto en cuanto se ha convertido ya en un nuevo perfil profesional que permite al estudiantado de Traducción e Interpretación ampliar sus horizontes laborales. Es necesaria, sin duda, la formación en este terreno para adquirir la competencia necesaria para acceder al mercado del lenguaje de una manera más completa y especializada.

Nuestro enfoque, tal y como mostraremos, tiene un marcado carácter interdisciplinar, multidisciplinar y colaborativo, basado en la utilización de métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos para explorar y accesibilizar espacios de cultura tales como museos, teatros o salas de cine. Haciendo uso de una metodología combinada, propia de diferentes disciplinas interrelacionadas, buscamos en nuestra investigación como objetivo último favorecer la participación completa de todas las personas en una visita al museo, una representación teatral o una proyección cinematográfica, con la finalidad de que estos se conviertan para los usuarios en una experiencia inolvidable. Comprometidos en particular con el compromiso multisensorial, que incluya herramientas afines, nos ocuparemos de todas aquellas cuestiones que sirvan para favorecer una experiencia museística, teatral o cinematográfica extraordinaria y completa para todas las personas, independientemente de su realidad física, sensorial o cognitiva.

**Keywords:**

Lenguaje claro, Accesibilidad, Inclusión, Estudios de género, Estudios de traducción.

**References:**

Arias-Badia (2020) [El experto en lenguaje fácil de comprender: un nuevo perfil educativo y profesional en el ámbito de la lengua española](https://doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2020.12.1). Para enlazar con este artículo:  
<https://doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2020.12.1>

Pérez L. de Heredia, M., B. Arias Badia y Ó. García Muñoz (2022) ¿Hay conflicto entre el derecho a la accesibilidad, al lenguaje claro y al inclusivo? *Jornadas EnClaro*, cuarta edición, online. 7 de octubre de 2022.

## **The Effectiveness of Metalinguistic Explanations on Metalinguistic Knowledge and its Interaction with Language-Analytic Ability in Young Learners: A Study on the Possessive Determiners His/Her**

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Recent investigations with young learners have uncovered the acute need to implement form-focused instruction (FFI) interventions that may help them expand their attention to grammar. Current research on FFI has also made a call for the investigation of its effectiveness on both language use and language development (Erlam 2013) and its interface with individual differences, such as language-analytic ability (Roehr-Brackin 2022).

In a previous study, we measured the effectiveness of a carefully-planned pedagogical intervention consisting of metalinguistic explanations (ME) on the accurate use of the English possessive determiners *his/her* in gender-matched and gender-mismatched contexts. Gains were observed in both contexts in the treatment group; however, what remained unaddressed was the effect of ME on language development, as measured by a grammaticality judgement task (GJT), and its interaction with language-analytic ability.

The acquisition of English possessive determiners is subject to developmental sequences and its developmental route has been found to interact with L1 influence, especially in the case of L2 English learners with a Romance L1 background (White, Muñoz, and Collins 2007). In addition, previous research (Imaz Aguirre, and García Mayo 2013) has shown that, in comparison to Spanish monolingual learners of English, Spanish-Basque bilinguals commit errors to a larger extent than monolinguals in cases of gender-mismatch.

This paper will attempt to fill these gaps by comparing the gains obtained in a GJT by 33 Spanish-Basque bilinguals from Grade 5 in Primary Education who were divided into two groups: a control group that only completed 3 dictogloss tasks and an experimental group who, in addition to the dictogloss tasks, received two mini-lessons with ME. Gains from the GJT were also correlated with the MLAT-ES, specifically designed for children aged 8-13, to study the effect of language-analytic ability on metalinguistic knowledge when young learners are exposed to different types of FFI.

The analysis of the results confirms the effectiveness of the provision of ME after the performance of a dictogloss task, as gains were obtained for both matched- and mismatched-contexts, a finding in line with the trend observed in our previous study on language use. In contrast to this earlier study, no losses were reported in the control group. In this respect, the cumulative experience of hypothesis-testing gained during the reconstruction phase may have had a flow-back effect into language development (Izumi 2003). Likewise, the absence of a correlation between the gains obtained in the GJT and the scores in the MLAT-ES for child language seems to indicate a minimal effect of this individual difference on these learners' metalinguistic knowledge.

### **Keywords:**

Form-focused instruction (FFI); explicit language knowledge; language-analytic ability; possessive determiners *his/her*.

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## Discovering and Analysing the Diverse Training Needs of Teachers Involved in Intercultural Virtual Exchange

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Intercultural virtual exchange (IVE) involves the use of internet-based (a)synchronous tools and online teaching techniques and strategies to offer learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds the possibility of engaging in meaningful interactions, regardless of their physical location (Belz, 2003; O'Dowd, 2018). This requires teachers with special skills to face the new online scenarios in which such interactions take place.

The E-LIVE (Engaging Languages in Intercultural Virtual Exchange) European project aims to create training modules for language teachers who wish to participate in IVE within our project. We consider diversity to be an asset that has the potential to enhance teachers' and learners' lived experience as well as improving educational institutions and society as a whole (Jaramillo-Cherrez & Gleason 2022; Helm & Acconcia, 2019). Another of the main purposes of the E-LIVE project is to foster critical cultural awareness in teachers and learners through computer-mediated intercultural exchange and the deployment and development of inclusive strategies.

This paper presents the results of the initial phase of the project's implementation, which involved an analysis of the teaching beliefs, experiences, conditions, and training needs of 39 language teachers from five European countries, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK, who collaborate with E-LIVE as associate schools. The results of the analysis were envisaged as input to aid in the design of an inclusive teacher training approach that acknowledges the cultural differences between teachers and learners and equips them with the necessary skills to plan and execute successful IVE programmes.

For the initial analysis phase, data were gathered using an online questionnaire and several focus groups made up of participants from the associated schools from the five countries mentioned above. The main themes were virtual exchange pedagogy, digital literacy skills and intercultural mediation. The questionnaire data were analysed using a spreadsheet application. For the analysis of the focus groups, content analysis (Stemler, 2001) was employed. From our results, we conclude that the teachers harbour concerns regarding local diversity, highlighting the culturally diverse contexts where they teach, the high number of students per class and the different competence levels; technological diversity, emphasising aspects related to their and their

students' perceived lack of digital and technical knowledge and also technical problems in certain schools; and cross-educational diversity, where they mentioned the difficulty in designing tasks that would appeal to both classes (particularly when their age was not the same). Regarding international diversity, the teachers did not consider potential differences in cultural backgrounds a problematic area, but rather a chance to raise intercultural awareness.

These results have already helped the E-LIVE project address diversity and facilitate inclusion by offering a wide range of tools, task types and contents that can be used and further adapted for addressing learner diversity through personalized mentoring. We will also carry out exchanges in which students are confronted with various forms of diversity to acquire the necessary strategies for understanding, accepting, and embracing otherness.

### **Keywords:**

Diversity; Inclusion; Intercultural Virtual Exchange; Computer-Assisted Language Learning.

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## **Is Noticing a Trainable Ability? Exploring the Relationship between Metalinguistic Explanations, Metalinguistic Awareness and the Development of Two Grammatical Features in L1 Spanish Young EFL Learners**

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Explicit learning seems to be an essential process at the time of purposefully negotiating meaning and establishing deliberate attempts to communicate: it is thought to facilitate the development of implicit learning and knowledge, as it promotes the noticing and subsequent acquisition of otherwise neglected forms (N.C. Ellis 2015). In this regard, metalinguistic awareness (MA), which refers to the ability to treat language as an object of reflection rather than as a mere tool of use (Bialystok 2001), could play a key role in boosting explicit language learning processes. For MA to take place, metalinguistic knowledge, or knowledge about how a language works, is required (Roehr-Brackin 2018). Accordingly, metalinguistic explanations (ME), which provide learners with explicit insight about language, are expected to increase learners' metalinguistic knowledge. In turn, it is within the realm of reasonable expectation that ME could potentially raise MA and, consequently, provide a valuable advantage for young learners (YLS) in order to make the most of their limited EFL communicative instruction time.

Following a sociocultural (Vygostky 1978) and interactionist (Long 1996) perspective, and within the Focus-on-Form (FonF) approach (Long 1991), we investigated whether ME could help YLS boost their MA and, in turn, improve their performance in regard to two grammatical features during a collaborative dictogloss writing task. Using a pre-test/post-test design, a classroom of 20 L1 Spanish EFL 10-year-old students (Primary Year 5) was divided into an experimental and a control group. Both groups completed an individual MA test before carrying out a dictogloss task in pairs. Afterwards, the experimental group was asked to engage with a set of ME concerning

two English grammatical features: *his/her* and third person *-s*. Additionally, an individual retrospective interview was carried out after the post-tests in order to triangulate collaborative data. The results showed a significant improvement of both MA scores and performance at the task in terms of accuracy regarding the two targeted grammatical features for the treatment group. Pedagogical implications are drawn from these conclusions.

**Keywords:**

Explicit learning; metalinguistic explanations; metalinguistic awareness; young learners; writing task.

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**Task-based interaction and grammar instruction with young EFL learners: the potential effect of integrating metalinguistic explanations and tasks on the accurate use of English possessive determiners**

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A considerable body of research within the Interaction framework has focused on how task-based interaction promotes learners' attention to linguistic aspects (Long and Robinson, 1998). A population that is gathering momentum in Interaction research is that of young learners in ESL (Oliver and Azkarai, 2019) and EFL settings (García Mayo and Imaz Aguirre, 2019). Collectively, this research has found that learners do attend to language (mainly meaning-oriented) in task-based interaction. Little is known, though, about whether their attention would be drawn to specific grammatical features by means of pedagogical tasks designed for that purpose (but see Gorman & Ellis, 2019). This study aims to provide empirical evidence about the potential effect of a carefully-planned pedagogical intervention in collaborative task-based interaction that draws young EFL learners' attention to a specific grammatical feature – English possessive determiners, in gender-matched ("The woman is sitting next to her daughter") and gender-mismatched ("John is saying bye to his mother") contexts. To this end, 33 10-to-11-year-old EFL 5th Primary-school learners were recruited. Participants (matched for proficiency) carried out three dictogloss tasks (Wajnryb, 1990) collaboratively – a meaning-focused writing task where learners first listen to an aural text, jot down notes, and subsequently reconstruct the text collaboratively or individually based on their own notes. 7 dyads acted as a control group and 9 as an experimental group. Both groups listened to a story twice and then they were asked to write a text as similar as possible to the one in the auditory stimulus in a grammatically accurate way. As part of the pedagogical



design, the control group received no treatment, whereas the experimental group received metalinguistic explanations on the accurate use of English possessive determiners prior Dictogloss 2 and prior Dictogloss 3. This treatment was divided into four phases: (i) error observation, (ii) noticing, (iii) awareness and analysis (where the golden rule for possessives was highlighted), (iv) and cloze practice. Results show a direct relationship between metalinguistic explanations and higher scores in Dictogloss 3. In fact, there are significant differences between the control and the experimental group in the total accuracy scores of Dictogloss 3 ( $Z=3,042$ ;  $p=0,001$ ) and in the accuracy scores of Dictogloss 3 in gender-matched contexts ( $Z=2,323$ ;  $p=0,018$ ). These results lead to the conclusion that a carefully-planned pedagogical intervention in collaborative task-based interaction which draws young EFL learners' attention to a specific grammatical feature leads to higher scores in the production of English possessive determiners, specifically, in gender-matched contexts.

**Keywords:**

Grammar; task-based interaction; EFL; young learners; possessive determiners *his/her*.

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**Teaching pragmatics in primary education: the case of requests and refusals**

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The benefits of pragmatic instruction have extensively been reported in interlanguage pragmatics (see Taguchi 2015); however, most of classroom curricula do not include pragmatics as a central part of the design yet (González-Lloret 2019). In addition to this, most of the instructed pragmatics research has mainly focused on adult learners, rather than on young learners (Qi & Lai 2017; Schauer 2019). The aim of this study is thus to contribute to this gap of research by exploring the effects of pragmatic instruction (in requests and refusals to requests) on primary English as a foreign language learners (EFL).

The participants of this study were 8-year-old Catalan/Spanish EFL learners with an A1 proficiency level, who were at 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade of primary education (N= 18). The study took place in two different phases. In the first phase, students were instructed in how to request in English, through four two-hour sessions devoted to pragmatic instruction, plus four one-hour sessions, in which students had to prepare a dialogue task to be performed in class. The focus of the second phase was on refusals to requests, and the same procedure as in the first phase was followed. In order to test pragmatic learning, a multiple-choice discourse completion test (MCDCT) was used before and after the pedagogical intervention, as well as a MCDCT in

Catalan, at the beginning of each phase, in order to know what their pragmatic knowledge was in their first language. Additionally, think-aloud protocols were used to understand the learners' choices in the MCDCTs. Pragmatic production was also analyzed through the oral dialogues. The findings showed that young learners were able to choose the most pragmatically appropriate responses in the English MCDCTs. Also, according to the think-aloud protocols, the metapragmatic explanations provided in the instructional period seemed to be very helpful for them. However, they also claimed that some strategies were difficult to learn and that more time devoted to instruction would have helped. Findings will be discussed in line with research in instructed pragmatics. Pedagogical implications regarding the need to integrate pragmatics in the primary school context will also be suggested.

**Keywords:**

Instructed pragmatics; EFL; requests; refusals.

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**The Effect of Different CLIL Intensities on Young Learners' Pronunciation**

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Early-start foreign language teaching in schools across Europe has gone hand in hand with an intensification of the exposure to the target language (mostly English) via Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the last decades (Muñoz, 2014). However, the umbrella term "CLIL" covers a wide range of intensities of exposure. In a comprehensive review, Muñoz (2015) pointed at a critical 300-CLIL-hour threshold beyond which sizeable language gains could be expected. However, she acknowledged two important limitations: firstly, the fact that such yardstick was based on studies carried out with mostly older learners, what questioned its generalisability to younger populations, and secondly, the fact that most studies on CLIL and proficiency have not accounted for important mediating factors, like socioeconomic status (SES) and extramural exposure. In addition, not all skills and subskills seem to be affected by different CLIL intensities to the same degree, and oral production has been comparatively under-researched (Pérez Cañado & Lancaster, 2017). In fact, recent research on the impact of CLIL on oral proficiency with young learners (YLS) has provided mixed results (Madrid and Barrios, 2018; Martínez Agudo, 2019; Gálvez Gómez, 2021). Similarly, specific findings on the CLIL effect on pronunciation seem inconclusive (Dalton-Puffer, 2008, 2011; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2011, 2015) and, although CLIL learners might be characterised by a more intelligible and less irritating accent (Gallardo et al. 2009; Rallo Fabra and Juan-Garau, 2011; Rallo Fabra and Jacob, 2015), it has been argued that, for significant pronunciation gains to take place, specific pedagogical instruction might be required (Gallardo et al. 2009; Varchmin, 2010). In light of this, much more research is needed in order to understand the possible impact of different CLIL intensities on YLS' pronunciation, ideally by means of studies which account for socioeconomic status (SES) and extramural exposure. This study compared the pronunciation of 108 young non-CLIL and CLIL learners in Spain performing a story-telling task, including i) a non-CLIL group (n=23;

mean age= 10.91), who had received 1766 hours of EFL instruction (EFLh); ii) a low-CLIL group (n=21; mean age= 10.24; EFLh: 1766, CLILh: 707); iii) a high-CLIL group (n=32; mean age= 10.91; EFLh: 1766, CLILh: 2473h) and iv) a younger high-CLIL group (n=32; mean age= 9.84; EFLh: 1545, CLILh: 2164h). All four cohorts were matched for SES and extramural exposure. Kruskal-Wallis, post-hoc and Friedman tests were conducted. The results revealed no significant differences in pronunciation between any of the groups, although the highest values were obtained by the younger high-CLIL group. The fact that even the additional CLIL 2000h+ exposure of the high-CLIL group did not lead to significantly higher values over the non-CLIL group supports previous claims (Gallardo et al. 2009; Varchmin, 2010) advocating a need of specific pedagogical instruction on pronunciation. Ultimately, our results also provide evidence which refines Housen's claim (2012) that the additional exposure provided by CLIL might not be enough for YLs to display sizeable language gains, at least regarding the pronunciation subskill.

### Keywords:

CLIL; EFL; exposure; pronunciation; young learners.

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### **What can they learn on their own? Examining the impact of self-access online materials on EFL learners' pragmatic awareness of email requests to faculty**

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Due to the popularity of study abroad programs in higher education, preparing university students to adequately participate in academic contexts in which English is the language of communication seems of utmost importance. Specifically, research has shown that a very frequent communicative situation, that of writing emails requests to faculty, presents numerous difficulties for EFL learners (e.g., Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011). As a response to students' need to develop their awareness of how to write appropriate status-congruent emails in EFL, a small but growing body of research has started to investigate the effects of pedagogical interventions on email request pragmatics (e.g., Nguyen 2018), showing positive results for in-class instruction, particularly in terms of framing moves. However, very little is still known about the extent to which learners may benefit from instruction delivered through out-of-class self-access online materials (e.g., Sydorenko, Jones, Daurio and Thorne 2020).

The present study intends to contribute to this emerging line of research by investigating EFL students' development of pragmatic awareness of email requests to faculty after three weeks of instruction delivered through self-access online materials. We focus on pragmatic awareness, that is “the conscious, reflective, explicit knowledge about pragmatics” (Alcón-Soler and Safont-Jordá 2008), as its development is considered necessary for learners to make informed decisions about the appropriateness of their messages in specific communicative situations. In addition, the study explores the effects of two individual differences that are likely to affect the extent to which students may benefit from independent learning: L2 proficiency level and engagement with the materials.

Participants were 66 EFL first-year university students whose proficiency levels ranged from B1 to C1, as measured through the Oxford Placement Test. Students' development of pragmatic awareness was measured through four open-ended appropriateness judgment tasks. Each email request to faculty had a different level of imposition and contained pragmatic infelicities and aggravators (Nguyen 2018). Students' descriptions of (in)appropriateness were analysed both through a scoring rubric and an in-depth qualitative analysis. Engagement was measured through

a combination of indicators (i.e., amount and type of tasks completed, and time spent on the materials) based on Zhou, Hiver, and Al-Hoorie (2021).

Our results indicate that self-access instruction had a positive effect on students' pragmatic awareness concerning email requests to faculty. A paired-samples T-Test revealed significant gains from the pretest ( $M=1.93$ ;  $SD=.75$ ) to the posttest ( $M=3.43$ ;  $SD=.89$ ), [ $t(65)=15.265$ ,  $p<.001$ ]. The qualitative analysis showed that, in the post-test, students identified a wider range of infelicities and aggravators, in terms of both framing and content moves. Concerning individual differences, while L2 proficiency was positively correlated with pre-test scores, it did not have an influence on students' pragmatic gains. Linear regression analyses showed that gains were significantly influenced by students' engagement with the materials ( $F(1,24)=13.46$ ,  $p<.001$ ). These results will be discussed in relation to their theoretical and pedagogical implications.

### **Keywords:**

Pragmatic awareness; Requests; Emails; Self-access; Individual differences.

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### **Using Teacher-produced Materials for Advanced EFL Learners: A Case Study**

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The materials that are used as part of a teaching programme are of utmost importance since they are essentially what the teaching revolves around and their role is crucial to the learning process (Fitria 2022). They are, thus, essential elements in helping teachers obtain the required academic results from their students (Tonawanik, and Donavanik, 2019). Nowadays, a wide variety of EFL coursebooks are available, covering a wide range of approaches such as EFL, ESP, CLIL, EM contexts to name but a few. Nevertheless, whether they be commercially published course books or teacher-produced material, there are advantages and disadvantages to using both (Howard, and Major, 2004). The principal advantages of commercially published course books are that students have all the material in one place, and it is material that has been created bearing in mind very specific learning requirements for the age and level of the student (Dudley 2023). However, when it comes to teaching advanced levels of English at university level, experience has shown me that the more traditional textbook is often limiting in up-to-date content and realistic learning situations making it difficult to find a course-book that fits the needs of students without repeating material or topics from previous years.

This research describes a case study in which students from English Language III, a 6-credit course in the first term of the second year of the degree in English Studies at the UIB participated in a project to use teacher and student-produced material for their classes. Students were administered pre- (21 questions) and post- questionnaires (14 questions) in order to obtain their

opinions on the use of course books, teacher-prepared material and teacher-student collaborative materials.

The pre-questionnaire results showed that although using a text book was generally seen as positive, they were open to classes where the teacher introduced topics and material from other sources. They do not appear to have the necessity of a rigorously structured course book, which will no doubt give the teacher a far wider range of freedom when it comes to preparing the course. Likewise, the post-questionnaire results suggest that the students enjoyed using the teacher-produced material and were also keen to participate in the development of new class materials. More specifically, the students were happy to incorporate up-to-date materials and topics that allowed them to give voice to what was happening in the world around them at that point in time.

### **Keywords:**

ELT materials; Advanced EFL learners; Teacher-produced materials.

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### **The Effect of CLIL on Motivation towards English Pronunciation: Does It Make a Difference?**

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One of the foundations of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is the claim that it not only enhances learners' language proficiency, but also improves their motivation towards language acquisition (Coyle 2006). Since then, extensive scholarly inquiry has been devoted to investigating this phenomenon, encompassing a comprehensive analysis of multiple aspects. These include examining the correlation between motivation and language achievement (Lasagabaster 2011), as well as conducting a thorough exploration of various variables that impact motivation, such as gender (Gallardo-del-Puerto & Blanco-Suarez, 2021) or the distinction between urban and rural areas (Alejo & Piquer-Píriz 2016), among others. However, there is a noticeable dearth of research concerning the potential influence of CLIL on motivation and attitudes towards foreign language pronunciation.

The examination of motivation in CLIL settings in relation to English pronunciation is of particular interest due to the historical underemphasis on pronunciation compared to other language skills, limited exposure in traditional approaches, and the prevalence of teachers with non-native accents (Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. 2006). This study aims to investigate the role of motivation in both CLIL and non-CLIL settings, with particular attention to the potential influence of the gender variable. This inquiry is motivated by previous research suggesting that, in traditional language learning approaches, girls tend to outperform boys (Moyer 2016); however, it has been shown that such a significant difference may not exist within the CLIL context (Gallardo-del-Puerto & Blanco-Suarez 2021).

The present study recruited a cohort of 124 participants within the primary education level, specifically spanning the age range of 8 to 10 years. The sample encompassed 56 students from non-CLIL classrooms and 68 students from CLIL classrooms. All participants underwent the

administration of a comprehensive motivation and attitudes questionnaire, purposefully tailored to evaluate their perceptions and attitudes towards English pronunciation.

The questionnaire utilized in this study employed a Likert scale with a range of 1 to 5, covering a wide array of 38 items. It assessed multiple dimensions pertaining to participants' attitudes and motivation towards English pronunciation, including positive attitudes towards pronunciation, perceived usefulness of English pronunciation, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, learner experience, and learner engagement.

The analysis carried out in SPSS software revealed that CLIL students had a slightly higher overall motivation towards English pronunciation than their non-CLIL counterparts, except for the ideal L2 self and learning experience constructs. Within groups, even though girls show higher levels of motivation in both groups, there is not a big difference and results are even among groups. The pedagogical implications of these findings will be discussed in relation to the influence of different variables that may have conditioned the results, aiming to provide insights for educational practices and interventions.

### **Keywords:**

CLIL; Pronunciation; Motivation; Attitudes.

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### **Analysing syntactic complexity in the written productions of CLIL and non-CLIL English learners in Primary Education**

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Research has shown that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) offers specific advantages for English language proficiency, although certain competencies, such as writing or syntax, may yield fewer benefits (Dalton-Puffer 2008). Several studies comparing CLIL and non-CLIL writing (i.e., Ruiz-de-Zarobe 2010) support the notion that CLIL students outperform their non-CLIL counterparts. Specifically, CLIL learners have been reported to exhibit a higher level of sentence complexity (i.e., Gené-Gil et al. 2015). Regarding gender, studies suggest a better disposition of females toward learning a foreign language, but there is evidence that bilingual programs may mitigate gender disparities in certain language learning aspects due to factors like motivation (Gallardo-del-Puerto and Blanco-Suárez 2021).

This study adds to prior research by investigating the potential positive impact of CLIL on the syntactic complexity of L2 English learners in contrast to students who solely receive instruction through conventional EFL classes. Additionally, this research aims to explore whether CLIL acts

as an equalizing factor by minimizing differences in syntactic complexity in the written performance of male and female students.

The sample, selected from the PELEC corpus (Blanco-Suárez et al. 2010), consists of the written productions of 56 learners in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades of Primary Education in the monolingual Spanish region of Cantabria. Among these learners, 26 participated in CLIL programs, while the other 30 students solely received EFL lessons. Both groups received equal EFL instruction: 361 hours in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 617 hours in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. However, the CLIL group had an additional exposure of 307 and 462 hours, respectively. Letters were transcribed in CHAT and later analysed for syntactic complexity. The measures employed included amount of subordination, amount of coordination, and sophistication, which were obtained through the Tool for the Automatic Analysis of Syntactic Sophistication and Complexity (TAASSC) and CLAN. The statistical analysis of the data was conducted using R.

Results revealed statistically significant differences in the CLIL group overall and CLIL 4<sup>th</sup>-graders in amount of subordination, coordination, and structure sophistication. In the 6<sup>th</sup>-grade CLIL group, significant variances were observed only in terms of sophistication. Gender-wise, no significant distinctions were found between females and males in either CLIL or non-CLIL groups. Conversely, a noteworthy contrast was spotted when contrasting female CLIL and non-CLIL groups, with the former displaying significantly higher scores in amount of coordination and sophistication.

Concerning CLIL, findings are consistent with previous studies showing a positive relationship between increased exposure to the L2, improved writing proficiency, and higher syntactic complexity. The decline in effectiveness among 6<sup>th</sup>-graders can potentially be attributed to their additional exposure of 462 hours, which may be attributed to the differential effect of maturational factors on the various components of syntactic complexity. Regarding gender, results diverge from previous studies that highlight the potential of the CLIL approach in alleviating the influence of traditional EFL instruction on gender differences. Nonetheless, the positive impact of additional CLIL hours on females particularly would rather align with the idea that girls may take greater advantage of programmes of additional (CLIL) instruction.

#### **Keywords:**

CLIL; Primary Education; syntactic complexity; writing; gender.

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**“If you can imagine it, you can achieve it!” Raising awareness of the impact of imagery-based intervention programmes on language learners’ motivation to future CLIL teachers**

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The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the impact of an intervention programme based on Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) on the motivation of a group of eleven CLIL Master's Degree students at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The research questions posed are the following: 1) What is the participants' motivation in the pre- and post-intervention phases?; 2) What is their perception on the possible use of the L2MSS in their classroom?

The L2MSS (Dörnyei, 2005) and its focus on vision and imagery as pivotal elements of language learning motivation continue to gain momentum. Despite the paucity in literature when it comes to intervention programmes based on this system, the studies conducted are gaining increased attention due to positive outcomes and prospective pedagogical implications (Ghasemi 2021; Sadfari 2021). An online proficiency test and a motivational questionnaire designed by You and Dörnyei (2016) and by Gardner (2004), analysing the motivational variables intended learning effort, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, L2 learning experience, instrumentality promotion and prevention, cultural interest, family influence and integrativeness, were carried out in pre- and post-intervention phases by eleven students (six female and five male), whose language competence was B2/C1.

The programme contained several motivational activities mostly based on Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013), such as watching a short video in which Dörnyei himself explains the power of vision and imagery in language learning, a role model role-play activity (Hadfield and Dörnyei 2013) in which students recorded each other pretending they were successful English speakers, or a future-L2-self activity (Hadfield and Dörnyei 2013), in which students visualised themselves as successful English speakers, then shared their vision with their partners and wrote about it. Examples of learners' multimodal production included a video in which they interviewed each other as future successful English speakers, a text on what they visualised during their future-L2-self activity, or a post-intervention interview, based on Mackay (2019), on the impact and usefulness of the programme both for themselves and for their students two years later.

Correlations and multiple linear regressions were performed using IBM SPSS programme version 25.0. Participants' oral and written production, together with the transcription in full of the post-intervention interviews, were analysed and coded by the two researchers. The quantitative analysis brought to light an evolution in terms of correlations in the post intervention phase together with a higher proficiency in English. Moreover, the qualitative exploration of the oral and written production, together with the post-intervention interview indicates a stronger ideal L2 self and learners' increased imagery vividness. The intervention programme seems to have raised awareness of the importance of motivation in the classroom and of the novelty of imagery as a way of engaging their students.

**Keywords:**

L2MSS; motivation; intervention programme; ideal L2 self; imagery.

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### **Young L2 English learners' production and elaboration of language-related episodes: oral vs. oral+written tasks**

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The production of Language Related Episodes (LREs), defined as “any part of a dialogue where the students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others” (Swain and Lapkin 1998, p. 326), has been the target of numerous investigations conducted with adult second language learners (i.e. Leaser, 2004; Niu, 2009; Payant & Kim, 2019). In the last years, young learners' LRE production is receiving increasing attention (i.e. García Mayo & Imaz Aguirre, 2019). This research has evinced that the production of LREs is influenced by the modality of the task, with oral+written tasks being more productive than oral-only tasks in terms of incidence of LREs and a greater number of form-focused LREs. It also seems to show that children elaborate LREs to a lesser extent than adults.

The present paper offers a further comprehensive analysis of young learners' LREs by examining the effect of task-modality on the features targeted in them (i.e., word meaning, word choice, phonology, morphosyntax, prepositions, spelling), as well as on their level of engagement/elaboration (i.e., number of turns per LRE). Twelve pairs of elementary-school learners of English, aged 10-11, performed two different convergent tasks aimed at fostering negotiation of meaning and attention to language: a collaborative task containing both an oral and a written component (OW) vs. a collaborative task delivered just orally but with an audio-recording editing phase (OE). Participants' interactions were audio/video-recorded and transcribed in CHILDES. LREs were identified and classified into the aforementioned categories by two independent coders.

Pertaining statistical analyses indicated that a higher level of engagement in language discussions was observed in the OW task, as compared to the OE task, and in meaning-focused LREs, as compared to form-focused LREs. As for the different targets of meaning-focused LREs, the OW task promoted learner's attention to and engagement in word choice whereas the OE task contributed to their focus on and elaboration of word meaning. With regard to form-focused LREs, the OW task fostered a greater focus on morphosyntax and spelling, with a higher engagement in the latter. Morphosyntax was also the target of learners' interactions in the OE task together with phonology, with slightly more elaborate discussions in the latter. In the light of the results obtained and taking into account that learning gains might be more evident in certain features than others, pedagogical implications will be discussed.

**Keywords:**

Language-related episodes, task modality, interaction, young learner, English as a foreign language.

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**A contrastive-competential approach to the teaching of English intonation: A pilot study**

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In this work we will put forward a novel approach to the teaching of certain aspects of English as a second language (Teomiro & Estebas-Vilaplana 2022), and set forth the results of a pilot study aimed at checking the advantages of this approach. More specifically, we will argue that the teaching of intonation, a crucial aspect of English pronunciation that is especially hard to acquire in a second language (L2) (Mott 2005, Wells 2007), can benefit from a contrastive approach that starts from the competences in the mother tongue (L1) to get to the specific linguistic strategies used to achieve such competences in the L2. We will report the results of an empirical study with two groups of native Spanish-speaking C1-level students of English as L2 from the EOI Santander (Cantabria, Spain) during the academic year 2022-2023. One group was taught certain intonational strategies in English using only English data, while the other worked with a contrastive methodology that started from the (unconscious) knowledge that the students had of the intonation of their L1 (Spanish) to achieve the strategies in the L2 (English); hence, they worked with both English and Spanish data in the classroom. This knowledge of the L1 was used as scaffolding (Vigotsky 1978) in the process of teaching the same intonational strategies in the L2 (English) taught to the other group. Therefore, we argue it can foster the conformation of the interlingua (Selinker 1972). Both groups were administered a linguistic background survey, a pre-test and a post-test. The prosodic parameter examined in this study was tonicity or sentence stress in broad and narrow focus as well as inthetic statements, whose neutral reading involves the location of the nuclear accent in the subject rather than in sentence final position. For both tests (pre- and post), the informants were asked to answer a set of questions that prompted the location of sentence stress in different positions. We will report the results of the empirical study, as well as comment on some questions, reflections and conclusions we achieved along and at the end of the study.

**Keywords:**



Teaching; intonation; contrastive; scaffolding; interlingua.

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### Investigating EFL children's motivation and attitudes about collaborative writing and the use of models as feedback

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Writing plays a crucial role in language learning (Manchón, 2011). However, the task of writing in a foreign language (FL) can be particularly challenging due to the complexity of the language and the need to master different writing skills (Murtiningsih, 2016). In this context, motivation emerges as a key factor, especially for young learners, who are in the early stages of their education (Dörnyei, 2019). When children are motivated to write, they are more likely to invest effort and time in their writing tasks, which lead to improved performance and language proficiency (Al Khalil, 2011). Collaborative writing tasks have been recognized as an effective way to enhance (child) FL learners' writing skills by providing them with opportunities to work with their peers, share their ideas and experiences, and receive feedback from their classmates and teachers (Storch, 2019). In recent years, model texts have also emerged as a popular technique for providing feedback and improving writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms (Lázaro-Ibarrola, 2021). However, the impact of these techniques on learners' performance has mainly focused on the improvement of formal language aspects, failing to consider the influence of written corrective feedback on task motivation (Al Khalil, 2011; Villarreal & Lázaro-Ibarrola, 2022).

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of using model texts as a feedback technique on the motivation and engagement of EFL children in writing tasks. Employing a longitudinal design, the researchers divided 30 pairs of EFL children (aged 11-12) into three groups: a treatment group, a long-term treatment group, and a control group. The treatment groups received feedback that incorporated model texts as exemplars of proficient writing, while the control group relied on self-correction. Task motivation was evaluated through self-report questionnaires and focus group interviews, which assessed the children's intrinsic motivation and the value they attributed to the tasks. The results demonstrated a positive response from the children towards the use of model texts, particularly among those who had been exposed to this feedback technique for a longer period. Although some participants expressed a preference for more explicit error correction, their overall enjoyment, progress in vocabulary, grammar, and overall writing skills, as well as their enthusiasm for collaborative work, underscore the significance of integrating model texts in the EFL classroom. These findings emphasize the value of collaborative work and suggest that EFL instructors should consider incorporating model texts as motivating classroom tasks.

**Keywords:**

EFL children; longitudinal design; motivation; model texts; collaborative writing.

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**Does a Study Abroad Period Trigger Development in the Production of English Vowel Phonemes?**

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Learning in the study abroad (SA) environment is commonly believed to act as a trigger of linguistic progress given the rich quality of the input to which learners are exposed, and given the higher frequency of contact with the target language (Freed 1995; Moyer 2009). Nevertheless, findings in the literature concerned with phonological development in particular are at times contradictory: some studies do report an improvement (Nagle, Morales-Front, Moorman & Sanz 2016), while others observe an opposite trend (Avello & Lara 2014). This paper intends to shed more light on this controversy, based on data collected from a sample of native Spanish university students learning English as a foreign language. The aim of this piece of research is, thus, to determine whether a period in a SA context would result in a positive development in the acquisition of English vowel phonemes, in comparison with the at-home (AH) learning environment.

My study focusses on eleven vowel phonemes in English (all except for schwa) and on the skill of production. The sample of participants consisted of fifty-four students enrolled in an English Studies degree in two universities in the north of Spain (Vigo and Santiago). The participants completed a background survey and two production activities at three different time periods, which spanned a year and a half. Of the fifty-four participants, twenty-one spent between five and nine months studying abroad. The survey collected background information about their biographical details and their individual language history (L1, English as a FL, attitudes towards learning English). The speaking activities involved reading a list of words with thirty-three lexical items in each task (three for each target phoneme) and reading a short passage of running text with twenty-two items (two for each target phoneme). The production of the vowel phonemes was measured on two dimensions: quality (the position of the vowel) and quantity (the length of the vowel). The data analysis traced the quantity and quality measures of the two groups of participants (SA and AH) through the three stages by comparing their scores against the scores of a control group of native English speakers.

The results suggest that there was a significant development in the quantity and quality production of only some vowel phonemes (e.g. /e/, /ɒ/), with noticeable differences between the two activities

(word list, short passage). In terms of quantity, a general shortening process of all vowel phonemes led to a significant progress from the first to the third stage of data collection in both activities. Regarding quality, no significant differences were found in the production of the items in the word list activity, but significant changes were found in the results from the short passage. Overall, the comparison of the participants' scores across the two experimental groups under study yielded no significant differences, which suggests that the learning context had less influence than a priori expected, and as often argued in the literature.

### **Keywords:**

learning context; pronunciation; SLA, study abroad.

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### **Cultural word knowledge of undergraduate EFL learners**

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Cultural and intercultural communicative competences (Byram, 1997) have gained prominence in EFL teaching worldwide. Vocabulary is influenced by culture and is an essential part of cross-cultural communication, that is why the connection between lexicon and culture has been considered as crucial in foreign language pedagogy (Williams 1976; Wierzbicka 1997; Sharifian 2009). Although some studies have previously focused on the relationship between culture and vocabulary in primary and secondary education in Spain (Canga Alonso and Cifone Ponte 2021; Canga Alonso 2021) to our knowledge, there is a scarcity of research on the cultural words undergraduate EFL learners are able to elicit in response to a PdLex task which measures lexical production. It is worth mentioning that by cultural word we mean terms used "for special kinds of "things", "events" or "customs" [...] that cannot be translated literally, because translation will distort its meaning" (Hapsari & Setyaningsih 2013: 76).

Hence, the aim of this study was threefold: (i) to identify the number of cultural words produced by undergraduates in response to two stimulus words: *Food and Drink* and *Celebrating*, (ii) to explore the number and kind of words which are alike in students' responses to both cue words, and (iii) to analyse whether the elicited words belong to source, target or international cultures. To that end, a sample of fifteen 3rd year undergraduate students were tested on cultural lexical knowledge by means of a PdLex task using the aforementioned stimulus words. Data were collected in March 2023 by means of an online PdLex task which also included a background questionnaire and an English proficiency level test.

Lexical units from the vocabulary output were lemmatized adopting the same criteria as in previous PdLex studies (Canga Alonso 2021; Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba 2009). The cultural meaning of the lexical units gathered from the task was checked using the *Longman's Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (2005). After being lemmatized, each file was subjected to frequency analyses by means of AntConc to obtain word frequencies.

Our findings revealed that our informants produced more words in response to the traditional cue word *Food and Drink* than to a specific cultural stimulus as *Celebrating*. This finding seems to portray that undergraduate students are not familiarised with cultural celebrations in their own or in other cultures. It is also noteworthy that in the 20 most frequent words three terms (bar, cake and celebration) were repeated and all the elicited words are nouns. Finally, most of our students' responses to the prompts surveyed referred to international culture which concurs with previous research with younger learners (Canga Alonso, 2021).

In view of this results, we can conclude that undergraduate students seem to produce the same kind of cultural words as younger EFL learners regardless of the nature of the cue words used to collect the data (i.e. traditional or culture specific prompts).

### **Keywords**

Undergraduate EFL learners; PDLEX; food and drink; celebrating.

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### **Out-of-Class Contact with English among Spanish ESP University Students**

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These days, an ever-increasing number of L2 learners are using leisure-related technology-enhanced resources to engage in informal language practices outside the traditional classroom learning context (Sundqvist, 2009; Hulstijn, 2012; Sockett, 2014). L2 learners have unlimited

access to a vast number and variety of materials which offer endless opportunities for autonomous learning, thus complementing and extending the language learning experience (Sockett, 2014). This is especially important for students taking university ESP courses as they are often very constricted in content, and do not provide many opportunities for enhancing students' knowledge of general English.

This study sets out to investigate the more frequent types of English language-related activities university students indulge in outside the classroom, and examine possible differences in terms of course degree, course year and gender. A total of 203 students enrolled in two university degree programmes (Computer engineering, N = 60 and Education, N= 143) at the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB) completed a questionnaire about their out-of-class contact with English. In line with prior research, findings reveal that the most popular activity beyond the classroom was 'listening to English music'. This was followed by 'watching TV, films or series in English' (especially with English subtitles) and 'doing other English activities' (e.g. playing board games, etc.). The least popular informal language activities were 'playing multiplayer video games' and 'speaking English online'. The data indicate significant differences across university degree programmes, with computer engineering students engaging more frequently in informal language practices than education students except for 'listening to English music'. Significant differences were also found across course year, with students in the third and fourth year of university studies indulging more often in all informal language practices than first- or second-year university students, except for 'listening to English music'. This aligns with previous research which suggests lower frequency of contact with English outside the classroom among younger groups (Muñoz, 2020). It also seems to indicate that engagement with informal language practices tends to change over time (see also Peters, 2018). Finally, the results of this study show significant gender-related differences associated with the type of activity, and the amount of contact with English students outside the classroom across both groups. Thus, males tend to engage more frequently in different types of informal language practices (e.g. playing video-games, writing, reading, and watching films in English with no subtitles) than female students (as in Muñoz, 2020).

#### **Keywords:**

Informal language learning; out-of-class English language-related activities; ESP students; English language teaching; university students.

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#### **Assessing Project-Based Learning in the English Language Classroom**

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Project-Based Learning (PBL) is increasingly gaining importance as a successful form of instruction, not only in Primary and Secondary Education but also at University level. The PBL approach is characterized for being an active and student-centred form of instruction that fosters students' autonomy, collaboration, and solidarity. Importantly for the English language classroom, this methodology enhances communication and research skills as well, all of which can be transferred to non-academic environments (Frank and Barzilai 2010, Kokotsaki et. al. 2016, Travieso and Ortiz 2018). However, whereas academic syllabi have been incorporating skills and competences as learning outcomes for more than a decade, these methodological changes in the learning processes and curricula design have not always been accompanied by an update in the evaluation techniques that would allow for an effective assessment of the acquisition of competences and more research in this area is needed (Guo et. al. 2020).

In this presentation, I display a case study that I developed for the assessment of a PBL instructional design implemented in the course “Lengua Extranjera: Inglés. Destreza Comunicativas B2” of the BA in Primary Education at the University of Oviedo. In the first part, I present the instructional design of the case study, briefly sketching its objectives in terms of contents, skills and competences. The instructional design was organized around the course contents: the thematic units, such as sentence structure and questions, narrative tenses, and intercultural awareness among others; the competences, general, specific and linguistic; and the learning outcomes. Next, I introduce the assessment tools implemented for each of the phases of the project, which included a combination of rubrics to measure students' individual and group performances; formative evaluation, to assess problem-solving skills, long-term learning skills, and teamwork; a group portfolio to evaluate organization, and creative skills; and a multimedia presentation to assess communication skills, and combined language skills. Finally, I offer a comparative approach of the weaknesses and strengths of these assessment tools, comparing previous findings in research literature on PBL assessment with my observations as facilitator and evaluator of the learning outcomes emerging out of the case study, and the perception of participating students, which was collected through questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews with the participants. The main findings of the study point in two directions: on the one hand, students show positive attitudes towards the PBL assessment approach, as compared to more traditional assessment instruments. With regards to learning outcomes, data shows that this approach tends to homogenize results in the higher ranks of the marking scale, which coincides with students' perception as they express that it pushes them to strive to reach for their highest potential during the projects development.

#### **Keywords:**

Assessment; competences; Primary education; project-based learning.

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## **Collaborative Writing and Written Language: Depth of Processing and Effects on Accuracy.**

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Both collaborative writing (CW) and processing of written corrective feedback (WCF) are considered advantageous for the understanding and processing of errors (e.g., Nicolas Conesa et al., 2019), as well as the retention of forms and subsequent language development (e.g., Chen, 2019; Leow et al., 2022). How students engage with the feedback they receive, the level in which it is processed, seems to impact its effect (Cerezo et al., 2019). To date, there is scarce research examining the combined benefits of CW and WCF processing via written languaging (WL) and its prolonged benefits among non-adult populations.

To this end, the present study investigates the effect of CW and the processing of WCF by exploring the accuracy rates of 3 texts (pre, rewritten and delayed texts) and the written languaging episodes (WLE) generated by 96 14 year-old secondary EFL learners under 6 conditions: (1) written and errors processed individually; (2) written and errors processed collaboratively; (3) written individually and errors processed collaboratively; (4) written collaboratively and errors processed individually; and two control groups who simply wrote the texts (5) individually and (6) collaboratively. Students' texts were analysed for correction rates (errors and errors per word) and evidence of learning -(un)successful, uncorrected or deleted errors. WLEs generated while processing the pre-test errors were categorized for depth of processing (DoP).

Results revealed accuracy differences and correction rate differences among texts and conditions favouring individual conditions. It was also the individual writing groups that engaged in higher levels of processing (DoP), while pairs demonstrated lower levels of processing characterized by fewer explanations and a diminished understanding of the provided corrections. The analysis suggested a correlation between the participants' DoP of WCF and the level of linguistic accuracy observed in the rewritten texts.

### **Keywords**

Individual and collaborative writing; WCF processing; written languaging.

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## The Impact of Shared Reading Experiences on Undergraduates' Learning Development in EFL contexts

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Using literary texts in the foreign language classroom is a widely recognised pedagogical practice. However, students generally experience reading as an out-of-class individual activity, often followed by written comprehension activities. These pedagogical practices may hinder a more comprehensive development of communication skills while also undermining the promotion of learners' critical thinking. It is thus necessary to find out how to better use literary texts in the classroom, promoting a more integrated approach to learning, and facilitating students' development of skills beyond language development.

In the present contribution, we explore the impact of shared reading of literary texts in students' learning development. This piece of research belongs to an innovative educational project, officially recognised by the University of Alcalá. The project is based on dialogic learning (Flecha, 1997, 2015), and follows previous research in the area (de Miguel-Barcala and Laorden-Gutiérrez 2021). The pedagogical experience was carried out with two groups of 1<sup>st</sup> year students (N=41) completing the subject 'English I' as part of their Degree in Modern Languages and Translation (Universidad de Alcalá, Madrid, Spain). The participants shared the reading of a novel written in English in a weekly meeting along 13 weeks. Some principles of dialogic talks were adapted to the context of FL, following previous research recommendations (Fernández-Fernández 2020, 2021). The students explored the literary texts from both private and public spheres, promoting an aesthetic stance to reading (Rosenblatt 2005). The classroom environment was based on respectful and egalitarian dialogue which facilitated the construction of shared meanings, the development of their identity as readers, and the promotion of their intercultural competence.

The impact of these dialogic talks was measured considering three areas related to students' learning development: EFL communicative abilities, motivation and increase of their reading habit, and critical thinking development. To this end, a mixed-method approach consisting of five data-gathering tools administered at different stages of the process: a questionnaire based on Jones and Carter (2012) that served as a pre- and post- test, students' marks in activities included in the subject, students' videoblogs on the shared reading they had experienced, reports of focus-group meetings and teachers' observation diaries. The information gathered was analysed using SPSS and NVivo statistical software. Results indicate that sharing reading had a positive impact in the three areas analysed. Upon the request of a group students, a book club was created, with gatherings held out of the classroom timetable.

### Keywords

Shared reading; Higher Education; EFL; dialogic talks; empirical study.

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## **Young Bilingual EFL Learners' Attention to English Vocabulary in a Collaborative Task**

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Since collaborative tasks have been put forward as an interesting means of language learning, most research has focused on analysing students' production of Language-Related Episodes (LREs), where learners pay explicit attention to the linguistic code they are using (Swain and Lapkin 1998). However, most studies have mainly examined grammatical LREs, leaving the relationship between interaction and vocabulary development thanks to lexical LREs under researched. Of paramount importance is the exploration of lexical LREs produced by bilingual and multilingual learners since they have been argued to have a higher degree of metalinguistic awareness (Jessner 1999). This is particularly needed in a population of young learners, where research is still scarce (García Mayo 2018; Murphy & Evangelou 2016).

Additionally, task modality needs to be considered since previous studies have found significant differences in students' attention to form between oral and oral+written tasks, although such studies have usually employed different tasks or different phases for the oral and written modes (Martínez-Adrián and Gallardo-del-Puerto 2021; Niu 2009).

Thus, this paper attempts to fill the gaps identified in previous literature by analysing the production of 40 Spanish/Basque learners of English from Grades 4 and 6 in Primary Education after completing either an oral or a written storytelling task in pairs. To do so, they were given the same 6 wordless prompts and the same instructions, effectively controlling for the nature of the task and overcoming the limitations of previous research. After transcribing students' interaction, lexical LREs were identified, counted and classified in terms of type and resolution, and results were quantitatively compared between the oral and the written groups in each grade to check for any effect of task modality.

Results show that both groups in Grade 4 produced a similar amount of lexical LREs, although they differed when looking at the type of LREs produced. The oral group produced more LREs searching for new words than the written group, whereas participants in the written group seemed to divide their attention between meaning and form since they produced fewer LREs searching for new words but more LREs focused on pronunciation and spelling than the oral group. In terms of resolution, the oral group left more LREs unresolved. In contrast to Grade 4, the written group in Grade 6 produced significantly more lexical LREs than its oral counterpart. In particular, this group produced significantly more LREs searching for new words in addition to more LREs about pronunciation and spelling. Moreover, the written group also achieved significantly higher rates of correct resolution. In conclusion, a change in the modality of the task seems to have some significant effects on the production of lexical LREs as well as a differing impact in Grades 4 and 6, which has important implications as regards the use of oral and written collaborative tasks for vocabulary learning with young learners at different maturational points.

### **Keywords:**

Task modality; lexical language-related episode (LRE); young learners; collaborative task; vocabulary.

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### **Effects of Exposure to English Online on the L2 English Proficiency Level of Spanish University Students**

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With the advent of globalization and the spread of technological advancement, there has emerged a new context for L2 learning, online informal learning of English (OILE). OILE has been defined as unstructured and generally non-intentional learning “resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure” (Stevens, 2010, 12). In fact, in the last decade, OILE has attracted considerable interest from EFL researchers. The different approaches to the object of study have brought about different terminologies depending on the focus: (i) the activity’s degree of formality (as in ‘OILE’ (Sockett 2013); ‘informal digital learning of English’ (Lee 2019)); (ii) the setting for L2 learning (‘extramural English’ (Sundqvist 2009); ‘out-of-class learning’ (Benson 2001); ‘language learning beyond the classroom’ (Benson and Reindeers 2011)); or (iii) the purpose (i.e. ‘incidental language learning’ (Kuppens 2010)). Among the issues being investigated, most studies have explored individual and group differences regarding the frequency of exposure to different extramural activities (Cole 2015; Olsson 2011; Svndquist 2011). Furthermore, substantial evidence has been provided of the existence of positive correlations between the frequency of exposure and L2 proficiency (Kuppens 2007; Olsson 2011; Sundqvist 2009).

The main objective of this study, therefore, is to investigate the exposure to English that university students have outside the classroom and to explore potential differences by gender and university degree and the existence of possible correlations between exposure and L2 proficiency. For this purpose, 45 students at the University of Santiago de Compostela from 3 different degrees (i.e. ‘Teacher Training’ (TT); ‘English language and literature’ (ELL); ‘other (non-English) languages and literatures’ (OLL)) answered a questionnaire indicating the amount of time they spent doing different online activities in English. Furthermore, the Oxford Placement Test was used as a measure of their proficiency level in L2 English.

The preliminary results indicate that the most popular activity was ‘Listening to music in English’, followed by ‘Watching films/videos/series/tv in English’ (with English or no subtitles as the most frequent options), and ‘Reading books/comic books/webpages/blogs/songs lyrics in English’, while the least frequent activity was ‘Playing videogames’. Across university degree programmes, the ANOVA test reveals the existence of statistically significant differences between ELL and OLL for the activity ‘Watching films/videos/series/tv in English’ ( $F=4.397$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p=.017$ ), and between OLL and TT for ‘Reading in English’ ( $F=3.070$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p=.05$ ). As for differences across genders, females were reported to engage significantly more frequently than males in ‘Watching films with English subtitles’ ( $t=2.412$ ;  $p=.019$ ) and ‘Doing other activities in

English (chat/email/Twitter/Facebook, Whatsapp, etc)' ( $t=2.201$ ;  $p=.032$ ), which confirms results obtained in previous studies (Muñoz 2020). Finally, the Pearson correlation was carried out in order to explore possible relationships between the proficiency level and the frequency with which the subjects engaged in the different activities in English outside the classroom, but no statistically significant results were obtained in this case.

### **Keywords:**

ICT; L2 English; online informal learning; proficiency.

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### **Language practices and beliefs in EMI: Who is afraid of teaching English?**

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Reticence to dealing with language in EMI classes is a widespread attitude among content lecturers, particularly in Spanish higher education (Aguilar, 2017). Nevertheless, in non-English speaking contexts, the implementation of EMI programmes is also driven by the consideration that this type of instruction will improve students' foreign language competence, along the line of integrated approaches to content and language learning such as CLIL (Moncada-Comas and Block, 2019). Moreover, empirical findings indicate that language-aware EMI leads to richer and deeper learning experiences for the students (Morell, 2007). Therefore, EMI lecturers need to navigate a series of language-related tensions between self (i.e., classroom practices and beliefs) and other (i.e., institutional and student expectations), which shape their disciplinary identity (Block, 2021). This paper aims to explore the role of language in EMI through the prism of

classroom practices, lecturer and student beliefs about English (teaching and learning) in a 4th year Strategic Marketing subject taught at the Tourism Faculty of a Catalan University.

Data from three sources was collected over the span of one semester and then triangulated: 1) interviews with the EMI lecturer at the beginning and at the end of the subject, 2) systematic classroom observations, and 3) focus groups with the EMI students. Class sessions were scrutinised for language-related episodes (LREs), namely instances when the participants talk about the language they are producing, question their language use or correct themselves or others (Basturkmen and Shackleford, 2015). The interviews and the focus groups were analysed within an interpretive framework using the constant comparison method of grounded theory developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

Findings point to significant differences between reported and actual lecturer practices in the classroom with regard to the focus on language as well as contradictory peripheral vs. core beliefs (Phipps and Borg, 2009) about how language should be approached in EMI, rooted in the lecturer's disciplinary identity but also their previous experience as an English teacher. Students' perceptions of the role of language in EMI are aligned, to a certain extent, with the lecturer's core beliefs and pedagogical intentions as to the importance of interaction, significant gains in terminology and productive skills, and the avoidance of codeswitching during the classes. We discuss the relevance of our findings for EMI research and their pedagogical implications for EMI teacher training in English as a foreign language contexts.

#### **Keywords:**

EMI; disciplinary identity; lecturer beliefs; student beliefs; EFL.

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#### **Postmemory and the legacy of trauma in Elizabeth Rosner's poetry and memoir**

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Elizabeth Rosner is an American essayist, poet and novelist, born in New York to Holocaust survivors of German and Polish origin. As a member of the second generation, Rosner's literary production fuses her imagination with the silences and shattered stories that shaped her sense of self growing up in the aftermath of the Holocaust, delving into its ongoing reverberations and into the nature of an inherited, unescapable grief that is impossible to embrace. In this way, she engages in the work of postmemory, which epitomizes the relation that children of Holocaust survivors bear to the Shoah, an event that, albeit merely accessed through fragmented narratives

and suggestive images, becomes so deeply and affectively transmitted that it creates memories in their own right.

Indeed, extended research has shown that the Holocaust trauma is passed-on to the second generation, who overidentifies with their post-traumatic parents, assuming their psychological burdens and silent suffering in a way that echoes throughout their lives. Postmemorial authors, like Rosner, turn to aesthetic language to face the impossibility of comprehending their parents' past, dwelling on the sense of absence and incompleteness of an unfinished story that is somehow vicariously reexperienced by them. Postmemory is, thus, a valid framework to interpret Rosner's work

Since Rosner has significantly begun to move away from fiction only in recent years, this paper explores her latest and first non-fiction works: *Gravity*, a celebrated poetry collection, and *Survivor Café*, a memoir. In these books, for the first time, the author-persona confides a sustained, intimate exploration of her own identity as a member of the second generation, attempting to work through an event that, beyond her parents' silences, defies narrative reconstruction and exceeds understanding itself. Rosner acknowledges these boundaries and leaves room for the inaccessible and illegible, reflecting the quality of unreadability inherent to all Holocaust literature—i.e., the void left by that which resist being accessed, interpreted or deciphered. Yet, at the same time, she takes great pains to evoke and enact the very same childhood and youth memories in *Gravity* and *Survivor Café*, symbiotically resorting thus to both the expressive compulsion of poetic engagement and the temperance of reflective prose so as to explore the ways in which, notwithstanding this intrinsic unreadability, she is able to come to terms with her un-lived past and belated memory. By revisiting and rewriting her life in this way, Rosner eventually reaches a form of posttraumatic growth only attainable through literature.

#### **Keywords:**

Poetry; memoir; trauma; Holocaust; Elizabeth Rosner.

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### **Utopian Landscapes in Becky Chambers' Wayfarers Tetralogy**

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In the last decade, American author Becky Chambers has established herself as both a critically acclaimed writer and a fan-favorite, with her science fiction work being awarded several Hugos and being nominated for other renowned prizes such as the BSFA, Locus and Women's Prize for Fiction awards. Her novels are generally characterized by a hopeful and lighthearted tone, and they tend to (re)imagine and embody better, brighter futures while centering subjectivities that have not always been included in the utopian tradition or that have been casted as undesirable when narrating alternative futures (see Collier and Prince's 2023 work for an analysis on queer representation in Chambers work, and Roldán Romero's 2022 work on posthumanism in the context of Chambers' second novel). My aim is to examine Chambers' alternative worlds as sites of hope, both physical and metaphorical, and to explore how Chambers hopeful speculation serves as a strategy of social resistance and even as a counternarrative for those that have historically been "denied access to the future by dominant imaginaries" or "marked as futureless" (Lothian



2019, 2) —that is, women, queer people and racialized communities, among other social groups. To do so, I will be focusing on Chambers' Wayfarers tetralogy, which is comprised of four different novels set in the same universe—that is, *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* (2015); *A Closed and Common Orbit* (2016); *Record of a Spaceborn Few* (2018); and *The Galaxy, and the Ground Within* (2021),—while arguing that the series use of 'critical hope' (West 2008) to narrate kinder and more inclusive worlds is directly tied to its science fictional nature and its use of science fiction tropes such as space travel, artificial intelligence, cloning or the Earth's collapse. By including these speculative elements, Chambers is able to draw from the transformative and political potential of science fiction to create utopian landscapes that go beyond mere optimism in its commitment to creating a future for all.

**Keywords:**

Hope; science fiction; American literature; Becky Chambers.

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**Collective Pessimism and the Weirding of Trumpism: A Selection from Kurt Fawver's *We Are Happy, We Are Doomed* (2021)**

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Contemporary weird fiction remains a largely unexplored literary phenomenon and an unconventional medium to express personal, philosophical, and/or cultural preoccupations. A specific branch of modern weird fiction draws on the bleak worldview and darkly surreal fiction of American cult writer Thomas Ligotti. While this author's oeuvre is invariably associated with the tradition of philosophical pessimism, budding writers in America are expanding upon his ideas and leading weird/horror fiction toward novel territory. The recent socio-political chaos provoked by Donald Trump's presidency, furthered by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, provides a particularly gloomy yet appropriate context for this mode of fiction to flourish, especially for those individuals unwilling to adhere to the former president's controversial principles. In light of this situation, dissenters of the government had to preserve cohesion in an attempt to combat the escalation of unwarranted hatred and irrationality prevailing in the country at the hands of Trump and his staunchest supporters, thereby causing a pronounced division between "we" and "they". Horror author Kurt Fawver, well aware of the circumstances leading to such strife, frequently resorts to the rare first-person plural voice in his short story collection *We Are Happy, We Are Doomed* (2021). An analysis of a selection of two stories which significantly utilize this sustained collective voice evinces the fierce ideological confrontation of the American population during Trump's mandate, at once emphasizing the importance of togetherness and unity during this state of affairs. This paper therefore aims to approach these texts from an interdisciplinary perspective, chiefly drawing on recent narratological research concerning "we-narratives", American studies—particularly those studies addressing the characteristics and consequences of Trumpism—and philosophical pessimism. Not only will Fawver's (we)ird stories be examined as testimony of a predominating sense of collective pessimism in American society, even amongst Trump's initial supporters, but also they will be regarded as potent political commentary.

Additionally, this results in the reconciliation of weird fiction with serious contemporary issues and suggests the importance of this overlooked mode of fiction as a reflection of the world when reality, due to social and political upheaval, becomes weird itself.

**Keywords:**

Weird fiction; “we” narratives; pessimism; Trumpism.

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**Coleridge and Wordsworth in Jeffrey’s Review of Hemans’ Poetry**

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Francis Jeffrey concludes his 1829 critique of Felicia Hemans’ *Records of Woman* and *The Forest Sanctuary* in the *Edinburgh Review* proclaiming the author as “the most touching and accomplished writer of occasional verses that our literature has yet to boast of” and declaring the decadence of the great Romantic poets—Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Crabbe, Scott, Byron and Moore (Jeffrey 1829, 47). Since the foundation of the *Edinburgh Review*, Jeffrey had Wordsworth as a recurrent target of his acrimonious lampoons. Although he was generally more lenient towards Coleridge, the years surrounding the composition of *Biographia Literaria* coincided with an unusual flow of negative reviews in the Scottish leading magazine. In 1816, the *Edinburgh* published an anonymous derogatory review of the volume containing “Christabel,” “Kubla Khan” and “The Pains of Sleep”. The critique is nowadays attributed to Hazlitt, with revisions by Jeffrey (Wu 2002, 176). Hazlitt also published his own harsh review of Coleridge’s—yet unpublished—*Lay Sermons*. Coleridge replied in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), where he dedicated two chapters to attack Jeffrey’s criticism in the magazine, making him rather than Wordsworth, as Christie (2009) has articulately argued, the main target of the whole book. Jeffrey answered by inserting a lengthy note within Hazlitt’s scathing review of *Biographia Literaria*, which appeared immediately in the *Edinburgh*. In 1822 Wordsworth had yet to see his *Tour of the Continent* harshly criticised by Jeffrey. Scholars have not gone beyond this point in this already long story of confrontations and replies (Erdman and Zall 1975; Christie 2009a, 2009b; Wu 2002). In this paper I argue that Jeffrey wrote a new chapter of the story through his review of Hemans’ collection. Scholars have only vaguely noted some echoes of Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* and Wordsworth’s Preface to *Lyrical* in it *Ballads* (Mack et al 1993, 226; Wolfson 2000, 555), but nobody has gone into detail. Significantly, Coleridge had used the same procedure in *Biographia Literaria*, echoing Jeffrey’s criticism of Wordsworth, at times, in Christie’s words, to the point of parody (2009, 121). In his critique of Hemans, Jeffrey is even more conspicuously parodic, reducing, on the one hand, Coleridge’s abstruse poetics to intelligibility and common

sense, and on the other, replacing Wordsworth with Hemans at the centre of Romantic poetry. In fact, after twenty-seven years in his office, this was Jeffrey's last review as editor of the *Edinburgh*, which he also included in the final compilation of his articles, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review* (1844), where it significantly occupies the last concluding position of the section of articles on poetry. By comparing the interplay of echoes and replies in Coleridge's criticism of Wordsworth and Jeffrey's criticism of Hemans, I contend that this critical piece can be interpreted as Jeffrey's literary testament, where the leading Scottish critic of the time used Hemans to debase Wordsworth's Romanticism and tried to establish the superiority of his eighteenth-century Scottish associationist and common-sense critical principles over Coleridge's Romantic, Germanised and elitist ones.

**Keywords:**

Francis Jeffrey; Felicia Hemans; Samuel Taylor Coleridge; William Wordsworth; *Edinburgh Review*; Romanticism.

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**Mesmerists, fortune-telling and spectacle in (neo-) Victorian literature**

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The nineteenth century was a time of uncertainty and change for women. From the first organised movements at the beginning of the century, to the associationism and political activism that characterised the second half of the century, one constant feature appeared recurrently in the different phases of the development of the "woman question": equal access to education and knowledge. In this context and participating in the dissemination of the different alternative currents of access to knowledge that proliferated throughout the century through spectacle, the figure of the mesmerist and the fortune teller proliferated in nineteenth-century entertainment culture.

Drawing on the studies of Assael (2005) and Winter (1998) on the development of the Victorian circus and the culture of mesmerism, in this paper we map the appropriation of alternative forms of knowledge by women entrepreneurs and actresses throughout the nineteenth century and its aftermath in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In order to do so, first we scrutinize the presence of the mesmerizer and the fortune-teller in circus performances of the Victorian period.

We will approach these figures of popular entertainment through various reworkings of the Cassandra myth in different comic and circus recreations of the siege of Troy. Mapping figure of the fortune-teller and the mesmerizer in specific sites of entertainment such as Astley's Amphitheatre and street fairs will allow us to establish the tropes which are re-oriented and re-framed –following Mieke Bal's terminology– in neo-Victorian narratives of spectacle (Pettersson 2013).

Then, we will examine the role played by mesmerism in the Victorian culture through a neo-Victorian novel, Barbara Ewing's *The Mesmerist* (2007), which challenges some preconceptions about mesmerism and gender dynamics. The Victorian London theatre is the backdrop of this neo-Victorian novel, that clearly deserves more critical attention. In it, an ageing actress, considered too old for acting roles, Miss Cordelia Preston, begins a new business as a mesmerizer. A follow-up novel, *The Circus of Ghosts* (2011), was published some years later, which also addresses the stage and acting characters, but on the other side of the Atlantic.

#### **Keywords:**

Mesmerizer; Fortune-teller; Cassandra; Circus; neo-Victorian fiction.

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### **The Depiction of the Spanish Civil War in British Young Adult Fiction: Lydia Syson's *A World between Us***

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In recent decades, the Spanish Civil War has emerged as a popular backdrop in British historical novels. Renowned authors such as Patrick McGrath, Colm Tóibín, Lindsay Ashford, Jack Ludlow, and C. J. Sansom have drawn inspiration from Spain and its 1930s civil war to craft their plots and characters. While detective novels, romantic stories, and biographical narratives dominate this historical subgenre, some of these stories target young readers. It is intriguing that the cruelty and horror of a civil war have become a source of inspiration for novels aimed at a teenage audience, which may be more inclined towards adventures or mysteries to solve. One such novel for young readers is James Watson's *The Freedom Tree* (1986), recounting the exploits of a young man who, despite his youth, manages to travel to Spain and join the frontlines. Similarly, Michael Morpurgo's *Toro! Toro!* (2001) presents the adventures of a boy and a bull against the backdrop of the Spanish war. In Lydia Syson's *A World between Us* (2012), a 17-year-old trainee nurse embarks on a journey to Spain in 1936 as a medical volunteer, following a young man who had enlisted in the International Brigades.

Considering the didactic nature and moral purpose of young adult fiction, the inclusion of war depictions in such texts has sparked lively debates (Sarland 2005, 31), since these narratives often feature disturbing images of violence and traumatic descriptions of human cruelty. Nonetheless, American children's writer Jenniffer Armstrong argues for the benefits of introducing accurate portrayals of war to young readers, suggesting that war stories offer them "the chance to think of what is just and unjust, to develop the capacity for philosophic inquiring doubt" (2002, 31). It appears that the horrors of warfare are no longer taboo in contemporary British literature for

teenagers, although, as Peter Hunt suggests, their treatment must be carefully considered, raising the following questions: “What should we give (or not give) our child-readers, how should we give it to them; what will they or can they understand; and why do we or should we write about such thing?” (2005, 14).

This paper aims to provide an in-depth analysis of Lydia Syson’s *A World between Us* in order to address Hunt’s four questions regarding the depiction of war in young adult literature. The study reveals that this novel, along with other readings for young readers, encompasses the elements outlined by Juan Cervera in his article “La literatura juvenil a debate”: adventures, risks, challenges, encounters with evil, exploration, mystery, and romance (1995: 13). However, through meticulous research on the Spanish Civil War, Syson also provides highly realistic and accurate descriptions of war scenes, including intricate details of gunfire, casualties, wounds, and the profound fears and emotions experienced by soldiers. Written from a clear ideological standpoint, the novel can be interpreted as a tribute to the foreign volunteers who came “to save democracy in Spain”, as expressed by the author in a historical afterword (2012, 263).

### **Keywords:**

Lydia Syson; Spanish Civil War; young adult literature; historical representation.

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### **The Transcultural and Translingual in Ken Bruen’s Crime Fiction**

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As early as 1999, Wolfgang Iser noted that contemporary writers are shaped not by a single homeland but rather “by differing reference countries”. To this may be added, and stressed, that such “reference countries” consist not only of solely physical geographical entities but also constructs of the mind, imagined spaces in which “differing cultural interests” converge in what can be seen as a transcultural process which permeates and penetrates all fictional worlds. Irish crime writing has – arguably since its first tender steps in the mid seventeenth century – reflected the pained and difficult relationship which has historically existed between the Irish writer, his country and his art. Throughout the history of the Irish crime novel or story, transcultural characteristics have been a norm, and the hybridity of the contemporary work of Irish crime fiction has as much to do with the history and development of the genre on the island of Ireland as with the interchange of ideas, concepts and sub-genres with international models. Recent attempts to breach the larger international markets have seen a number of Irish writers using hybrid fictional models – John Connolly’s successful blending of the classic P.I. novel with neo-Gothic elements is a good case in point – but, and not always on a positive level, has also seen a growing internationalization of Irish crime writing, where even the cover art copies American prototypes.

This paper will examine a number of aspects of transculturality as seen in Irish crime writing, before taking as an example the works of Galway-born Ken Bruen, whose works demonstrate

many of the aspects of the transcultural as he fulfils the five central concepts attributed to this by Gilsean Nordin et al, that is “migration, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and translanguaging” (xii). By monitoring the three main phases of his narrative – London, Galway and the USA – we will argue that Bruen, apart from being a great crime writer, a worthy example of how the transcultural has developed within Irish letters over the past thirty years.

**Keywords:**

Irish Crime Fiction; transcultural, Ken Bruen.

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**Reframing Historical Agency During the Third Reich in Rachel Seiffert’s “Helmut”**

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As we move further away from the events of the Holocaust, contemporary memory scholars become more and more interested in finding new directions and forms to study the past. One of the main reasons for this shift is that the twenty-first century is witnessing the death of the last Holocaust survivors and with it the “end of the era of testimony” (Morag 2018, 14). Another explanation is the pervasive concern of Holocaust Studies about the possibility that the large number of narratives revolving around the experiences of victims will fossilise into yet another master narrative (Berberich 2019, 4). The figure of the perpetrator and, more recently, that of individuals who inhabit the different shades of grey existing between victims and perpetrators, have garnered attention as complementary lenses through which to understand the legacies of historical atrocities.

Drawing on the premise that literature is a powerful platform to delve into the complexities of the past, this paper addresses Rachel Seiffert’s reframing of historical agency in her debut work, *The Dark Room* (2001). The book is a tripartite novel that walks readers through the lives of three unrelated ordinary non-Jewish Germans belonging to different generations who become willingly and unwillingly entangled in Nazi crimes. Among them, I will focus on the first vignette, “Helmut”, which recounts the story of its homonymous protagonist, a boy who is born with a congenital malformation in 1921. Were it not for this physical condition that limits him to being a mere bystander, Helmut would be an enthusiastic soldier fighting in the *Wehrmacht* during the Second World War. Instead, he becomes an ardent follower of Hitler’s ideas and a skilled photographer, capturing with his camera the momentous changes taking place in Berlin. Helmut

possesses the photographer's innate observational engagement with reality but his allegiance to Nazism and his concern with photographic technique render him emotionally detached from what is happening around him. In light of this, this paper proposes a narratological analysis, informed by relevant theories within memory studies and perpetrator studies, of the ways in which Seiffert navigates the challenges inherent in portraying a morally and ethically questionable protagonist like Helmut. The author resorts to an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator with internal focalisation, giving rise to a double-voiced narrative that is animated by the tension between, on the one hand, the narrator's external, diachronic, hence more expansive, perspective and, on the other, Helmut's internal, experiential, hence more limited, perspective. The conflictive interaction between the two discourses problematises reader identification with Helmut. Yet, the narrator's impersonal and neutral tone forces readers to experience the narrative in paradoxical and conflicted ways and to rely on their own moral and ethical values to grasp its final meaning. The final aim of my analysis is to demonstrate that "Helmut" provides a granular look at historical agency during the years of the Third Reich that not only counters the blind spots of our current identificatory wound culture but also engages readers in a critical reflection on the Third Reich and the Holocaust.

**Keywords:**

Bystanding; memory; narrative ethics; narratology; the Third Reich.

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**Anti-Catholic literature. Joseph Blanco White as "pretext" of authenticity in two escaped nun narratives**

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The anti-Catholicism of Joseph Blanco White's best known works published in his Anglican period (1812-1835) was one of the most important reasons for his popularity in Britain and America. His criticism of the excesses of the Inquisition, of the unnaturalness of celibacy and of deceitful and cruel conventual life found a favourable echo in the protestant Anglican and Calvinist literature of the time. The Anglo-Spanish heterodox always authenticated his anti-Catholic claims with his familiar and personal experience as a priest in Spain. The account of the tragic fate of his two sisters, who died young after having professed as nuns, made a deep impression on his readers.

Some Anglican protestant works used his testimony as proof of the evils of Catholic confession, exerted by venal priests, as a means of both seduction and abuse of nuns submitted to the harsh religious discipline of convent life. On the whole, his comments were considered insightful and psychologically realistic by these anti-Romanist authors. His critical views were virulently contested by the pro-Catholic circles during his lifetime. After his death, a much more subtle and

objective response was produced by the newly converted to Catholicism John Henry Newman (1851). Blanco's testimony is worthy of attention within the frame of contemporary research on confessional literature from the perspectives of discourse analysis, Lacanian psychoanalysis and gender (Bernstein 2000, Hoeveler 2014, Peschier 2020).

However, his writings were not only used for theological debate. His denunciation of the mechanisms of mental control in confession, based on authority, seduction and fear, seemed to resemble, superficially at least, the scheme of religious and emotional deceit to attract young women to conventual life present in many popular anti-catholic works of Calvinist orientation of the time, being the "escaped nun narrative" subgenre, originated in Antebellum America, the most significant example (Griffin 2004, Yacovazzi 2018, Hirrell 2021). These narratives claimed to be real stories. However, it seems clear nowadays that they were fictional, sensationalist accounts aiming at popular success. As part of their legitimation strategy, they used to incorporate footnotes and appendices to support their claims to veracity. A search on representative titles of this subgenre shows that Blanco White was taken as "pretext" (Widdowson 2004) to support their authenticity in two novels from 1836 and 1855.

This paper interrogates the reasons for taking the Sevillian infidel priest as reference in these two popular works in order to determine whether this move was religiously and psychologically justified, as in the protestant anti-Romanist treatises, or whether it was simply a case of opportunistic appropriation of his name for commercial reasons. In any case, the Anglo-Spanish heterodox's critical position on this topic seems to depart in motivation, sensitivity and scope from the main bulk of the popular anti-Catholic literature on convent life of the time. In this respect, as in other aspects of his production, Blanco White seems to be a separate case, often subjected to unfair manipulation, which makes his contribution more interesting and worthy of study.

#### **Keywords:**

Joseph Blanco White; anti-Catholic literature; confessional; escaped nun narrative; pretext.

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#### **Anglo-Saxonism and Female Agency in Romantic Drama: Ann Yearsley's *Earl Goodwin***

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This paper explores Ann Yearsley's historical play *Earl Goodwin*, first staged in 1789, and its utilization of Anglo-Saxon political myth. The tragedy presents a remarkable case study of popular Romantic medievalism in the genre of drama, as it is authored by a female member of the



laboring class and female characters play central roles in the story as well. Facing both gender and class-based discrimination Yearsley, a former milkwoman turned poet, embarked on writing her first play as the reimagining of a significant episode from the glorified Anglo-Saxon national past. With this history, she engages in the ongoing debate concerning the definition of British national identity and the legitimacy of key political institutions such as monarchy, parliament, and the Church of England.

The play addresses the crisis between King Edward the Confessor and his in-laws, Earl Godwin of Wessex's family, in the mid-10th century, a rebellion whose weighty effects would ultimately lead to the collapse of the Anglo-Saxon rule and the Norman Conquest of 1066. The 18th c. Whiggish take on the Norman Yoke myth and ancient constitutionalism, claiming the continuity of English political freedom since Anglo-Saxon times, provides Yearsley with the necessary ideological support for her reformist stance. The play defends the need to prevent both royal tyranny and the abuse of power by an influential elite but, at the same time, it is witness to the country's fear of radicalization among the lower classes since the political and social turmoil provoked by the American Independence process and the recent French Revolution were disturbing George III's government, greatly affecting Britain's imperial self-image. In response to the tense national situation, *Earl Goodwin* promotes resilience, temperance, and the avoidance of violence as patriotic virtues, features which are best embodied by the characters Queen Emma and Queen Editha. As the studies by Pearson and Newey (2000), Pietropoli (2010), Foss (2018), and Wood (2020) argue, the Romantic literary appropriation of the national past by female playwrights consistently resonates with contemporary concerns about women's political agency and their actual participation in the (re)production of history. My contention is that, attentive to the political and aesthetic sensibilities of her popular audience, Yearsley's rewriting of the medieval sources for the stage needed to adapt their male-centered narrative to the conventions of Romantic popular drama. While the medieval texts primarily focus on the influential Anglo-Saxon men who "made history" --in all senses of the term— *Earl Goodwin* places both queens at the center of the action, combining the motifs of the domestic tragedy and its victimized females with those of the historical tragedy, whose plot typically revolves around the power struggle among men. By connecting familial tragedy and gender issues with the gravest matters of state, personal loyalties and civil chaos, Yearsley claimed visibility for female historical agency.

**Keywords:**

Romantic drama; 18<sup>th</sup> c. Medievalism; Anglo-Saxonism; Ann Yearsley; *Earl Goodwin*.

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**The Healing Effect of Brexit Fiction: Jonathan Coe's *Bournville* as a Case Study**

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The United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union has had an undeniably overall impact on art and literature. In the particular case of British fiction, it immediately acted as a driving force triggering a new sub-genre known as BrexLit (Shaw 2018). The novels included in this category initially represented the different reactions to the 2016 EU Referendum results in an astonished and divided country. Those early plots unfolded a series of deep confrontations between families, couples or friends derived from their opposing viewpoints on the rationale for Brexit and its consequences. Characters of diverse backgrounds and generations struggled to come to terms with their new situation and showed their concern with topics such as politics, migration, race and history. Although the setting of most of these stories is the United Kingdom, their scope is actually worldwide, as they obviously involve not only the European Union, but also the Commonwealth, and the United States. Brexit has revealed itself then as a new ethical turning point which many authors such as Ali Smith, Ian McEwan and Jonathan Coe have responded to by intentionally including the issue in several of their works. They act as critical observers of the pre and post Brexit climate, which they fictionalise by portraying an emotionally wounded, deceived and sceptical population. Their recent plotlines are mostly oriented to encourage their characters, and readers, to understand the machinery of lies and manipulation they have unwarily been targeted into. The validity of the master narratives (Meretoja 2018) of Brexit such as supremacy, imperialism and power is largely questioned. Jonathan Coe bears witness to this approach and portrays a still divided and resented country in *Bournville* (2022). Most of his reviewers mainly refer to it as a state-of-the-nation novel, or emphasise the autobiographical traces in its plot. In my view, its most outstanding feature is that it presents us with various counter-narratives to pride, prejudice, oppression and rivalry. By means of family ties and love bonds, his characters try hard to reconceptualise outmoded clichés of separation and build new ways and strategies of understanding. Some of his protagonists seem to heal from the wounds of Brexit by means of their willingness to learn how to cope with the unbridgeable. I aim at showing how the author's ethical invitation (Marshall 2011) and his narrative commitment may as well have the same effect on his readership.

**Keywords:**

*Bournville*; BrexLit; Ethical Criticism; Jonathan Coe; Narratology.

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**Millennial Vulnerabilities and the Paradox of Interconnectedness: A Transmodern Reading of Sally Rooney's *Normal People* (2019)**

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*Normal People* (2019), Sally Rooney's second novel, works as an accurate portrayal of a new generation of Irish writers who explores how we perceive the globalised world we live in and how we interact with one another. In this paper I wish to demonstrate that Rooney's novel triggers many questions in relation to our present-day world. In so doing, it responds to a new cultural paradigm called Transmodernity, since according to Irena Ateljevic, "humanity needs (and is actually going through) a major global mind change and paradigm shift" (201), a paradigm evolving in parallel with the transformations of contemporary society. The plot focuses on the

intimate relationship between the two protagonists, Marianne and Connell, both deeply marked by their Irish origins and background. However, non-Irish readers may easily identify with the characters. As Rosa María Rodríguez Magda explains, “globalization introduces us to the primacy of simultaneity [...] where the global and the local coexist, shaping the ‘glocal’ (in R. Robertson’s accurate expression), offering a panorama which is not post or multi but transcultural” (n.p.). Thus, although the novel presents the particular stories of two individuals, their stories take place in a global, transnational and transcultural context. The text delves into the vulnerabilities and frustrations of young, urban people, something that could be addressed as “millennial vulnerabilities.” This matches the notion of “Transmodernity” as, in Rodríguez Magda’s words, this new paradigm is based on “the search for a new model that will explain the changes that operate in our present” (n.p.). Besides, as Ateljevic explains, in this transmodern era “we are seeking to examine not just the world as it is, but to reflect on the world as we make it” (215), a task Rooney is fulfilling by taking her readers into this millennial world where she constantly questions our contemporary uncertainties. Besides, the issue of communication—or the lack of it—and the idea of interconnectedness are thoroughly explored in the novel, since despite living in a highly technological era that allows us to be permanently connected with anyone, the characters (specially Connell) are unable to express their feelings and communicate with one another. What is more, all these issues are further reflected at a structural level because of the disorganised and chaotic way in which the story is presented. The story line is full of temporal gaps and continuous shifts in focalization, favouring Marianne’s or Connell’s perspective and feelings depending on the episode narrated. Chronological linearity is further disrupted by continuous flashbacks, interrupting the narrative rhythm of the episode that is taking place. Significantly enough, these flashbacks provide more information, generally speaking, about what happened in a previous chapter, allowing readers to complete the general image of the plot as if they were trying to solve a narrative puzzle. Thus, by close-reading this novel from a Transmodern perspective I wish to prove that Rooney portrays today’s transnational socio-cultural paradigm, ultimately exposing an entanglement of contradictions related to the multiple subject positions we can find in our globalised world.

**Keywords:**

Glocal; Interconnectedness; Millennial; Transmodernity; Vulnerability.

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**Reclaiming Personhood and Dignity: The Role of Graphic Novels in Dementia Care**

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The use of graphic novels to portray disease is a relatively new concept that has gained attention from researchers and professionals in the field of Medical Humanities. While “literature has been used within medicine as a reflective tool that attempts to bridge the gap between knowing a disease and understanding the patient's experience of the disease,” (Greenhalgh and Hurwitz 1998) the unique format of graphic medicine permits an even broader understanding of the subjective reality of experiencing illness. Graphic pathographies, a term coined by Ian Williams, refers to comic books that address health issues, such as mental and physical illnesses, disabilities, and advanced life stages, which are written and narrated by “medical professionals, caregivers, and patients” providing “different perspectives on a range of medical conditions” (Kovan and

Soled 2023). Currently, dementia has become a significant public health concern, with patients experiencing mobility difficulties, disorientation, or dependence on others for assistance in their daily and instrumental activities as the condition progresses (Venkatesan and Das 2022). Alzheimer's disease (AD), the most common type of dementia, is among the most feared conditions after cancer and heart disease. This dread towards AD (and dementia in general) stems from dominant, popular discourses that promote a view of its patients as “hollow bodies” or “walking dead” based on a problematic representation of selfhood that associates cognition with a loss of the self. However, there is a growing body of graphic narratives on Alzheimer's disease and related dementia that criticize the prevailing negative portrayal of dementia and the need to reclaim the personhood and dignity of individuals with dementia (Venkatesan and Das 2022). In this context, graphic medicine emerges as a well-suited and valuable tool to illustrate symptoms of Alzheimer's disease that support the progressing deviation caused by AD while illustrating a more representative and visual narrative for patients with dementia. Among graphic novels that have AD (or dementia) as a core element of their narratives, I will delve into two memoirs that offer unique perspectives on the impact of the disease on individuals and their families: Dana Walrath's *Aliceheimer's Through the Looking Glass* (2013) and Sarah Leavitt's *Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother, and Me* (2010). Both narratives chronicle the authors' experiences of caring for their mothers, who have been diagnosed with AD, exploring the emotional challenges faced both by the patient and the caregiver through a very particular artwork that conveys the sense of confusion and disorientation experienced by those with AD. By providing a relatable and engaging way to learn about AD, these graphic novels can help to break down the barriers between patients, their families, and healthcare professionals.

**Keywords:**

Graphic Medicine; Graphic Pathographies; Dementia care; Alzheimer's Disease; Medical Humanities.

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**Registering the Collective Suffering of the Underdog: Embedded Trauma Narratives in Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight***

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In “The Trial of Jean Rhys”, an imaginative piece appended to her autobiography *Smile Please*, the Anglo-Caribbean writer Jean Rhys touches on how writing enabled her to rekindle her ability to feel for others, especially the unfortunate ones. This endeavour to reawaken her empathy amid her multilayered pain of alienation crystallised in the 1930s. In this decade, during which she completed three of her four modernist novels, she set her sights on using literature as a self-discovery tool that helped her make sense of her traumas. This process, as Leigh Gilmore argues in *The Limits of Autobiography* (2001), necessarily involves an interplay of factual accuracy and fiction that facilitates the representation of such an elusive phenomenon as trauma. In Rhys's writings, this transgressive blending makes it possible for the autobiographical subject's

testimony to enter into dialogue with the (hi-)stories of other human beings living under similar circumstances. Such communication channels between trauma narratives dovetail with the second thesis by Gilmore: that the trauma testimony, in challenging the adherence to the survivor's experience as it occurred, might contribute to blurring the boundary between "my" story and "our" story.

Relying on Gilmore's postulates, this paper seeks to foreground some key meeting points where the narratives of the so-called 'Rhys woman' and those of other shattered individuals criss-cross each other. A closer look is taken at the dialogue between the larger trauma narrative and these secondary characters' little stories in *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), the novel culminating Rhys's 1930s self-exploration. The analysis relies on trauma studies, and more concretely on Maria Root's notion of 'insidious trauma', to explore to what extent the autobiographical subject's ordeal is representative of that of a collective her literary mentor Ford Madox Ford named "the underdog". For this purpose, this paper firstly gives an overview of the female protagonist's structural trauma and then focuses on how her experience of destituteness, social invisibility and unbelonging ties in with that of other vulnerable subjects. It has been found that these apparently unnoticed characters are given pride of place through the punctual intrusion of narrative snapshots that make heard their otherwise muffled stories. The prominence given to these embedded stories, mostly facilitated by both Rhys's and the protagonist's keen attention to underdog life, not only evinces the larger trauma testimony's relatability; it hints at the ethical stakes of this dialogue between underdog stories while underscoring a multidirectionality laying bare that the topics addressed by Rhys are in keeping with twenty-first century concerns.

**Keywords:**

Jean Rhys; modernism; the underdog; empathy; insidious trauma.

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**Retreat, restrict, regulate: Environmental concerns and social control in YA dystopian novels**

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Young adult dystopian novels often depict oppressive societies from the point of view of adolescent characters who rebel against them, thus placing the possibility for hope and change upon teenagers instead of adults (Basu et al. 2013, 7). These novels reflect the challenges that adolescents face in their daily lives and also their anxieties for the future they will inherit once they become adults themselves. For this reason, environmental concerns have long been identified as one of the issues most commonly portrayed in YA dystopia (Hintz and Ostry 2003, 12), particularly as our societies have become more aware of climate change. Furthermore, many of the protagonists of these stories find in nature a welcome contrast to their surveillance societies, which allows them to start their journeys towards achieving more agency (McDonough and Wagner 2016).

This presentation will focus on discerning the ways anthropogenic environmental crises are represented in YA dystopian novels. Through an ecocritical lens, it will explore how the nature-culture divide is presented in these narratives and where they place the blame for the environmental crises they depict. Particularly, it will explore how some of the societies portrayed

in YA dystopias use the protection of the natural world to legitimise the enforcement of harsh mechanisms of control and how the protagonists are set to combat them.

In order to illustrate these ideas, this paper will analyse the *Uglies* series by Scott Westerfeld (originally published between 2005 and 2007). In the future depicted in the novels, most people live in hypertechnological cities removed from nature and, when they turn sixteen, they undergo an operation that turns them “pretty”, that is, makes them conform to a beauty standard that is considered to be universally attractive. These people view the civilization that came before them, the Rusties (presumably our civilization), as repulsive, not only because of their “ugly” appearance but because of the continuous conflict that emerged from their diversity and their inability to respect nature. In this respect, conformity and sustainability are linked as two of the core values of this society. Moreover, Tally, the protagonist of the series, discovers that the operation purposefully provokes brain lesions, which in turn makes the patients more docile: their whole identities are thus controlled by the authorities. This practice is justified by the idea that humans left to their own desires will cause conflict and environmental destruction, as the Rusty civilization did. After seeing her friends drastically change their personalities once they undergo the surgery, Tally decides to help a group of rebels that are trying to find a cure for the brain lesions. The series ultimately depicts the protection of nature as a noble goal but rejects the necessity of turning to manipulation and the erasure of free will to achieve it.

#### **Keywords:**

Young adult dystopia; nature; environmental crises; social control; agency.

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#### **Unveiling the Palimpsest: Art and Intertextuality in Ali Smith’s Seasonal Quartet**

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The novels of Ali Smith’s Seasonal Quartet, *Autumn* (2016), *Winter* (2017), *Spring* (2019) and *Summer* (2020), delve into the intricacies of our present exploring temporality, vulnerability and borders and creating a portrait of our reality. Beyond the socio-political thematic concerns, the novels also include timeless themes that are relevant across all eras and ages, like intimate relationships, family and art. In its exploration and subversion of traditional constructions of time and borders, the Quartet creates an interrelation of different time periods not only thematically, but also through the countless relationships it establishes with other works, mainly through intertextuality. As Julia Kristeva claims in *Word, Dialogue and Novel* (1966): “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (37). Thus, the Quartet relies on art as one of the main themes but also as a way to create a multimodal intertextual experience and to contribute to the construction of a palimpsest. Drawing

upon Dillon's contention that palimpsests "embody and provoke interdisciplinary encounter" (2007: 2), Smith's use of intertextuality in the Quartet extends beyond mere references to other literary works, encompassing visual arts, music, and popular culture, hence becoming the perfect example of a palimpsest. As Adorno observes: "the truth content of artworks, on which their rank ultimately depends, is historical right into its innermost cell" (2002: 191). Thus, Ali Smith chooses to incorporate works from different time periods into her novels as a way to recover the truth content they hold within them, and to contribute to the depiction of time and history as circular and interrelated concept. The novels of the Seasonal Quartet explore the different roles of art and they personify them through the protagonists of each instalment and their relationship to art: echoing several Shakespeare's plays, referencing multiple Dickens's novels, and featuring artists from different disciplines that become part of the plot of each novel, like painter Pauline Boty, sculptor Barbara Hepworth or authors Rainer Maria Rilke and Katherine Mansfield, the novels explore the power that art holds across different disciplines. Moreover, the characters also exemplify a variety of relationships with art: being an art teacher, writing music and scripts, flagging copyright infringement in audiovisual media or being the active subject that artworks need to complete their meaning. Hence, art becomes a thematic concern that underlies all the storylines woven into the Seasonal Quartet. The intertextual references to painting, sculpture, film and literature and the importance that the characters confer to each of these art forms become a depiction of the final role of art in the novels: a tool for social commentary and a catalyst for change. The aim of this paper is to explore the role of art in the Seasonal Quartet and to unveil the multimodal intertextual relationships to discover how they become a formal tool for the creation of a palimpsest and a thematic concern underlying all the different plots of the novels, which in itself becomes a way of providing social commentary and critique. The Seasonal Quartet novels become a palimpsest that blends multiple forms of artistic expression, and through their exploration and exemplification of the functions of art and their multimodal intertextual relationships they blur the boundaries between different time periods and demonstrate the ways in which literature, art and life intersect.

**Keywords:**

Ali Smith; Seasonal Quartet; palimpsest; intertextuality, borders.

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***"We Are a Small Community": Silence and the Figure of the Scapegoat in David Farr's The Hunt and Arthur Miller's The Crucible***

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Reaching the conclusion of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953), the farmer John Proctor is being subjected to an exhaustive cross-examination by the Deputy Governor Thomas Danforth, as part of the Salem witch trials of 1692. After some prolonged pauses, Proctor finally utters: "I speak my own sins. I cannot judge another. I have no tongue for it" (2015, 123). During this act, Miller recurrently highlights Proctor's reticence to speak by underlining, through the use of the stage directions, how he remains silent after the accusations against him. This perceptive lack of speech in the character illustrates the mechanisms by which silence, in its various forms, reshapes the way in which different audiences receive and interpret theatrical plays as literary works meant to be performed. From the codes of secrecy, hearsay, and taboo to the questioning of unsaid lies, unspeakable truths, or the reticence to unconceal hidden voices, the presence of unstated layers

of meaning in plays such as *The Crucible* acquires a deeper insight when extrapolating the multiple dimensions of silence to the sociopolitical contexts in which they are based.

The adherence of these typologies of silence to the sense of community in reduced groups of population and the identification of the main characters with the archetype of the scapegoat can be observed as common threads joining Miller's *The Crucible* and David Farr's theatrical adaptation of the Danish film *Jagten (The Hunt)* (2012). Farr's play, based on a screenplay originally written by Tobias Lindholm and directed by Thomas Vinterberg, follows the story of Lucas, a 40-year-old teacher of an infants' school in a small town in Northern Denmark who is wrongly accused of abusing several children. The accusation, triggered by a concise comment made by Klara, the 6-year-old daughter of his best friend, Theo, unravels a process of public judgement as well as it unleashes the tacit tensions of his fellow citizens, resulting in Lucas' isolation from his community. The connotations of those commonal tensions as part of what the French philosopher Jean Luc-Nancy called *silence partagé*, or shared silence (Gould 2018, 93), open a suggestive space to reconsider the way in which the conflict between what is said and what is not said – or, between the explicit and the implicit layers of meaning – gradually transforms restrained language into spoken violence.

Considering this common ground as a starting point, this paper will aim to develop a comparative analysis between Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and David Farr's *The Hunt* by examining both the written plays and some of its recent theatrical performances. Following this initial stance, the paper will revolve around the notions of taboo and indirect speech as seen by literary pragmatics (Jaworski 1993, 122), the coercitive ways of interrogation and the meanings hidden beneath language (Olsson 2015, 125), the figure of the scapegoat in modern drama, and the methodological background provided by recent research in the field of silence studies.

#### **Keywords:**

Comparative Literature; Contemporary Drama in English; Literary Pragmatics; Modern Drama; Silence Studies.

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#### **The Digital Legacy of Ezra Pound: a Research Experience**

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I met Roxana Preda at the EPIC in Salamanca in June 2019, where I presented a paper on the letters of Ezra Pound to forgotten modernist Iris Barry, included in D.D. Paige' sediton, *The*



*Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*. I told her about my interest in modernist digital humanities and, in December 2021, she invited me to visit her at the University of Edinburgh, where I had the opportunity to know first hand her long-term project *The Cantos Project*, a digital research environment (DRE) dedicated to the study of Ezra Pound's monumental long poem. As a result of that encounter, an interview titled "Make It Digital! Roxana Preda in conversation with Paula Camacho Roldán" was published in *Make It New* (Spring, 2022), the Ezra Pound Society Magazine.

The aim of this contribution is to share my personal experience in terms of research. Taking Preda's annotated version of *The Cantos* as a starting point, I will analyse aspects such as digital annotation, copyright restrictions, platforms, software and website design, as well as the critical apparatus itself and the effects of the pandemic on archival research.

The theoretical framework will range from Modernist studies and approaches on how to teach Ezra Pound today to works on digital culture. As to the method used, I have followed a qualitative research technique in which I have conducted an individual interview with Pound scholar to explore her perspective on different topics. The interview has been semi-structured, given that I prepared a series of pre-determined questions to be answered in a certain order, but I also made additional questions during the interview to clarify and/or further expand certain issues.

Among the results, I have confirmed that, even if D.D. Paige's volume of *Selected Letters* is a classic of scholarship and has been tremendously useful to us over the years, the author had an editorial policy that is not practiced in Pound studies any longer, namely, to standardize and uniformize Pound's typography and letter layout, which has made the poet appear much more didactic and conventional than he really was. I have also confirmed the effect that the pandemic has had on archival research and digitalization. It has considerably slowed down the publication of books dedicated to Modernism.

#### **Keywords:**

Digital culture; Modernism; Ezra Pound; archival research; letter editing.

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#### **"I speak, therefore I am": Repositioning Nonhuman Intelligence, Language, and Cognition within Assemblages in "The Great Silence" by Ted Chiang**

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In 2012 Philip Low wrote, together with a group of cognitive neuroscientists at the University of Cambridge, what is known as the "Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness" where they groundbreakingly stated, among other ideas, that "humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness" (n.p.) and that "[n]onhuman animals [...] also possess these neurological substrates" (n.p.). These affirmations served just as another indication to confirm what philosophers, scientists and scholars from multiple fields have upheld since the posthuman turn: that anthropocentric human superiority based on our "unique" mental capacities, including intelligence and consciousness, is not completely substantiated. Not only do

we have proofs that nonhuman animals have cognitive capabilities that would dismantle this hierarchy but also, we can clearly see now how, with the latest development of generative systems of Artificial Intelligence capable of processing and creating information, the ‘human’, as we knew it, is suffering an integral and complete redefinition. Cognition has become then, one of the, if not the central analytical category in the current debate of posthuman and animal studies, which has been proliferating in the last decade. N. Katherine Hayles (2017), following this line, proposes a reconsideration of concepts like intelligence, consciousness, and cognition from the perspective of a new paradigm, the ‘cognitive nonconscious’, in which she claims that not only humans, but other nonhumans, what she calls ‘cognizants’ or ‘cognizers’, like animals, plants, technological systems or material forces have agency and a cognitive capability of their own to a certain extent. In this re-understanding of cognition as an extended capacity beyond the human, she affirms the existence of a system of non-hierarchical relations in which information circulates and influences all the parts equally. This, she claims, is a ‘cognitive assemblage’, or an “arrangement of systems, subsystems, and individual actors through which information flows, effecting transformations” (Hayles 118). The cognitive nonconscious, in combination with the notion of assemblage, appears a perfect tool to understand our accelerating, ever-changing and technically mediated world. In literary studies, the nonhuman, and more relevant for this paper the nonhuman animal, is surfacing in contemporary creative works in what Kate Marshall has called “Novels by Aliens”, or narrations from viewpoints of conscious nonhumans that experience feelings and emotions and that act as cognitive agents. Ted Chiang adapts this idea in the short story under analysis in this paper, “The Great Silence” (2019), narrated by an almost extinct parrot that lives in the Río Abajo Forest in Puerto Rico. As a first-person narrator, the parrot reflects about the humans’ insatiable desire to contact with extra-terrestrial intelligent life through the Arecibo telescope at the expense of destroying the narrator’s natural habitat and while obviating, or negating, the narrator’s cognitive capacities, among which are language and an understanding of abstract concepts. The text, analysed using the ideas and potentials of the cognitive nonconscious and the assemblage among cognizers-- both human and nonhuman animal--, serves as an example of how posthuman fiction and theory are following the same trajectory to dismantle human exceptionalism.

**Keywords:**

Posthuman; cognitive assemblage; animal studies; speculative fiction; Ted Chiang.

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**From Trauma to Resilience in Madeleine Thien’s *Dogs at the Perimeter***

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Classical trauma theorists based their approach to trauma on the difficulties that survivors encounter in the process of overcoming their trauma and putting their memories into words (Caruth 1996; Edkins 2003). Such a narrow approach gave rise to a decolonizing movement in trauma studies aimed at revisiting the main principles of the field in order to move away from the pathological and individualist orientation initially proposed. Contemporary scholars recognize the importance of understanding trauma as a socio-cultural construction in which different forms of healing are possible (Rothberg 2008; Craps 2010; Visser 2015). Opening the framework to cultural specificity allows insights into the different beliefs, cultural practices, and mechanisms employed by survivors to come to terms with their trauma (Visser 2015). In this context,

resilience, which is defined as the capacity of both individuals and systems to cope with adversity, survive, and thrive, emerges as “a positive, meaningful outcome of trauma and disaster” (Basseler 2019, 28).

Drawing on postcolonial revisions of trauma theory, this paper attempts to analyze Madeleine Thien’s *Dogs at the Perimeter* (2011), paying special attention to the refugees’ capacity to build up resilience in the aftermath of trauma and the importance of narrating a collective and historical trauma such as the Cambodian genocide in order to promote a form of collective resilience. *Dogs at the Perimeter* narrates the cruelties of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia from the viewpoint of Janie, a Cambodian woman who struggles to survive as a refugee in Canada thirty years after fleeing her home country. Even though the formal features of the novel contribute to the aesthetization of trauma and produce a climate of disorder characteristic of trauma narratives, the novel also contains elements that attest to the possibility of recovery and healing. Moreover, Thien’s novel highlights the personal, social, and political dimensions of trauma and its importance in the process of reconfiguring a nation’s cultural memory.

Thus, this paper argues that *Dogs at the Perimeter* can be read as a resilience narrative as it presents trauma as a catalyst that moves the main character towards resilience, transformation, and healing. It will examine the main elements and motifs used in the novel to represent the process of working through trauma. Moreover, it will delve into the inextricable and meaningful connections between the past and the present of the main character, trying to offer a transnational understanding of historical trauma. In doing so, this paper will attempt to prove how trauma becomes a mobilizing force that turns refugees into agents, who are capable of contributing with their personal testimonies to the recognition of marginalized (hi)stories and the reshaping of cultural memory.

#### **Keywords:**

Trauma; resilience; refugees; cultural memory; Madeleine Thien.

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#### **Figuring the Aging Sleuth. Alzheimer and Detection in Emma Healey’s *Elizabeth Is Missing***

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Emma Healey’s Costa Book Awarded debut novel *Elizabeth Is Missing* (2014) testifies to the healthy condition of young British crime fiction, that keeps on soundly rehearsing its own structural renewal. On this occasion, Healey’s story posits whether it is possible to solve a crime—and to reconstruct the criminal narrative and the process of its resolution—out of cognitive disability. *Elizabeth Is Missing* thus enacts the desperate search undertaken by Maud, a seventy-year-old Alzheimer patient who refuses to forget and give up the sorting out of the mystery about her best friend’s disappearance, Elizabeth.

In this paper I reflect on how this novel performs a detective emplotment lying at the bottom of a story that seemingly revolves around (just) aging and disability, what eventually confirms Gill Plain's statements about a "shift of paradigm" in current crime fiction which has "repeatedly confront[ed] the subject's terror of annihilation" through corporeal decay to nowadays stage its "mode of resurrection and reconfiguration" (Plain 27). In line with this, the diseased body of the female, aged detective blatantly defies the genre conventions to propose new insights into detective agency via neural plasticity. My analysis will also draw on Ricoeur's contentions on (the) self-understanding dynamically emerging out of story fragments and thus constituting personal identity via narrative reconfiguration (Ricoeur 1991); likewise, his statements about the persistence of the trace of first impressions in the context of forgetfulness, which replays the individual's mnemonic strategies (Ricoeur 2003, 545) in pragmatic situations, will assist me in studying the retrieval of the self's psychic and personal identity in the figure of the detective suffering from growing dementia. Finally, affect theory and its views on bodily memory will as well frame my analysis; particularly, Massumi's positions on the superempirical experience of the human body and (Massumi 2002) its openness to participate affectively/effectively in "the matter's capacity for self-organization, its being informational" (Clough 210) and Ahmed's insights into the way emotions mould our bodies and minds by "sticking" or circulating amongst other bodies (Ahmed 2015)—in this novel, past and present, forgotten or recalled—will help me probe into other ways of cognition and crime resolution and eventually resignify via literary analysis the stigma of Alzheimer devastation (Harris 2019).

My paper will first approach the new detective strategies Maud undertakes, how recomposing the whodunit via amnesia, dementia and neurological decay parallels recomposing personal memory/history and the detective self by effecting new visions of human cognition (rational, emotional and sensorial). Such remaking of detective agency provide a new and multifaceted understanding of (detective, human, emotional and historical) truth which eventually manages to descend into and undig another mystery in Maud's mind and history, the disappearance and murder of her sister Sukey fifty years before. My analysis will especially focus on the detective figure, the use of narrative and mnemonic times in reconstructing and solving the mystery to finally propose new elastic extensions of detective agency and the nature of truth renewing the textual structuring and protean nature of crime fiction nowadays.

**Keywords:**

Emma Healey; affect; aging; disability; detective fiction.

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**Pronunciation of English codas in CLIL: a longitudinal approach**

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The study of second language (L2) speech involves the examination of perception and production. The relationship between these two speech domains remains an enduring concern in Second Language Acquisition as research evidence seems to suggest that there is not a straightforward correspondence between these two dimensions (Nagle & Baese-Berk, 2022; Sakai & Moorman,

2018). The present proposal intends to contribute to the inspection of such relationship by observing the development of perception and production skills of English codas longitudinally in a group of Spanish secondary school learners in a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programme, which increases exposure and production opportunity. The study of phonological development in CLIL is scarce (Rallo-Fabra & Jacob, 2015) and a dual observation of sound perception and production has not been conducted in such a context.

Twenty-one Spanish/Basque students in Secondary CLIL were tested on their abilities to perceive and produce English codas at 15 and 17 years of age. These codas were identified according to phonotactic occurrence in the L1/s. Three coda distributions were identified as fully allowed, or also present in the L1/s (-nθ -n -θ), four coda distributions were identified as partially allowed in the L1/s (-g -k -p -ks) and four coda distributions were identified as not allowed (-v -ŋ -lk -nt). Perception testing consisted on a four alternative identification task. Production was elicited by using a picture and orthographic representation of the same words used in perception in a read aloud task.

Perception and production results were coded for correct answers and for error type. Pearson correlations between the two skills explored overall correct results and results in time 1 and in time 2, which were two years apart. As for the intra-skill longitudinal exploration, both perception and production showed high Pearson correlations indicating that there were partially no differences between the two testing times for either skill. Inter-skill analyses revealed a tendency to correlate positively in time 1 and a stronger correlation in time 2. When errors were inspected qualitatively, it was observed that allowed codas exhibited correct scores and no differences between skills. The same was true of partially allowed codas with the exception of /-g/, which exhibited some longitudinal improvement in production skills. Non-allowed codas /-v/ and /ŋ/ also showed some longitudinal improvement in production.

Overall, results point at a modest phonological development when inspecting English coda perception and production along two years in a Secondary CLIL programme. It also reveals that English codas that are phonotactically allowed and partially allowed in the L1/s are well perceived and produced by intermediate learners. Not allowed sequences seemed to leave room for improvement, which was limited within a two-year time span for these CLIL learners. Perception and production tended to correlate in this study although slight differences could be observed when error types were considered.

**Keywords:**

Codas; perception; production; CLIL; L2 English.

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**L2 speaking anxiety: Causes and its Relation to Comprehensibility and Accentedness**

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Psycho-social factors such as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) are an important source of individual differences in the acquisition of foreign languages [1]. FLA is known to have a negative

effect on language achievement, since it hinders learners' ability to perform in a FL class successfully [2]. Also, FLA has always been studied as a static construct; however, it varies in intensity and duration, and fluctuates over time [3]. Despite extensive previous research on FLA, L2 speaking anxiety (the feelings of nervousness when speaking the target FL) and the reason of its fluctuations has been under-researched, even in instructed FL classrooms where learners report speaking-oriented activities, especially oral presentations, to be highly anxiety-evoking [4, 5]. Moreover, very few studies have analysed the possible relationship between comprehensibility [6, 7], accentedness and L2 speaking anxiety. The present study investigates the distress levels generated by two oral presentation contexts, their causes as well as its possible relation to comprehensibility and accentedness. Eighty-five first-year University students performed a total of 8 speaking tasks in counterbalanced order. 4 of the presentations were performed in their L2 (English) and the remaining 4 were in their L1 so as to obtain baseline data. This study included two presentation modes (individual vs. audience,  $N=7$ ) and two task types (descriptive vs. argumentative). In the descriptive tasks, learners had to explain past experiences (e.g., a tough challenge), while the argumentative tasks consisted of discussing three different pictures in relation to a topic (e.g., three ways of transportation within the city). After task performance, the audience assessed the perceived level of nervousness and comprehensibility, while the EFL learners self-assessed their distress with questionnaires and the idiodynamic approach [5]. In the aforementioned task, the learners watched their videos and had to self-assess their levels of distress that accompanied their presentation. Additionally, stimulated recalls were carried out for the L2 oral presentations, in which the EFL learners explained the reasons of their distress during the oral presentations. Accentedness and comprehensibility was assessed through native speakers' ratings as well as through the audience members. Finally, proficiency [8] and vocabulary size were controlled variables. It is hypothesized that these data, currently under analysis, will provide informative insights into why learners experience L2 speaking anxiety as well as uncover insights into the relationship between speaking anxiety and linguistic dimensions of oral performance.

### **Keywords:**

L2 speaking anxiety; L2 speech production; self-assessment; comprehensibility, accentedness.

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## Intonation and Degree of Directiveness in Insubordinate *If*-Clauses in American English

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Fragments, i.e., structurally non-canonical but semantically felicitous constituents which are fully intelligible in their context, have received some attention in written English (Morgan 1973; Merchant 2005; Stainton 2006; Bowie and Aarts 2016). However, the description and classification of fragments in *spoken* English has been comparatively scarce. The existing research gap has been addressed by a small number of works, some of which analyse the intonation contours of a specific type of fragments, namely directive insubordinate *if*-clauses (1)—i.e., those occurring without a main clause or syntactically independent from it (see Kaltenböck 2016; Mato-Míguez 2016; Rodríguez-Vázquez and de la Iglesia Sanjuán, in press).

(1) Okay, folks, if you will please, follow me now.

Kaltenböck (2016) provides one of the few existing analyses of the intonation of directive insubordinate *if*-clauses in spoken British English. He subclassifies insubordinate *if*-clauses regarding their degree of directiveness into orders, requests, instructions and offers, and concludes that the vast majority show a falling contour. Along the same lines, Elvira-García (2019) indicates that in Spanish, the intonation pattern of insubordinate *if*-clauses, typically describing a falling contour with a final low boundary tone, is used as a cue to indicate the type of speech act that it accomplishes, i.e. its prosody reflects its pragmatic function. Similarly, Rodríguez-Vázquez and de la Iglesia Sanjuán (in press) conduct a comprehensive acoustic analysis of the terminal contours of directive (in)subordinate *if*-clauses in American English and conclude that insubordinates use a falling contour regardless of their position within the utterance. Additionally, they observe that the specific type of falling contour described by insubordinate *if*-clauses might be linked to the force of the directive.

The hypothesis underlying this paper states that the degree of directiveness of insubordinate *if*-clauses will determine a) the type of falling contour that they show as well as b) the degree of fixation of that falling contour.

In order to come to a conclusion regarding the above-stated hypothesis, 67 directive insubordinate *if*-clauses extracted from the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (SBC) (Du Bois et al. 2000-2005) have been annotated by means of the Montreal Forced Aligner (McAuliffe et al. 2017) and PyToBI (Domínguez, Roher and Soler-Company 2019), and the resulting contours have been analysed with Praat (Boersma and D. Weenink 2021). As well as those, 34 directive subordinate *if*-clauses extracted from the SBC have been annotated and acoustically analysed so as to compare their intonation patterns with those of insubordinates.

The findings stemming from the analysis of the directive insubordinate *if*-clauses confirm, firstly, that they display a falling contour in all positions within the utterance. Secondly, the results show that the more directive an insubordinate *if*-clause is (i.e., orders and requests), the lower the inception of the falling movement, while the less directive it is (i.e., instructions and offers), the higher the start of the falling movement. Thirdly, the analysis conducted indicates that a higher degree of directiveness corresponds to a lesser degree of variability in the contour, that is, the more directive the *if*-clause, the more fixed the falling contour.

### Keywords:

Intonation of Insubordinate *If*-Clauses; Directiveness and Intonation; American English Intonation; Intonation of fragments.

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## Uncovering the benefits of foreign accent imitation training on L2 pronunciation

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While L2 pronunciation teaching used to prioritize attaining a native-like accent, the emphasis has shifted towards promoting intelligible speech (Levis, 2018). However, it is important for current pedagogical practices to adapt to this shift in perspective. Recently, various innovative proposals have emerged for pronunciation instruction, including pronunciation-focused communicative tasks, form-focused communicative instruction, incidental multimodal high



variability phonetic training, shadowing techniques, the use of gestures, or accent imitation methods (Ruellot, 2019). Imitating an L2 accent while speaking the learners' L1 might enhance awareness of the phonetic differences between their L1 and L2, thereby improving segmental accuracy (Everitt, 2015). Additionally, an accurate pronunciation of L2 sounds while reading a text in the L1 has been suggested to reflect learners' implicit knowledge of the L2 phonetic dimensions and their acquisition (Henderson & Rojczyk, 2023; Mora et al., 2014). Little do we know about the potential benefits of accent imitation training on overall global dimensions of L2 pronunciation (i.e. comprehensibility, accentedness and fluency). The current study therefore addresses this gap in the literature in the context of English as a Foreign language (EFL) instruction.

A total of 56 Catalan/Spanish advanced EFL learners participated in 5 sessions of guided imitation training at home. In each of the sessions they listened to one pre-recorded audiofile of 650-word text. Participants were afterwards asked to practise reading the texts and record themselves imitating the accent they had just heard. While one group of participants ( $N=33$ ) listened to Spanish texts read by native English speakers with a strong Spanish accent which they had to imitate (accent imitation group, AI), the other group ( $N=23$ ) imitated an English text produced by English native speakers (the L2 imitation group, L2I). The data from the L2I learners served as a means of assessing the effectiveness of accent imitation training. The English speakers' accented Spanish included both segmental and prosodic characteristics of English, which the learners aimed to imitate. All learners were assessed through pre- and post-tests, in which they were asked to read an unfamiliar text in English and an unfamiliar Spanish text in English-accented Spanish. From these productions, five sentences and a 45-second excerpt were selected and extracted for evaluation. The L2-English speech samples were randomly presented to seven native English listeners who rated them for comprehensibility, accentedness and fluency. Similarly, the English-accented Spanish speech sample were presented to seven native Spanish listeners who rated them for the same dimensions. Different training approaches (AI or L2I) and the degree to which learners successfully imitate the target accents were expected to have distinct effects on their L2 English pronunciation skills.

### **Keywords:**

L2 accent imitation; phonological training; comprehensibility; accentedness; fluency.

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## **The Effect of English Phonetic Training on Schwa Production**

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The acquisition of L2 sound patterns has been found to be influenced by learners' L1 phonological system (Dupoux et al. 2008, 19). This is particularly evident in the case of Spanish speakers, as their L1 lacks a central vowel akin to the English schwa sound. Traditionally, the English schwa sound has been considered challenging for Spanish speakers learning English as a foreign language (Brown, 1990, p. 1158). In this context, explicit phonetic training has been demonstrated to enhance L2 phonological awareness and improve perceptual skills (Gómez-Lacabex and Gallardo-del-Puerto 2014, 517). Previous research conducted by Cenoz and García-Lecumberri (1999) investigated the impact of explicit training on vowel perception among university learners of English and found a significant improvement in receptive skills. Building upon this previous work, the present study aims to examine the effect of explicit phonetic training on schwa vowel production among Spanish university students studying English as a foreign language. Specifically, this study explores the development of schwa sound production skills in university students following explicit phonetic instruction.

A total of 55 undergraduate students pursuing a degree in Primary Education, aged between 19 and 25, participated in this study. At the onset of the course, the participants recorded themselves reading a set of 66 words, seven of which contained a lexical schwa. Among these words, two had the schwa sound in a pretonic position, while the remaining five featured the schwa sound in a posttonic position. The latter set of words included instances where the schwa sound was represented by a different orthographic vowel. Additionally, one of the words was considered for potential deletion of the vocalic sound.

Two speakers of English as a foreign language with linguistic training in English phonetics and phonology judged the recordings and assessed them according to three criteria: reduction of the vowel, strong vowel production or unassessable distinction.

Preliminary results revealed that none of the judges identified noteworthy enhancements in the posttest analysis for the vowel reduction phenomenon, with the exception of a single judge who detected a statistically significant improvement in one word and a statistically significant drawback in another word. This may lead to conclude that a general course in English phonetics does not result in a better production of lexical schwa vowel. These findings align with those reported in the study conducted by Cenoz and Lecumberri (1999), wherein certain vowels exhibited improvement while others did not.

These outcomes may be influenced by the experimental condition in which participants read isolated words instead of producing them in connected or impromptu speech not generated from orthographic stimuli. In this controlled setting, participants might have potentially emphasized all syllables to ensure clarity and intelligibility, thereby diminishing the observed effects of explicit instruction on English vowel reduction.

#### **Keywords:**

EFL; schwa; production; explicit phonetic training; pronunciation.

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## **Crosslinguistic perceived similarity may not readily predict accuracy of L2 vowel perception and production at an individual level**

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The likelihood of target-like categorization of second or foreign language (L2) speech sounds has been linked to L2 learners' ability to detect differences between native and target language sounds (Best & Tyler 2007; Flege & Bohn 2021). Predictions about L2 categorization difficulty have often been based on group results, e.g., from experiments assessing the perceived similarity between native and target-language sounds. Still, individuals may differ in the perception of similarity between native and non-native sounds and thus learners' developmental paths may not be uniform across individuals sharing the same L1 (Escudero & Boersma 2004; Mayr & Escudero 2010). The current study investigated the relationship between the perceived similarity between a subset of British English and Spanish vowels and the perception and production of English vowels by L2 English speakers. The paper aimed to explore whether individual differences in perceived similarity between target and native vowels are reflected in the ability to perceive and produce L2 vowels.

Thirty-seven Spanish/Catalan bilingual learners of English performed a perceptual similarity task (PAT) in which listeners identified target (English) vowels in terms of native (Spanish) categories and provided goodness of fit ratings. In addition, the learners completed a series of English vowel identification and discrimination tests as well as a picture naming task to elicit their production of the English vowels. The results of the PAT showed that learners were fairly consistent in their perception of similarity between L1 and L2 vowels, with few exceptions. Specifically, English /ɪ/ showed the most notable inter-learner variability, as it was perceived as closest to either Spanish /e/, to Spanish /i/, or was split between the two L1 categories. The results of the PAT were contrasted then with the L2 perception (identification and discrimination accuracy) and production (native speaker ratings by fifteen British English listeners) measures.

The results of a series of correlations investigating the relationship between the different measures yielded very few significant results, and no results involved the perception or production of English /ɪ/, the vowel that had shown the greatest individual variability in the PAT. In addition, while identification and discrimination results were correlated, perception and production measures were not. Overall, these results show little connection between perceived similarity and L2 perception and production accuracy as the ability to perceive and produce contrasting L2 sounds does not seem to depend consistently on the perceived similarity between L2 and L1 sounds. The lack of a stronger relationship between cross-linguistic perception and L2 performance runs counter to L2 speech models' predictions. Still, the fact that assimilation patterns were very consistent (at or above a 70% assimilation threshold, Tyler et al., 2014) may have resulted in too little individual variability to be reflected in L2 performance differences. In addition, it is possible that PAT may reflect a perceptual sensitivity that does not play a role in L2 categorization. Finally, as the participants in this study participated in a longitudinal training study, the current results may be discussed in light of the participants' performance at post-training tests.

**Keywords:**



L2 speech learning; cross-linguistic perceived similarity; vowel perception; vowel production; individual differences.

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### **Do individual differences in attention control impact L2 rhythm, comprehensibility and accentedness in a spontaneous oral task?**

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Understanding individual differences (ID) in attention is crucial to inform strategies for language learning and enhance learners' capacity to process and retain spoken language (Segalowitz & Frenkiel-Fishman, 2005). Auditory selective attention (ASA), attention switching (ASW) and sustained attention (SustAttn) allow learners to selectively attend to specific acoustic dimensions during speech processing (Astheimer et al., 2016) as well as maintain attention on the relevant information necessary for decoding L2 speech. While ASA and ASW have been explored in relation to L2 perception and production of L2 segmental features of L2 speech (Mora-Plaza et al., 2022), SustAttn has been mainly examined in studies on disordered language (Christakou et al., 2013). No studies have so far examined the relationship between attention control, suprasegmental features and global pronunciation measures during L2 speech production. In addition, little research has explored the interactions between cognitive and learner factors as predicted by Robinsons' Cognition Hypothesis (2001). The present study addresses these gaps by examining whether ID in attention control (ASA, SustAttn, ASW) play a role in learners' L2 rhythm, comprehensibility and accentedness in a spontaneous oral task and whether the effects of ID are mediated by task complexity.

Eighty-two Catalan/Spanish English learners ( $M_{\text{age}} = 20.23$ ,  $SD = 2.94$ ) performed cognitively simple and complex versions of an oral task in which they had to explain how to sit six characters at dinner tables based on their personalities and interests. Simple and complex tasks differed in how coherent characters' personalities were and how many people sat at each table (2 vs. 3). Two rhythm metrics were extracted, namely, the percentage of vocalic intervals (%V), and the normalized Pairwise Variability Index (nPVI-V). English native speakers ( $N=13$ ) evaluated 45

seconds of the samples for comprehensibility and accentedness. In addition, accuracy scores from ASA, d-prime scores from SustAttn and reaction times from ASW were obtained. Overall, the results revealed that ID in attention control significantly affected L2 speakers' comprehensibility and accentedness and, to a lesser extent, their production of target-like rhythm in spontaneous L2 speech production. In particular, ASA appeared to have the strongest effect on both L2 rhythm and global measures of pronunciation proficiency. In addition, the findings seem to indicate that ID in attention control explained more variance on global pronunciation proficiency measures in the complex than the simple task. However, only a weak relationship was found between the nPVI-V measure and attention control in the simple task. Complex interactions between ID in attention control and L2 pronunciation outcomes will be thoroughly discussed.

### **Keywords:**

Individual differences; attention control; L2 rhythm; comprehensibility; accentedness.

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### **Pronunciation in EMI: the impact of instruction on the comprehensibility and foreign accent of a lecturer**

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The increasingly fast spread of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in tertiary education has become noticeable over the last decades (Lasagabaster, 2022). Nevertheless, doubts and concerns on lecturers' proficiency level have also arisen with this rapid expansion and arguments of insufficient support to boost the communication skills which these practitioners need in the classroom have been made (Briggs, Dearden & Macaro, 2018). Pronunciation can also be a concern of these lecturers, who can feel that their foreign accent diminishes their confidence in teaching (Henderson, 2019) or that it can produce others' negative evaluations of their teaching quality (Hendriks, Meurs & Reimer, 2018).

The present study aimed at exploring whether EMI lecturers' classroom speech can benefit from specific linguistic support. More specifically, it inspected the effects of a customized pronunciation session for an EMI lecturer, whose classroom speech was recorded before and after the pronunciation session. The potential intervention effects were tested for pronunciation, via

two groups of judges who listened and rated 30 excerpts using a 9-point Likert scale for comprehensibility (how easy/difficult speech was to understand) and foreign accent measures. The two groups chosen differed in English nativeness, one being English native speakers living in the United Kingdom and the other group being Spanish undergraduate English Studies students. This intended to explore possible differences between these two groups of listeners, as native speakers have been found to attend to phonological detail only when assessing foreign accent (Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2012).

The results of this case study revealed that both groups found the post-test easier to understand (increased comprehensibility), however, the groups did not align in their lecturer's foreign accent judgements after the pronunciation session. First, these results seem to suggest that supporting actions such as tailored courses could help these professionals in developing communicative speech dimensions such as pronunciation. Second, interesting results emerged from the comparison of the judgements given by the two groups of listeners. The non-native listeners tended to notice more comprehensibility and lower accent than the English native speakers across testing times, supporting an L1 intelligibility benefit, which indicates that comprehensibility among speakers who share a first language may be expected to be higher (Bent & Bradlow, 2003). Finally, it was also found that the native speakers were able to make more distinct assessments for comprehensibility and foreign accent. This could be indicative of the fact that they may be attending to different features for each construct as previous literature has indicated.

**Keywords:**

Pronunciation; EMI; comprehensibility; foreign accent.

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**EMI students' attitudes towards pronunciation: interlocutor anxiety and lecturer speech**

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The consolidation of English as a global language has brought along the need to reconceptualise aspects such as English pronunciation, which seems to be experiencing a detachment from the native norm and the integration of multicultural identities. While several studies have investigated students' attitudes to various aspects of their experience in English Medium Instruction (EMI) (e.g., Macaro & Akincioglu, 2018; Toledo, Rubio-Alcalá & Hermosín, 2012; Tsui & Ngo, 2017), hardly any research has focused on their conceptualisation of pronunciation or their attitudes towards their lecturers' pronunciation. Moreover, evidence from research on EFL indicates that

pronunciation may be an anxiety factor for students, which may prevent them from actively participating in their classes (Baran-Łucarz, 2011, 2014).

This study explored how 126 EMI students at a Faculty of Engineering at a Spanish university conceptualize the learning of pronunciation, their attitudes towards EMI teachers' pronunciation and their pronunciation anxiety upon interaction with different interlocutors in their EMI context: teachers, local peers, L1-English international peers and L2-English international peers. The data were collected via a questionnaire and group discussions.

The analyses revealed that the EMI students surveyed viewed pronunciation more as a communicative tool than a specific English/language skill to be mastered. We also found that this community of learners are tolerant of accent and favour intelligibility and fluency over accuracy in their EMI lessons. These students showed overall low pronunciation anxiety, which was slightly higher when considering the teacher or an English L1 speaker as interlocutors than when considering local peers or English L2 interlocutors. Finally, they tended to report that their teachers' pronunciation is not a reason for uneasiness or lack of understanding during EMI lectures. Interestingly, we found divergent views between their EMI experience, more communicative-oriented, and their personal aspirations and lecturer expectations regarding pronunciation, which turned out to be more accuracy-oriented as these students reported that they wish to sound accurate and standard, they desire to improve their English pronunciation and they expect adequate and precise pronunciation from their EMI lecturers. These apparently distinct results need further exploration and possibly represent the crossroads which English pronunciation seems to be at nowadays, as it tries to both retain intelligibility but also define speaker identity in multicultural environments such as EMI. Based on these findings, it may be useful to include reflexions on pronunciation for both students and lecturers in EMI programmes. Such sessions could be used to discuss attitudes to pronunciation and accent and to raise awareness of issues such as intelligibility versus nativeness. Moreover, lecturers could be made aware of pronunciation anxiety and receive guidelines on how to help their students lower their anxiety in order to participate successfully in the EMI classroom.

#### **Keywords:**

English medium instruction, pronunciation, attitudes, anxiety, interaction.

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**L2 English speech rhythm in spontaneous and read speech: Interval duration metrics, nativelikeness distance measures, and listeners' perception of comprehensibility and accentedness.**

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Speech rhythm is largely under-researched as a prosodic dimension of second language (L2) phonological acquisition. For language pairs situated at opposing ends of a rhythm class continuum between syllable-timed (e.g. Spanish) and stress-timed (e.g. English) systems, acquiring the phonetic properties that underlie speech rhythm (e.g. vowel reduction for Spanish learners of English) may help make L2 learners' speech more comprehensible and easy to process (Ordin & Polyanskaya, 2015; Van Maastricht et al., 2021), leading to benefits in communication. However, most research to date on L2 speech rhythm is based on read speech materials (Algethami & Hellmuth, 2023; Ramus et al., 1999) and research investigating rhythm in spontaneous speech has focused on cross-language differences (e.g. Arvaniti, 2012) rather than on rhythm metrics that might apply to spontaneous speech samples of a given language as produced by both L1 speakers and L2 learners. In addition, there is lack of consensus on the choice of speech rhythm metrics that might best capture L2 rhythmic development for specific L1-L2 pairs as well as on the extent to which such measures might be useful in doing so in spontaneous rather than read speech. It is also currently unclear whether such measures are sensitive enough to identify the contribution of L2 speech rhythm to global pronunciation-related dimensions of L2 speech (comprehensibility and accentedness) in spontaneous L2 speech (Crowther et al., 2018).

This study investigates the sensitivity of a selection of well-established rhythm metrics distinguishing Spanish from English speech rhythm ( $%V$ ,  $VarcoV$ ,  $nPVI-V$ ,  $VarcoC$ ; Dellwo, 2006; Prieto et al., 2012; White & Mattys, 2007), as well as a set of novel Mahalanobis distance measures between L2 learners' and native speakers' speech based on pairs of rhythm metrics ( $%V-VarcoV$ ,  $%V-nPVI-V$ ,  $%V-VarcoC$ ) defining a two-dimensional space (e.g.  $%V$  on the  $y$ -axis and  $VarcoV$  on the  $x$ -axis), in characterizing the rhythmic properties of spontaneous L2 English speech (compared to L2 controlled speech) and in explaining native English listeners' perceived degree of comprehensibility and accentedness. We collected English speech samples from 82 advanced learners of English and 8 native English controls performing two versions of the same problem-solving oral narrative tasks varying in cognitive complexity (spontaneous speech) and an elicited imitation task (sentence-long controlled speech samples). Excerpts of the learners' spontaneous speech were then rated by 13 native English listeners for comprehensibility and accentedness. Data analyses did not reveal robust differences between L2 and L1 speech, but L2 learners' spontaneous speech involved higher variability of interval durations for  $Varco-V$ ,  $nPVI-V$  and  $Varco-C$  than controlled speech (consistent with a more stress-timed rhythm), although  $%V$  was higher in spontaneous than controlled speech. Interestingly, Mahalanobis distances were much larger for spontaneous than controlled speech, suggesting that learners' and native speakers' speech differed more substantially in spontaneous than in controlled speech. Finally, learners with higher  $%V$  scores (more syllable-timed speech) were perceived to be significantly less comprehensible ( $r=-.409$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and more strongly accented ( $r=.365$ ,  $p<.001$ ), a relationship also illustrated by the significant associations (though weaker:  $r_s=.261-.313$ ) between Mahalanobis distance measures and comprehensibility and accentedness ratings.

**Keywords:**

L2 speech rhythm; spontaneous speech, comprehensibility, accentedness.

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**Factors affecting the discrimination of L2 vowel contrasts: Perceptual asymmetry, perceived similarity and lexical status**

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A number of factors explain adult second or foreign language (L2) learners' difficulty to perceive and produce target language phones accurately. This paper focuses on linguistic factors and contrasts the predictions of two influential models of speech perception and L2 learning. According to the Perceptual Assimilation Model-L2 (PAM-L2, Best & Tyler, 2007), two target phones that are assimilated (i.e., perceived in terms of) two different L1 phones will be more accurately discriminated than two target phones that are assimilated to a single L1 category. In the latter case, two target phones perceived as equally good or bad versions of the L1 category will be more difficult to discriminate than a pair of L2 sounds that differ in degree of assimilation to the L1 category. A number of studies have provided evidence in support of these predictions (e.g., Tyler et al., 2014). Previous studies on vowel discrimination have also reported the existence of directional perceptual asymmetries: listeners appear to be better at discriminating between two members of a vowel contrast when the more peripheral vowel is presented second. According to the Natural Referent Vowel (NRV) framework (Polka & Bohn, 2011), this outcome is predicted by the fact that vowels that are more peripheral in the acoustic vowel space act as perceptual anchors (natural referents) in the development of vowel perception. Finally, some studies have found that adult L2 learners are better at discriminating L2 phones in real words than in nonwords, suggesting that lexical representations may facilitate the perception of segmental L2 contrasts (e.g., Ganong, 1980).

The aim of the current study was to examine the effects of cross-linguistic perceived similarity and vowel peripherality on the discrimination of L2 vowel contrasts, comparing the predictions of different perception models. The study also explored the role of word status (real vs. nonsense words) in L2 vowel discrimination. Forty-four Spanish-Catalan bilingual learners of English performed a perceptual assimilation task, in which they identified and rated British English vowels in terms of L1 vowels, and two L2 vowel discrimination tasks involving the English vowel pairs /æ-/ʌ/, /ɜ:-e/, /ɜ:-ɑ:/ and /i:-i:/. The discrimination tasks presented the members of each pair in the two possible orders (e.g., /i:-/i/, /i-/i:/), and stimuli were embedded in real and nonsense words. The results indicated that perceptual asymmetries emerged generally in accordance with

the predictions of the NRV framework (e.g., /i/-/i:/ was better discriminated than /i:/-/i/). Regarding the predictions of PAM-L2, discrimination accuracy was not always explained by crosslinguistic mapping relations as the results for one of the four pairs did not seem to support the PAM-L2 predictions. With respect to lexical status, the results support the role of lexical representations in L2 perception, as discrimination in real words was more accurate than in nonwords. These outcomes are discussed in light of the models' predictions and possible additional factors are also considered such as the role of explicit knowledge and methodological limitations.

**Keywords:**

L2 vowel discrimination; cross-linguistic perceived similarity; vowel peripherality; lexical status.

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**Embodying the Spirit: African Indigenous Religions and (Female) Empowerment**

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Mainstream Western feminism, linked from its inception to the secular *weltanschauung* of the Enlightenment and to notions of citizenship and (un)belonging into a laic nation-state, has traditionally looked with suspicion onto established religions which excluded females from their hierarchical structures. However, African indigenous religions have offered women spaces of spiritual and public prominence, whether as priestesses, prophetesses, spirit mediums or healers, always deeply in connection with their own cultures, localities and ethnicities. It is my purpose in this paper to examine how four African writers, namely Flora Nwapa, Yvonne Vera, Nkunzi Zabile Nkabinde and Akwaeke Emezi, have deployed autochthonous traditions and onto-epistemologies in order to construct empowered female or non-binary subjectivities which defy and transgress Western conceptualizations of gender and female powerlessness. Spiritual power also deeply affects the ways in which female bodies are theorized and (re)constructed, allowing for new possibilities of self-inscription generated in the contact zones between coeval “traditional” and “modern” ways of understanding identities.

**Keywords:**

African Indigenous Religions; gender; spirituality; embodiment; decolonial feminisms.

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**You will be considered a terrorist for life: Forms of Dissent and Militancy in Meena Kandasamy's *Tomorrow You Will Be Arrested* (2023)**

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This paper studies Meena Kandasamy's latest poetry collection *Tomorrow You Will Be Arrested* (2023) as part of the writer's creative, reformist and activist trajectory. The poems in this collection will be analysed as a reinforcement of her anti-caste and anti-national politics as a form of resistance that safeguards transformative dissent against the persuasion of fear and violence ignited by contemporary policies of the Indian state (Thapar 2022, Roy 2020, Chaudhuri 2019). I will propose the theoretical term *reexist* (a neologism composed of 'resist' and 're-exist' in different conditions) as a term that addresses Kandasamy's nuances of dissent and its subversive commitment inherited, as in Thapar's theorisation of dissent, both from post-colonial but also from pre-colonial times.

In this sense, Kandasamy's latest poetry collection will be analysed as a form of creative resistance that enhances new paths to re-exist and survive physically, mentally, spiritually, and creatively. Kandasamy's collection will be used to study the role of her poetry to offer reparative histories which use postcolonial and decolonial theory (Castillo 2020, Gopal 2019, Santos 2016) and articulate performances of subversive resistance (Herrero 2019, Fraile-Marcos 2019, Bracke

2016, O'Brien 2013, Spivak 2012) that unveil the post-colonial, colonial and pre-colonial trajectories of Indian dissidence (Thapar 2022). Accordingly, it is my intention to study the different oppositional acts explained in this poetry collection to highlight the importance of Kandasamy's act of dissidence to counteract and interrogate the interlocking systems of domain of the Indian state and its transnational prosecution against acts of *resistance*.

### **Keywords:**

Indian Poetry in English; Resistance; Anti-Nationalism; Dissent; Militancy; Meena Kandasamy.

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### **Selina Thompson's *salt*: A Monument of Remembrance and Affective Healing**

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Selina Thompson's play *salt*. (2018) is a landmark addition to the genealogy of Black British theatre, whose longevity, development and crucial significance in the context of British theatre has been amply examined in the last two decades (Abram 2020; Chambers, 2011; Goddard, 2015; Griffin, 2003, Pearce, 2017). *salt*. is the result of the deeply emotional voyage Thompson carried out for forty-two days in the months of February and March 2016 on a cargo ship retracing the route of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Thompson's journey took her from the United Kingdom to Ghana and Jamaica, fundamental locations of the three-legged Transatlantic triangle. The play premiered at London Southbank Centre in July 2017 to great acclaim and subsequently toured in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, USA and Brazil. The national and international praise that Thompson received culminated with the release, on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021, by BBC Four of a documentary of the same title combining footage from the theatrical performance with extracts from an interview with Selina Thompson conducted by renowned Black British writer and broadcaster, Afua Hirsch. In this paper, I shall study Thompson's play as a unique case in the

context of the neo-slave genre, mostly cultivated through fiction and poetry, in its revisiting of the history of British plantation slavery and its enduring legacies. Thompson's solo play not only retraces the Transatlantic Slave Triangle so as to revisit the historical connections between Britain, Jamaica and Ghana and connect the past with the present, but also in order to envisage a future, both personal and collective, for her and for Britain as a nation at a moment in history where the legacies of slavery are still in the process of being fully acknowledged and negotiated. I shall also explore Thompson's personal journey and that of her theatrical alter ego's one, "The Woman", as the embodiment of personal and collective processes of remembrance and affective healing which through this theatrical performance acquire a resonance of epic proportions. The Woman's appeal to the audience to commit themselves to remember the past in order to ground the present and build a future together not only symbolically encapsulates "the commitment to the radical space of not moving on" (Thompson, 2018: 52), but also becomes a reminder of the monumental task of maintaining alive an "affective memory" (Karavanta, 2013) which can only be rescued by the community. It is my contention that there are two main driving emotions guiding Thompson's journey and process of affective healing: anger and love. I shall examine them both drawing upon Audre Lorde's (1981) and bell hook's (2006) conceptualisations of the potential uses of these two emotions in struggles for freedom and liberation so as to highlight the importance of creolising affect (Anim-Addo, 2013).

**Keywords:**

Black British theatre; Selina Thompson; *salt.*; neo-slave genre; remembrance.

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**NoViolet Bulawayo's *Glory* (2022): Re-assessing and Decolonising African History**

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African fiction, both that written on the continent and in the diaspora, is certainly flourishing and in a constant process of transformation and redefinition. As a matter of fact, there is an emerging trend among contemporary female African authors worth taking into consideration: the aim to write on their own terms epic, multigenerational and historical counter-narratives of their respective countries, with particular emphasis on periods of political turmoil. To put it differently, these writers engage in a thorough process of historical revision and aesthetic experimental peculiarities, always having in mind a feminist political agenda. The novel that will be chosen for analysis here is NoViolet Bulawayo's *Glory* (2022), a political satire/fable which clearly echoes George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). This voluminous novel mainly tackles

Zimbabwe's tumultuous past, in particular Robert Mugabe's downfall and its aftermath, together with the relational nature of human and non-human entanglement in both pre-colonial and neo-colonial contexts. As will be shown, *Glory* accommodates diverse worldviews and strands of knowledge in keeping with the notion of 'pluriversality', understood by Enrique Dussel (2012) as an alternative to the univocal knowledge provided by grand universal narratives, and by Walter D. Mignolo as the need to prompt a "response and confrontation with universal Eurocentrism" (2011, 344) while urging to build "histories-others," that is, "histories written by those who were made others and the histories of Western expansion seen from the receiving end of globalisation" (330). Likewise, this novel can be seen as an example of 'narratives of the limit', to rely on Rodríguez Magda's (2019) term to refer to a new generation of transmodern literatures which, unlike the 'narratives of celebration' that reiterate the dominant discourse and ideology with a view to making them hegemonic, attempt to think what has not been conceptualised yet, both as regards form and content, thus marking the advent of a paradigmatic turn towards the new understanding of the very notions of liminality and relationality brought about, in this particular case, by the effects of colonial violence and dispossession. Transmodernity is the term coined in the late eighties by the Spanish philosopher Rosa María Rodríguez Magda in order to designate a paradigm shift inaugurating a new global worldview that, taking up Modernity's challenges and assumptions while assuming the postmodern criticism of them, mainly strives to revalue and integrate formerly discarded values from premodern cultures. In the case of *Glory*, it is the reassessment of Zimbabwean lifeworlds and cosmologies, in a clear attempt to eschew Eurocentric representational codes, that takes the upper hand.

Last but not least, this novel will also be suffused with theories of the Global South (West-Pavlov 2018), which prompt notions such as decolonial re-existence as resistance (Mignolo 2011; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Falola 2022), and multiversality and epistemic disobedience (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018), with a view to questioning and decentering Eurocentric discourses, while retrieving and reappraising elements of myth and oral African stories, mainly passed on by women.

#### **Keywords:**

No Violet Bulawayo; African counter-narratives; Zimbabwe's historical past; decolonial re-existence; epistemic disobedience.

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#### **Cultural Liminalities and Missionary Schools in Colonial Kerala**

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The educational paradigm in Travancore remains today a mystery. While the rest of the country is sadly immersed in an episode of relatively high illiteracy, Kerala, on the contrary, stands first among other states in education. This communication aims to draw on a very thin line over the footprint of missionaries in colonial Travancore as one of the consequences for this paradigmatic asymmetry. This paper aims at demonstrating that missionary schools functioned in colonial Kerala as a physical and metaphorical space that challenged existing hierarchies. To that end we borrow from postcolonial scholarship, a theory that might help us investigate the communication resulted from the liminal interaction between colonial and indigenous narratives, thus H. Bhabha's "Third Space" is key in our approach to this subject. In short, the Indian scholar elaborates, borrowing from Victor Turner and Soja, on an imaginary space where two discourses (or spaces), the hegemonic and the subaltern, meet in conversation in the hope of interweaving experiences. Nevertheless, we speak of missionary schools as a "Fourth Space," because these zones coerced the dialectal encounter between three discourses that would not normally concurred: the one of the colonizers, the low-castes, and the wealthier classes. Synergies that, we advance, occur asymmetrically. Our analysis follows a very didactic configuration after the transitional taxonomy popularized by van Gennep and later developed by Turner, who has been central in the construction of "Third Space." Our contention is that these schools reconditioned the already systematized social rhythm of Travancore. The reality is that, prior to missionary intervention, vernacular or public schools were only accessible for Brahmins and other high-castes. With the arrival of European colonizers, educators grouped students following a different criterion that, redundantly enough, proved convenient for the colonial enterprise. Even if accidentally, they catapulted a more egalitarian and democratic model in the local educational paradigm. However, they also problematized an already complicated scenario for Southern Indians. We therefore argue that this is not simply a Third Space where the colonizer and the colonized meet in conversation, but rather a Fourth Space in which the colonized dialogue for the first time under the supervising eye of the colonizer. In this Fourth Space, as it happens in Bhabha's proposal, hybridity functions as "the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects" (Bhabha, 1994: 112). Even if discriminatory, new ways of appropriation and resistance emerged. We are aware of the problematics of colonial education, yet denying that such representational symbiosis in the Fourth Space helped in the articulation of new insubordinate discourses and identities that were long denied, would also result into a dishonest investigation.

**Keywords:**

Colonialism; Education; Kerala; Missionaries; Schools.

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## Advocating for Equality: Perspectives on Dalit Human Rights in Modern India

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Aiming to contribute to the ongoing struggle for the human rights of marginalized communities through a literary lens, this paper will explore the perspectives of Yashica Dutt and Githa Hariharan regarding Dalit human rights in present-day India. Dutt, a prominent Dalit writer and activist, draws from her personal experiences to shed light on Dalits' state of affairs. Her memoir *Coming Out as Dalit* (2019) not only chronicles her personal journey as a Dalit woman but also contributes to a broader understanding of the urgent need for equal rights and dignity for her community. In contrast, Hariharan, a Brahmin writer known for her nuanced portrayal of social issues, weaves together three different perspectives on Dalit human rights in her novel *I Have Become the Tide* (2019). While not a Dalit herself, Hariharan utilises her privileged position to critique the biases and power dynamics prevalent in Indian society and advocate for the rights of marginalised communities.

By highlighting the power of literature in amplifying marginalised voices and challenging oppressive systems, this paper aims to contribute to the larger movement for social change and human rights advancement. To support the analysis, this paper will draw upon the works of renowned scholars and activists such as Anupama Rao (2009), Surinder Jodhka (2015) and Anand Teltumbde (2017) on caste theory and the historical and social context of Dalit rights. Additionally, concepts such as intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989), substantive equality (Sen 2000), human development and capabilities approach (Nussbaum 2000) and transformative justice (Daly 2002; Gready and Simon 2014) will be explored to examine the interconnectedness of caste, gender, class, the intersectional dimensions of Dalit human rights, and the necessary conditions for their realisation. These diverse perspectives contribute to a deeper understanding of human rights, social justice, and the interplay of different forms of discrimination, all of which are crucial for analysing and advocating for Dalit human rights in contemporary India.

### Keywords:

Dalit; Caste; Human Rights; Intersectionality; Transformative Justice.

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### Attire in Kai Cheng Thom's Work

Alejandra Moreno Álvarez



Kai Cheng Thom, Chinese Canadian writer, performer and diasporic trans woman of colour, often writes about clothing in her novels. Thom's selected garments provide the characters, as well as the author herself, with the empowerment that they seek. My intent is to show the role of such attire in Thom's work—*Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars. A Dangerous Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir* (2016) and *I Hope We Choose Love. A Trans Girl's Notes from the End of the World* (2019)—by focusing on three elements: a suit, a dress, and a pair of heels.

Thom asserts that the “resilience and brilliance of trans people have a long and proud lineage, rooted in the ancestral memory of colonized peoples worldwide” (2019, 103). It is this resilience that made Thom take off her makeup, and dress in a black suit and tie at her grandfather's funeral. In this personal essay (2019), the author explains how the suit did not mean choosing between being a trans and being Chinese but expressing her belief in the strength of her family values plus “the magic of queerness: transformation, change, adaptation, and resiliency” (2019, 125). Thom also tells the story of her womanhood through the outline of an iconic outfit, a *cheongsam*, a high-neck dress with side slits that marks the silhouette of a woman's body and that has become the summit of Chinese femininity and a traditional as well as an erotic garment. The *cheongsam* represents “...the texture of our humanity, our womanhood” (129) which becomes lost in translation when crossing Chinese borders. From being an item of clothing that covered women's bodies, uniform style, and that restricted free movement, it became a sensual dress, thanks to its shortening and side openings. For Thom, the *cheongsam* is a liminal garment: too queer for Chinatown; too “whitewashed” for the urban queer scenes of Mainland China (123). But the *cheongsam* “hides more than it reveals” (130) allowing the character to go down a new path; nonetheless, this garment is the one she chose to wear for the first time in public as a trans woman, giving a new meaning both to the *cheongsam* and to herself. On the other hand, Thom's first pair of heels were “dark shiny luscious red that makes them look molten, like crimson liquid in a shoe-shaped mouth” (2016, 63). The high heels turn this character into an unstoppable subject. With them she goes out empowered, feeling sexy “closer to some dangerous heaven” (64). Heels make the character feel different, thus becoming, once she puts them on, a liminal subject that escapes definitions and is aware that “a femme's heels are serious business” (64). By wearing these heels the character feels real and becomes the designer of her own identity and subjectivity. Fashion, therefore, constitutes a discourse, and clothes are its expression. Although fashion is generally taken as a language that builds us up and traps us, clothing, as I will attempt to prove, can also be a means of empowering.

**Keywords:**

Kai Cheng Thom; attire; identity; liminal space.

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**Neo-Slave Narratives as Sites of Resilience: Rewriting Black Canada in Lawrence Hill's *Any Known Blood* and *The Book of Negroes***

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This paper examines how Canadian neo-slave narratives *Any Known Blood* (1997) and *The Book of Negroes* (2007), written by reknown author Lawrence Hill, provide the framework to study discursive resilience through a new lense, through the wake of slavery. Before the American Civil War, Black slaves and ex-slaves claimed their own voices by writing about their life experiences and producing the autobiographical writing known as slave narratives. In the 20th and 21st centuries, this literary form gave way to the new genre of the neo-slave narrative, which revisits the experience of slavery through fictional characters that narrate their journey to freedom, and usually highlights the resilience of slaves and ex-slaves. In recent decades, neo-slave narratives in Canada, have brought to the forefront new discussions concerning the wake of slavery (Sharpe) and theories of resilience that relate to the Black experience in this North American country. This paper aims to apply the scholarship on discursive resilience to the analysis of two neo-slave narratives by Black Canadian author Lawrence Hill, namely, *The Book of Negroes* and *Any Known Blood*. I argue that he uses discursive resilience as an aesthetic technique to revisit the Black experience in the wake of slavery through a new lense. *Any Known Blood* reprieves the story and history of five generations of the Black Canadian Cane family through five generations, from the nineteenth-century slave trade to the twentieth century, while *The Book of Negroes* narrates the life and liberation of Aminata at the turn of the eighteenth century, telling her journey from the time she was captured in her African hometown as a young girl and enslaved in South Carolina to her old age and collaboration with the abolitionists in England. Following recent studies that highlight the importance of discursive resilience (Hájek, Fraile-Marcos) as an innovative and revisionist literary technique, I will study how these neoslave narratives grapple with the profound impact of slavery on the Black experience and its consequences in today's societies. This paper argues that Hill's Canadian neoslave narratives bring up the forgotten experience of Black Canada, exposing the shortcomings of the hegemonic Canadian metanarrative and the haunting impact of slavery in the postcolonial imagination. Consequently, this paper shows these narratives as expressive sites of discursive resilience and consciousness that work as literatures of the wake, as representations of Black annotation, contributing to the deconstruction of myths and the recovery of a differential historical and cultural memory.

**Keywords:**

Discursive resilience; Canada; neo-slave narratives.

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**Female Empowerment and Participatory Culture in the Nigerian Web Series *Skinny Girl in Transit***



This paper explores the Nigerian online romantic comedy *Skinny Girl in Transit* (2015-present) and how it delves into contemporary Nigerian womanhood. With its seventh season in the making, *Skinny Girl in Transit* has become a consolidated show which has been praised for granting visibility to specific challenges of contemporary Nigerian women (Makinde 2020). The show follows the life of Tiwa, a self-declared overweight twenty-eight-year-old living in Lagos. As head of a radio program called *The Gist*, Tiwa discusses her concerns regarding love, Nigerian traditions, and self-acceptance with her Nigerian audience. In this context, *The Gist* constitutes a platform to expose Nigerian women's struggles in the public and private spheres. My contention is that *The Gist* functions as a meta-device to spread counter-discursive notions of beauty and to question customary laws and the gendered power relations they foster. For this, I shall first focus on Tiwa's discussion of body politics as she denounces that Nigerian women are under pressure to abide by traditional and western opposed notions of an ideal body (Amazue 2014, 6113). Pre-colonial beauty standards associated large female bodies with "wealth, fitness of clothing, [...] physical strength, better sexual enjoyment, and leadership" (Ibrahim and Jegede 2017, 6). However, during the last two decades, "there has been increased publicity and awareness of the implications of obesity" (Duru 2017, 119) in Nigeria. Through *The Gist*, Tiwa voices how cultural contradictions regarding body size affect not only Nigerian women's self-esteem but also their professional opportunities when it comes to being hired or given a promotion. Tiwa's sharing of her personal experience will be explored as a form of mentorship which encourages her interactive audience to publically discuss their anxieties with their fellow Nigerians. I seek to demonstrate that Tiwa's discussion of her private fears in the public sphere fosters a sense of "participatory culture" (Jenkins 2009: xi). *The Gist* will be read as a safe space fostering a sense of comradeship and social connection which ultimately prompts critical thinking towards Nigerian customary laws and the practices that undermine Nigerian women's rights. Against this background, the focus shall turn to other concerns affecting contemporary Nigerian women such as: trusting dating apps, dealing with infidelities, problems conceiving, and even the mechanics of Nigerian politics. In this manner, female participants in *The Gist* will be examined as metonymically representing the multiplicity of voices and socio-cultural realities of Nigerian women. In turn, Tiwa's self-love as a plus-size heroine turns into a force to inspire her listeners through this national radio platform which, very much like *Skinny Girl in Transit*, constitutes a transgressive tool of female empowerment.

**Keywords:**

Nigeria; web series; romantic comedy; plus-size heroine; womanhood.

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## The Mechanics of Romantic Love in *Florence*

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Video games are not primarily associated to romance. At a second glance, however, romantic love is present in many of them: some provide romantic subplots and secondary mechanics that simulate romantic relationships, some give the opportunity to develop a relationship with other players, while others are focused on romance itself such as hidden object video games and otome games (Chess 2014; Saito 2021). This diversity in how romance appears is due to the broad range of existing game types and where these are placed on the literary-ludic continuum, a continuum which places games that privilege the “*playerly*” or interactive aspect on one end and the “*readerly*” or narrative aspect on the other (Ensslin 2014). This paper is focused on how the readerly mobile-phone game—or interactive love story—*Florence*, released in 2018 by the Australian studio *Mountains* under the leadership of Chinese-Australian director Ken Wong, represent romantic love through its gameplay mechanics and traditional narrative elements.

Using Grace’s (2011) analogy of independent games as narrative poetry, I will argue that the combination of the gameplay mechanics together with the visual and narrative features create a meaningfully-situated representation of romantic love in relation to the western concept of love and Australian multiculturalism. Sundaram and Gottlieb (2022) argue that the game’s cultural specificities are flattened into a cosmopolitan, globalised experience of a story that is other yet “quintessentially human” (77). While the game attempts to normalise cultural differences by making them part of the mundane and is, indeed, aimed at a global market, the conceptions of a “universal love story” (90) and of a “*normal couple*” (91; original emphasis) may prevent us from looking at how the imagery and tropes used have specific cultural implications in terms of national discourse and gender roles in romantic relationships.

This paper will explore the literary characteristics of the videogame, paying particular attention to how the figurative language that is mapped onto concrete mechanics of the game relate to romantic and national discourses. Meaning is mainly presented wordlessly through metaphorical gameplay. This is not unusual as figurative language is often used to make sense of difficult or abstract notions through simpler, more physical experiences (Lakoff 1993). In the game, for example, the intangible status of a romantic relationship—if it is beginning, stable, deteriorating or broken—is mapped onto the concrete object of the puzzle—used in interactive play—in reference to the metaphors of “fitting together” or the “other half” that are part of the discourse of soulmates, that is, of an idealised relationship.

### Keywords:

Asian-Australian studies; videogames; romantic love; figurative language; intersectionality.

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## The habit of self-critique: postcolonial theories and decolonial methodologies

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In his influential handbook *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2010, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) John McLeod dedicates a full chapter to reviewing what he describes as the healthy habit of self-critique that characterizes the postcolonial theoretical field. McLeod’s extensive review takes into consideration the practice of self-reflection within postcolonial criticism, registering the major drawbacks and weaknesses that have been pointed out by diverse critical currents within Postcolonial Studies. Among them, McLeod discusses the critique to the almost exclusive use of Western theory, raised by intellectuals in non-Western epistemological traditions; the tendency to abstraction of some of the major postcolonial theorists and their strong focus on discourse, a critique coming most notably from Marxist materialist flanks; or the neglect regarding gender and sexuality issues, coming from feminist critics. In my intervention, I propose to contribute to this habit of self-critique by examining the more recent irruption of decolonial methodologies as a strong critical current that further problematizes the status of postcolonial theory in the academic world. The concept of *decoloniality* is fundamental in two different epistemological frameworks: Indigenous epistemologies and the Latin American project Modernity / Coloniality. On the one hand, Indigenous epistemologies, which are firmly grounded on the premise that the “post” in “post-colonial” is simply a lie, a (neo)colonial fallacy that pretends to cover ongoing settler colonialism in the Americas, Australia and Oceania. Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* was a groundbreaking contribution in the struggle of unveiling imperialist regimes of truth, followed by intensive theoretical production on the part of numerous Indigenous scholars who reject to be included under the designation “postcolonial subjects” given the colonial conditions in which they live (see Simpson 2017). On the other hand, the Latin American Modernity / Coloniality project, developed by thinkers like Aníbal Quijano, María Lugones. Walter D. Mignolo and Ramón Grosfoguel, among others, has focused on exposing the connivance of postcolonial thought with modernity –a driving force of colonial expansion-- and, thus, with coloniality.

In this paper, I will offer an overview of the points of convergence and divergence among these two theorizations of decoloniality, and of their approaches to colonialism as an ongoing phenomenon. I am interested in evaluating the potential benefits of exploring what Gurinder K Bhambra has named the “connected sociologies” of postcolonial and decolonial theories, while also amplifying Bhambra’s scope to include Indigenous views, which are not considered in his analysis. I will also defend the need to be more attentive to the theories developed in non-Anglophone contexts so as to be more effective in the process of actual decolonization.

### Keywords:

postcolonial theory; decoloniality; Indigenous epistemologies; Coloniality/Modernity.

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### **The Female Figure in Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story***

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The female figure in Wicomb's oeuvre proves her determination to provide the reader with the female perspective of those voiceless South African women by "pointing out the difficulties suffered by coloured women" (Wicomb 2011, 142). Although the title suggests the opposite, the female characters in this novel play an essential role for the development of both the story and David himself. Due to this reason, Dulcie and Sally, the antagonistic characters of this novel, will be analyzed in this paper through post-colonial theories on identity construction – specifically black female identity – (Baiada 2007, Fanon 1986). They represent the two kinds of women during the liberation movement. Sally would represent those women who had to leave behind the guerrilla to focus on domestic issues, reproduction and stay at home, leaving her "in some measure dissatisfied with her insertion into domestic life" (Alvarez 2011, 129). On the other hand, we find Dulcie, whose denial of leaving the Movement automatically transforms her into "not a woman at all [...] not pretty" (80). These two characters' analysis will be supported by the works of feminist scholars such as Samuelson, Ngwira or Felki, whose insights into the black female identity – inside and outside South Africa – can bring some light to the challenging role black women had during the Black Consciousness Movement. Furthermore, factors such as memory and truth (Gabeba 2009, Graham 2008) will be taken into consideration, given that the indetermination of truth by word of mouth usually results in misconceptions, as happens, for instance, with Dulcie's strength and her "super natural powers" (180). In fact, "Wicomb always questions the existence of one fixed 'truth', which translates into her postmodern approach to literature, which, as previously illustrated, is admittedly "fragmented, indeterminate" (2013, 116). What *David's Story* accomplishes is a demonstration of how truth depends on the eye on the beholder, fulfilling then Wicomb's aim "to show that there is not one definite truth about that history" (Wicomb, interview, 2010: 24). By examining the female characters that lived under the Black Movement in *David's Story*, this paper aims firstly, to analyze both the agency and the role women were given inside and outside the guerrilla in order to determine whether any of the female characters achieve the agency they aim for (Spivak 1988). Secondly, to consider these female characters' relation to Saartjie Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman who was exhibited around Europe with the name 'Hottentot Venus' – for the relevance this historical character has for the story and the similarities the female characters share with her. Thus, through the analysis of both Sally and Dulcie, this paper aims to highlight Wicomb's denunciation of the sometimes-hidden reality of women in the ANC and how the treatment of their gender, their bodies – which worsens if steatopygious – and their colouredness become a primordial differential issue.

#### **Keywords:**

Postcolonialism; South Africa; female; Zoë Wicomb; Apartheid.

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### **"More human than human": Capitalist (un)happiness is Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl***

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Asian Canadian author Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl* (2002) uses science fiction and myth to explore issues of identity, class struggle and happiness. *Salt Fish Girl* presents two different timelines as it simultaneously follows the stories of Nu Wa, a snake woman from Chinese mythology, and Miranda, her reincarnation who lives in the year 2044 and suffers from a virus that makes her reek of durian fruit. The novel explores their humanity or lack thereof and presents Miranda's timeline as marked by the brutality of a patriarchal and capitalist system and the production and exploitation of clones, placing the novel in the dystopian genre. Even when there is a somewhat significant amount of literary analysis regarding these ideas in the novel, they are often approached from a transhumanist stance that focuses on the concept of the cyborg. Thus, a study that focuses on affects as a social tool and its connections to posthumanism and the concept of monstrosity is yet to be conducted. This paper presents an analysis of Lai's novel through the lens of affect theory and posthumanism in order to explore what forms the concept of the human and the monstrous as well as the notion of affects as a tool of societal control and the role that the concept of happiness plays in a capitalist system. In particular, I follow Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) to explore how expectations of happiness and prosperity are presented under certain conditions in an effort to control and maintain the existing social and economic fabric and how these conditions are often connected to identity markers. Thus, I explore the concept of the human, presented by Rosi Braidotti in *The Posthuman* (2013) as a normative category, in order to define the monstrous, which is often presented as a mere sign of difference and surrounded by a sense of shame. The correlation between these two terms exposes the place non-normative identities take in the promise of happiness, questioning whose happiness is valued. This way, I use the characters' monstrosity as clones, mythological creatures, and 'sick' durian-smelling reincarnations as a sign of difference not only to explain their role as (un)happy subjects, but also as an exploration of the social and economic system that surrounds them and their place in it. Thus, this study participates in ongoing theoretical discourses such as affect theory and posthumanism from the perspective of literary analysis as it focuses on the examination of speculative fiction as a medium. It presents an intersectional approach and deals with the space occupied by non-normative subjects in a capitalist system that makes promises of happiness.

#### **Keywords:**

Speculative fiction; Larissa Lai; affect theory; posthumanism; capitalism.

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### **Chibundu Onuzo’s *Sankofa*: Retrieving an African Identity from Colonial History Bites**

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Onuzo’s choice of this title is not a lucky turn of serendipity. In fact, the word “Sankofa” is one of the Adinkra symbols, a vernacular visual set of concepts represented in icons that encapsulate traditional cultural, political, social, ontological and philosophical knowledge. According to Bruce Willis’ work *The Adinkra Dictionary*, these ideograms emanated from the Akan people in West Africa mainly from Kumasi in Ghana. Each image expresses one or more ideas. Sankofa, which has more than one graphical representation, is presented in his case as a feathered creature with its feet ready to walk forward, though the neck and beak of the fowl are looking back, so as not to forget to carry the valuable egg and leave it behind. Even if it is not a songbird, it still carries an important message: Don’t leave the gems -knowledge and experience- of the past behind. Fetch them and bring them to the present. The aim of this paper is to highlight through Postcolonial theory and African literary criticism how Onuzo uses the grand history of the British Empire during the colonial era to focus on personal lives and identities of individuals who lived in Britain in the sixties. Her sources vary depending on the past events that the people experience. Anna, the main character, after her mother’s death, is interested in discovering who her father was and how he, as a west African, related to her Welsh mother in London at that time. The first notebook Anna finds hidden in her mother’s trunk along with the picture of a black man uncovers Francis Aggrey’s impressions about his life in a racist London. The notes were varied and full of expressive encounters with different situations from which Anna could sketch out the character of an African from Bamana. Moreover, contrast these entries with Anna’s overlapping opinions and words as a person belonging to a recent generation. At this point the reader starts having ideas about the young Aggrey, about his daughter’s new generation, but need to hear the mother’s voice. Missing her mother’s opinion about Aggrey, Anna finds a second book full of press clippings about Aggrey where we all learn about his political intentions. Once she discovered he had become the first prime minister of Bamana under a different name -Kofi Adjei-she started to use technology and the British Library to research. Onuzo’s incursions in possible colonial and independence history of an invented west African country ring many bells until she pushes Anna to go to west Africa to discover the truth about her roots and ancestors. She visits the fictitious Bamana and the metaphoric slavery Castle that stands for the Elmina Castle in Ghana. This research will delve into the different ways these identities are built up through historical facts, metaphors and different types of texts. Kadiatu Kanneh’s work will help unravel the complexities of this novel, as well as Anyidoho’s critical text that suggests and explain the use of metaphors intertwined with vernacular knowledge to deal with the African issues.

#### **Keywords:**

Sankofa; Colonial History; Intertextuality; Skin Shades; British Museum.





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## Mere Gelatin: Political-Affective Strategies in the Poetry of Roque Salas Rivera

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Socially-engaged poetry, the current umbrella term used to encompass the various iterations of works committed to socio-political causes, presents certain features that separates it from the genre's version of the past century. Namely, today's political poets generate engaging strategies by unapologetically blending ideological, identitarian, and experimental elements in their productions to convey their messages. Driven by a keen sense of justice and queer utopianism, Puerto Rican poet and translator of trans experience Roque Salas Rivera's oeuvre grows out of an unyielding love for Puerto Rico, its land, people, and language. As Wendy Trevino has noticed, there vibrates in Salas Rivera's work an "urgency [...] to address the present & all its crises" (Salas Rivera 2015). In the spirit of Nelson Maldonado-Torres's decolonial fervor and José Esteban Muñoz's queer theory of hope, this involvement with the present fuels on the perspective of a future that will emerge from within the waste lands of disaster capitalism. The books studied here attest to this engaging zeal: *lo terciario / the tertiary* is a direct response to the release of the PROMESA bill, a manifestation of economic violence that curtails Puerto Rico's autonomy; and *while they sleep (under the bed is another country)* is born from the rage before the political negligence in the aftermath of hurricane María, which devastated areas of the Caribbean in the fall of 2017. While scholars have typically approached Salas Rivera's poetic collections from the angle of translingualism, or languageism, I would like to focus my analyses on a more elusive aspect of translation that can be gathered from the poet's work. In what follows, I will first trace their theorization of self-translation, which can be found scattered through Salas Rivera's prose and poetic work, interviews, and articles. Following the poet's claim that "[e]xperiencing deeply can lead us to fight for change in ways that affect more than just ourselves" (2017), I contend that beyond linguistic theorization, these strategies conceal a socio-poetical goal: the engagement of individuals via emotionally charged language with a view to creating new collectives unhinged from fixed inherited identifications that will envision and create alternative futures. I will then analyze the deployment and limits of these affect-translating strategies in *lo terciario* and *while they sleep*, while problematizing currently-held notion of the witness stance with regards to its role in trauma theory and its recent rejection in the field of political poetry to reclaim it as a valid means of representation.

**Keywords:**

Salas Rivera; socially-engaged poetry; self-translation; affect; witness poetry.

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**Narratives of memory in contemporary British and American decolonial fiction: Bernardine Evaristo's *Manifesto* (2022) and Cherríe Moraga's *Native Country of the Heart* (2019)**

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In the context of memory narratives and decolonial communities, the main aim of this article is to provide a comparative analysis of two texts subtitled "memoirs". It shows that the use of the memoir by the two authors - the British writer Evaristo and the Chicana writer Moraga - is not a matter of coincidence. In *Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography*, Francis R. Hart distinguishes between the autobiographical genre and memoir in that "memoir is personal history that seeks to demonstrate or repossess the historicity of the self (...) and places the self relative to time/history, cultural pattern and change" (Hart 1974, 491). Our analysis shows that the historicity of the self in Evaristo and Moraga refers to two different historical contexts, yet contains two similar decolonial experiences of dispossession, loss, nostalgia and trauma.

The first decolonial memoir in our study is by the British writer Bernardine Evaristo, who, after winning the 2019 Booker Prize for her novel *Girl, Woman, Other*, focuses on telling "a memoir and a meditation on my life" (Evaristo 2002, 1). In *Manifesto: On Never Giving up*, Evaristo observes that the collection of her childhood memories stems from the invisibility and denial of these memory narratives of British people of African ancestry "while the post-war Windrush Caribbean era of arrival has been well documented and explored, the equivalent African narratives have not" (Evaristo 2022, 6). Likewise, this paper analyses the narration of trauma and the construction of memory in Cherríe Moraga's memoir, in addition to providing a brief overview of the historical and social context of the Chicana/o community in the United States. From literature and literary criticism to ethnography, history, sociology, anthropology, politics and the visual arts, Chicana/o studies encompass many important scientific and artistic fields. However, the methodology in this paper is novel. There is little research that proposes the study of Chicana/o fiction through the prism of multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2009) or trauma (Caruth 1996) as a vertebral theoretical framework. On the other hand, the field of postcolonial/decolonial criticism has been instrumental in understanding and analyzing Chicana/o works (and other Latina/o communities in the United States) from the twentieth century to the present. However, memory and trauma studies have been less explored in relation to decolonial Latina/o identities in the United States. The conclusions of this study are derived from the analysis of the two memoirs, considering the coordinates of multidirectional memory, post-memory, and trauma, as it is the individual and collective memory that functions as a chisel that carves the identity of these two decolonial writers.

**Keywords:**

Decolonial; Memoir; Moraga; Evaristo; Chicana.

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### **Mental Health and Community in Giles' "Rain to Swell the Olives" (1994) and Tsoulis' *Between the Ceiling and the Sky* (1998)**

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Mental health is central to a person's well-being and the experience of migration, which oftentimes is felt as exile, is stressful, just as Edward Said said: "Exile is life led outside the habitual order" (2000: 186). The stress of migrating to a new country can show its effects as physical, psychological and/or emotional pain or wounds that cannot close.

Literature and storytelling "provide the means for dealing with experiences by discussing them" (Sarup 139) as it allows readers to reflect on several situations and develop an understanding and empathy for the experiences of the characters. As Julia Kuznetski and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín explain, "literature expose[s]... controversies and point[s] directions to possible solutions" (2023: 6) and Madan Sarup furthers on this idea by stating that literature means "to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement [as t]he achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever" (1991: 137).

This paper aims to analyse two texts. First, the short story "Rain to Swell the Olives" (1994), written by Sydney-born Greek-Australian author Zeny Giles, explores the consequences of the stress and the lack of support felt by the main character in her impossibility to get pregnant in Australia. Second, the novel *Between the Ceiling and the Sky* (1998), written by Greek-born Greek-Australian author Eugenia Tsoulis, OAM, also explores mental health and the importance of the support of friends and a community. The analysis will rely on Intersectional feminism (Kuznetski and Pellicer-Ortín 2023) and Trauma Studies (Balaev 2018).

The expected results include a deeper understanding of vulnerability, resistance, the importance of community and the difficulty of speaking or being heard even when those characters are literate and brave.

#### **Keywords:**

Migration; identity; trauma; healing.

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### **Postcolonial Self-Fashioning in Preti Taneja's "Four Models in Bright Hats Think about the Future"**

*Andrea Llano Busta*

The idea of self-fashioning takes on a new significance in a postcolonial context, for subjects must (re)construct their identities, sometimes doing so, quite literally, through the clothes and accessories they wear. Indeed, “practices of fashioning, styling, and their visual representation had been considered as having a fundamental role in the production of emancipatory identity politics, countercultural resistance, and the foundation of corresponding image archives” (Gaugele & Titton 2019, 14). The two-sided process of letting oneself be seen and observing others forms the backbone of Preti Taneja’s “Four Models in Bright Hats Think about the Future at the End of the 1990s, or the End of the 1990s from the Future” (2022), a short story that revises colonial legacies and their ramifications in the English fashion industry of the late twentieth century. By adopting the perspective of second-generation migrants modelling in a photoshoot for United Colors of Benetton—a company that “has attempted to redefine the link between commerce and politics by emphasizing both the politics of representation and the representation of politics” (Giroux 1994, 7)—the text juxtaposes both the perils of global capitalism to the development of an unadulterated sense of self and the transnational alliances that could counter them.

As for the theoretical framework, material memory and cultural studies will be essential for the analysis. The former refers to “the ability of an object or a possession to retain memory and act as stimulus for recollection” (Malhotra 2017), which Taneja neatly presents through the marketed clothes the characters wear and the inherited ones they fondly remember. These fashion items will be connected to the multidirectional circuit of style-fashion-dress (Green & Kaiser [2012] 2021), adapted from the circuit of culture by Paul du Gay et al. (1997) to display notions of consumption, regulation, distribution, production and, of course, subject-formation. Since Taneja repeatedly writes that “[t]he representation of reality becomes our lived experience,” a distinction will be drawn between the static depictions of the photographs and the flow of images conjured up by the narrator’s internal monologue. All in all, it will be argued that the short story encapsulates how the commodification of seemingly exotic clothing extends to the models themselves, who nonetheless retain the potential to reduce neocolonial and sexist oppression through a much-needed rupture of binaries based on three intertwined factors: the establishment of sisterhood ties among them, a profound understanding of the past, and the affirmation of their multiplicitous selves.

**Keywords:**

Body politics; circuit of style-fashion-dress; fashion studies; material memory; sisterhood.

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**Memoirs of mourning: Jamaica Kincaid’s *My Brother* and Jesmyn Ward’s *Men We Reaped***  
by

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In 1997 Jamaica Kincaid's brother died of AIDS associated complications. In her memoir *My Brother*, published that same year, she writes about the process of his death, her accompanying him and bringing AZT medication from the USA where she is living and her final realization after his death of his queerness. Readers are also presented with Kincaid's own experience as a diaspora writer, her relationship with her motherland Antigua and her mother. Jesmyn Ward's brother was killed in 2004 by a white drunk driver who was not charged with manslaughter therefore was sentenced to less years than he should have, five, of which he spent three and some months in jail. Four other black men she grew up with died violently from 2000 to 2004. Their deaths are told in reverse chronological order and interspersed with sections that tell the writer's upbringing in De Lisle, Mississippi and the circumstances of being poor and Black in the rural South.

This communication aims at exploring these two memoirs that have at their core the loss of a brother, but that are about much more than that. They both mourn more than the lives of lost ones. Their similarities and differences will be analyzed through the lens of mourning and grief taking into account Judith Butler's ideas on this and Derridean notions. Neither writer was living in their hometown when the death or illness that ended in death happened although there are stark differences between Kincaid's and Ward's relationship with where they were born, which plays a significant role in both memoirs. Both texts, it will be argued, mourn something else; Kincaid might be affected by what Paul Gilroy called postcolonial melancholia and, as the author herself admits, she is writing to save herself over and over again. Ward, on the other hand writes despite having been silenced by these terrible and violent deaths in a very consciously political and denunciatory act of resistance. Finally, the way both authors share the background of their dead, I argue, contributes to their humanization and representation as tridimensional beings, complicated, not gratuitously sanctified, besides being victims of different epidemics, HIV infection and violence against Black people and racist law enforcement and justice system in the USA.

**Keywords:**

Jamaica Kincaid; Jesmyn Ward; memoir; mourning; grief.

**Behind Bars and Beyond: Resisting Colonialism in Behrouz Boochani's Prison Writings**

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Over the six years that Behrouz Boochani spent incarcerated on Manus island, he wrote extensively about the refugees' conditions in Australia's offshore prisons. In his memoir, *No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* (2018), as well as his recently published essay collection, *Freedom, only Freedom* (2022), the Kurdish-Iranian refugee has expressed his sharp criticism of both Australia's immigration policies and the Iranian regime's oppressive measures against the Kurds. The aim of this paper is to draw attention to Boochani's position on politics of belonging. Through an analysis of his texts, as well as his visit to the Parliament in Canberra during his recent Australian tour to promote his new book, the paper focuses on Boochani's support of self-determination for the Kurds in Iran and the First Nations in Australia. By invoking Lorenzo Veracini's notion of settler colonialism operating "on the basis of expectation of its future demise" (2011: 3), the paper argues that Boochani resists the structures of both colonialism and settler colonialism.

**Keywords:**

Boochani; Offshore Detention; Belonging; Settler Colonialism; Uluru Statement from the Heart

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### **Indigiqueer Homemaking: Memory, Erotics, Food and Spirits**

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Queer Indigenous literatures, as Lisa Tantonetti asserts in relation to the work of Janice Gould (Koyang'auwi Maidu), could generally be seen as a "Palimpsest[s] of pasts and presents that fluidly intersect, overlap and rearrange through the *felt* experience[s] of history and memory" (2014, 146, emphasis in the original). This paper is an approach to how mnemonic, affective, and historical experiences are entangled with spatiotemporal home configurations in *indigiqueer* and Two-Spirit authors and their texts, such as Joshua Whitehead (Cree), Tommy Pico (Kumeyaay) and Beth Brant (Mohawk). By dwelling in their representations of home, which encompass (beyond) domestic structures, the land, and the body itself, and paying particular attention to the roles that the rooms of the kitchen and the basement have in orientating the writers' memory in their works of literary fiction, I aim to observe how these authors' work chorally dialogue to (dis)locate their characters and their identities, understanding the incommensurable objects (following Sara Ahmed's definition) that they use to (dis)orient themselves in these spaces, namely those which at times are associated to waste, to body fluids and things discarded or deemed as to be banished from the "clean" ideal of the "American Home" as queer decolonial, Indigenous orientation devices. In the first section of this paper, I will be elaborating on what is the methodological framework of my thesis, the intersection between Queer Indigenous, Waste, Affect, and Home studies; to later assess in a second section the main converging aspects between the authors chosen concerning the kitchen, as a room of multitemporal memory, active presence, the erotics of food and what is considered to be food/waste from Western and Indigenous frameworks; to, in a third section, dwell in the several "basements" across these works that bring to the spotlight the underlying knowledges, vulnerabilities, covert realities and relationships that build the contemporary foundations of (queer) Indigenous homemaking.

Therefore, taking home as the main starting point, this paper aims to open up a conversation between the literary works of *Indigiqueer*, Queer Indigenous, and Two-Spirit authors, such as Beth Brant's "My House" (1991), Joshua Whitehead's *Jonny Appleseed* (2018) and Tommy Pico's tetralogy (*IRL, Nature Poem, Junk, and Feed*, 2016-2019) to unravel the varied, diverse, and significant homemaking practices embedded in their pieces to (de)construct their identities in the context of waste Capitalism; while also de/reconstructing waste, which could begin to be considered as an *upcycling* of the homing devices in question; thus, unhousing overall the ideal of Home.

#### **Keywords:**

Two-Spirit; Queer Indigenous; Home; Memory; Waste.

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### **“Today, / I plant a poem”: Worldmaking in Jennifer Rahim’s *Sanctuaries of Invention***

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In the era of global capitalism, poetry is a privileged site to find alternative futures and the poet, a key cultural worker with a sensibility that allows them to decipher what lies behind official narratives. Focusing on Trinidadian writer Jennifer Rahim’s last collection of poetry, *Sanctuaries of Invention* (2021), this paper will argue that her work participates in the collaborative task of proposing decolonial and feminist futures for the Caribbean region.

Aware of the historic roots of the ills of the region, but optimistic about the possibilities of reconstruction, Rahim’s lines imagine a creation story for the region with a “first ancestor crocodile [that] swam an ocean/ to these Americas. // No one forced or stole her” (Rahim 2021, 9). Through this alternative story that imagines a female animal as forebearer for the region, the poet decentres humans from her worldmaking project, decolonises human’s relations to non-human animals and ultimately acknowledges the collective nature of the construction of decolonial and feminist futures.

Importantly, Rahim’s poetry unmasks the present “coloniality of power” (Quijano 2010) and recognises the Caribbean region’s position at the forefront of climate change resulting from its past and present colonial exploitation. Her poetry denounces the extractive industries of mining and tourism that maintain the region economically dependant and normalise a way of inhabiting the world “based upon the destructive exploitation of the environment” (Ferdinand 2022, 123). In fact, Rahim recognises that this capitalist mirage-development with devastating results for the region is accompanied by an imposed “coloniality of knowledge” (Quijano 2010) that maintains the region dependant on western approval and tutelage. In order to critique the two-fold dependant nature of the Caribbean, Rahim’s poetics propose alter(-)atives rooted in the knowledges of the region. Her lines recover female Caribbean folklore characters such as La Diabliesse, whom she envisions walking “the plantations of the world” (Rahim 2021, 63). In this way, the traditional figure of La Diabliesse – a beautiful woman in a long dress who has one calf as a foot and entices men astray at night – is resurrected to assert her potential to threaten the perpetuation of colonial worldly arrangements.

All in all, this paper will prove that Jennifer Rahim’s last collection of poetry is a testament to her worldmaking project: a decolonial effort at the service of a “humanizing (r)evolution” (Rahim 2013, 39) that seeks to overturn colonial ways of thinking about the Caribbean archipelago and propose alternatives to undo colonial modes of inhabiting the world.

#### **Keywords:**

Caribbean poetry; worldmaking; Jennifer Rahim; decolonial futures; feminist futures.

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## **Life as Ritual in Inga Simpson's *Nest***

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This paper deals with *Nest*, published in 2014 by the Australian novelist and nature writer Inga Simpson. It recounts the story of Jen, a middle-aged bird artist and former teacher who, after breaking up with her partner, resettles in the village where she was born. There, at a cottage among trees, she paints the local birds, looks after the vegetation and tutors a teenage boy, Henry. Jen's memories of her school friend Michael, who went missing at 12, and of her father's abandonment are painfully echoed by the sudden disappearance of a girl in Henry's class. Despite these tragic events, the narration puts the spotlight on the rhythms of everyday life at the small community, punctuated with the occasional trip to nature and encounters with relatives, friends and acquaintances.

Simpson's novel is analysed at the intersection of three theories: Byung-Chul Han's reflections on rituals, the ethics of attention and Dacher Keltner's studies in awe. Han laments the loss of rituals in contemporary societies and the erosion of people and communities it has brought along. He advocates for lifestyles that favour ceremony, contemplative attention, courtesy and hospitality as an antidote against contemporary narcissism and the current obsession with work and productivity. My main point here is that in *Nest* Simpson invokes the idea of life as ritual by highlighting the interconnected role of attention and awe through the figure of the protagonist. According to Keltner, awe brings "joy, meaning, and community" and "empowers us to collaborate, to open our minds to wonders, and to see the deep patterns of life" (xx), patterns, I argue, that can be best apprehended by means of ritual. However, for there to be awe, there first needs to be attention. Thus, Jen's ability to attend will be investigated as key to the experience of awe and the preservation of communal bonds, since the novel proves that attention, as Sandra Laugier believes, is intertwined with care. In *Nest*, attention and awe have the power to transform everyday actions into meaningful activities, elevating them to the category of small ceremonies. The fact that the protagonist is a nature artist is very relevant in that it further invites a reading of attention, awe and ritual alongside the continuum nature-culture. I propose that *Nest* acknowledges the continuity of this traditional divide while at the same time respecting the specificity of the two realms. Jen's form of attention to nature makes it apparent that her loving regard has replaced the instrumentalising gaze characteristic of the colonial mentality and that she feels deeply connected to the natural world. At the same time, her work as an artist and the various rituals she takes part in —domestic but also public— provide a meaningful anchor to culture. In this, as well as in its concern with the restoration of communal bonds, I defend that Simpson's novel is clearly representative of the emerging transmodern paradigm.

### **Keywords:**

Ethics of attention; ethics of care; awe; nature-culture; transmodernity.

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## Refugee Po-Ethics of Self-Location in SoutheastAsian Canadian Narratives

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This paper is focused on interpreting the way in which twenty-first-century refugee writing in Canada is currently approached critically and theoretically. It proposes new reading strategies that contest the influence of nation-state powers over literary production deployed with an aesthetics of neo cosmopolitanism. This proposal takes up refugee writing by Canadian writer Kim Thúy in order to show its affective relations in the transformation of subjectivity, confronting issues of Western complicity in foreign human rights abuses and in mediating questions about alternative epistemologies of healing and trauma posed by Canadian critics in the aftermath of mass violence. Living through broken times urges an act of “refugeetude” (Nguyen 2019) to relocate the subject in a new geopolitical homeSpace.

Keywords: Refugeetude; cosmopolitanism; hospitality; relocation; worldbuilding; Kim Thúy. *Poethics is what surrounds you like your house, it's where you live.* (Fred Wah's Faking It) Spanning a period of more than twenty years, the South(east) Asian “boat people” exodus was the last major refugee crisis of the Cold War. It started in the seventies but its consequences are lifelong. Most people were fleeing from the East to the West, with communist countries imposing penalties for illegal departure so severe that they amounted to persecution. In the last decade, a new concept of relocation and renewal will try to “reimagine a new life that would be planetary, or a consciousness of planetary entanglement, where a new shift becomes necessary, in a search for safety, away from the fear and anxiety that pervaded diasporic writing twenty years ago” (Mbembe 2018). We are willing to find a new epistemology that seems necessary to transform the current biopolitical set of relations that shape bodily and social space. This re-location of the diasporic subjectivity would create a new space of dissension and agency to contest previous attitudes of assimilation and resilience to national policies where subjects “occupy a paradoxical borderline position in Canadian society. A necessary shift in the discourse of the refugee is currently underway to create a new space of “subjecthood” (Puar 2017) with the means of “capacitating our understanding of lived realities of refugee experiences” (Nguyen, 30). Kim Thúy's *Em* (2021) contains some of these affective manifestations of territorial and emotional displacements. It uncovers selves, here and there, who are trapped geographically and linguistically, and focuses on collective re-locations to reverse and mitigate “the effects of epistemic violence” (Bakara 491). Bracke's notion that resilience is a mode of subjectification used by biopower without exploring other possible ways, without challenging the power which causes these situations and our vulnerability (2016) is what we would like to explore. Will these subjects strive for resilience (often critiqued as being closely knitted to neoliberal, late-capitalist ideas of success) or opt for resistance (more closely connected to subaltern subjectivities” (Romero & Cuder 2022)?

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### **Sudanese Geographies of Becoming: Borderscapes and Resistance in Fatin Abbas's *Ghost Season* (2023)**

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Against the backdrop of the second civil war in former Sudan, *Ghost Season* emerges as a blend of cinematic prose, political contestation, and climate change statement. Hence, the present paper aims to analyse Fatin Abbas's debut novel by focusing on how it underscores the notion of *borderscape* as postulated by border studies. In synch with this contention, I argue that the novel interpellates long-established Northern Nomad versus Southern Nilot narratives in the African country by exploring topographical, symbolic, temporal, and aesthetic borderscape tropes. Concisely put, *Ghost Season* depicts a fictional city located on the frontier of present Sudan and South Sudan –Saraaya– and an ONG compound as the communal enclosures that the national armed conflict gradually penetrates and intends to shatter. A family-like cast of motley characters –Alex, William, Dena, Mustafa, and Layla– populate the fictive world together with an increasing number of war-displaced refugees. The five main protagonists –and narrative focalisers– have in-between identities that straddle Western, Nilot, and Nomad labels. As has been previously mentioned, while framing the fictional analysis through the lens of border studies, I will especially

delve into performative borderline aesthetic concerns and how the novel reveals a narratorial penchant for political agency (Schimanski and Wolfe 2017; Brambilla and Jones 2019). In this regard, I will seek to bring to the fore the resistance synergies, or “politics of hope,” propelled by each of the main characters (Appadurai 2013). With that being said, I will attempt to demonstrate how the notion of borders is fictionally questioned from a *topographical* lens. To wit, the frontier city and the ONG loci are signaled as relational geographical spaces that simultaneously unite and separate the villagers. By the same token, *symbolic* borders are also evinced as palimpsests. In this sense, the difficult task of mapping the region (one of the ONG aims) remains as elusive as the local climate alteration. Moreover, *temporal* borders are also disrupted and brought into conversation with the present conflict through analeptic digressions in the characters’ memories. Eventually, *aesthetic* borderscapes are delineated in an attempt to capture the contingent and elusive Sudanese frontier demarcations and the liminal community through cinematic diegesis – a documentary film undertaken by one of the characters. Notably, the climate change irruption is undoubtedly zeroed in on so as to foreground the present inadequacy of historical narratives which have greatly contributed to shaping the national politics while escalating the rifts in Sudan before partition. Inasmuch as the usual wet/dry seasonal weather pattern progressively deteriorates, it further exacerbates *and* persistently nuances the agonistic flanks. Revealingly, the Western subsidised mapping enterprise proves to be one of the main sources of contestation of (neo)colonial boundaries and emerges as one of the most compelling narrative collages of the historical and ecological juncture of the African country.

**Keywords:**

Contemporary Sudanese literature; Border studies; Borderscapes; Politics of hope/resistance; Climate change.

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**Voicing the Trauma of the Lost Territory: Creative Writing, Therapy and the Chagos Refugees Group**

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In *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora. Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*, Vijay Mishra, echoing Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, offers us a compelling opening line: “All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way” (2007, 1). Taking Mishra’s statement as our starting point we thus pose the following question: what are the specific characteristics of the Chagos Islanders’ forced displacement that articulate their distinct unhappiness? The diasporic imaginary Mishra delineates in his book is the resultant of the study of works of literature written by well-known, published authors such as V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, and Bharati Mukherjee, among others. Their diasporic unhappiness Mishra inscribes within the literature of trauma studies

and so demonstrates how their literary performances are ways to “work through” the trauma of displacement and thus liberate them from a meaningless repetition -“acting out” – of the traumatic episode (LaCapra, 2001). The displacement to which the Chagos Islanders were subjected is fundamentally different to those experienced by the abovementioned authors for one significant reason: the possibility and materiality of return, which features the works analysed by Mishra, are denied to the Chagos Islanders who are literally banned from their homes. Another crucial aspect differentiates the Chagos Islanders’ experience of displacement to that of Mishra’s authors, namely, the very fact that they are not authors themselves and, therefore, their literary presence has always been mediated by a third party, the author that writes about them (eg Bigaignon, 2011; Grosset, 2021; Soobramanien & Williams, 2021)

Our experience with creative writing has shown us that creative writing workshops generate a space wherein traumatic experiences can be, in LaCapra’s terminology, *worked through* since participants are able to voice their suffering in a meaningful manner. With this objective in mind, we conducted a creative writing workshop, *Myth and Memory. Fighting Cultural Injustice*, in August 2019 at the University of Mauritius with members of the Chagos Refugees Group of Port Louis. Contingent upon this objective, we assessed to what extent the profound sense of community that binds the Chagossian experience was formulated upon the loss of their homeland. Through a description of our creative writing workshop we aim to disclose the peculiarities of the unhappiness of the Chagossian diaspora through the *actual*, unmediated voices of the Chagossians. Ultimately, we would like to demonstrate how a literary approach can contribute originally to the study of the history of forced displacement of the Chagos Islanders. The intimate relationship between history and trauma expressed in Caruth’s (1996) and LaCapra’s (2001) works is further noted by Mishra who defends that “history cannot be written without trauma (both on the level of the individual and the group)” (Mishra 2007, 118), but he convincingly asserts that trauma, despite its historical core, cannot be articulated through historical discourse because trauma “disrupts the linear flow of historical narrative” (Mishra 2007, 118), but literature can. Without undermining historical narrative, the creative writing workshop we organised allowed the participants to delve into the intricacies, individual and communal, of their traumatic experience of loss, in both its geographical and psychological dimension. Thus, we conclude, literature equipped them with the tools to reflect upon and *own* the history of their displacement.

**Keywords:**

Chagos Islands; trauma; creative writing; displacement; diaspora.

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**Herman Melville and the Idea(l) of a Multilingual Readership**

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Herman Melville is widely considered one of the most “transnational” writers of the US nineteenth-century canon, and it is only natural that critics have extensively addressed the wide-ranging geographic and cultural references encountered in his works. Only recently, however, has Melville’s frequent and at times radical use of foreign languages received serious attention. The

few critics who have explored the subject have usually focused on individual texts and/or specific aspects (Gillman and Gruesz 2011; Brander Rasmussen 2012). This paper will present a more comprehensive approach, by Emilio Irigoyen languages that most extensively appear in Melville's works) and placing those examples in the context of the writer's sustained engagement with issues of translanguaging and translation.

One of the most frequent and significant ways in which Melville's narrators use foreign languages is by quoting names, words, and phrases encountered in their travels. While they are usually translated and/or explained for the readers, these seemingly helpful explanations are often misleading. In "Benito Cereno," for instance, what is presented as the unproblematic translation of the Spanish phrase painted on the hull of the *San Dominick* turns out to be a way of deceiving readers, much in the same way that the Spanish-speaking characters in the story deceive the US hero (Irigoyen 2022). Chapter 54 of *Moby-Dick* presents a very similar situation, but here translanguaging and translation work in the opposite way, since the common purpose of all characters is to learn from each other's cultures and experiences. The many translanguaging encounters found in Melville's works are usually shaped by one of these two opposing attitudes: either collaboration and understanding across the language divide (as well as the national, religious, cultural, and/or ethnic ones), or mistrust, contempt, and deception.

Using "Benito Cereno" as a departing point and expanding on recent scholarship on Melville's use of Spanish (Gruesz 2021; Irigoyen 2022), as well as studies on Melville's similar use of Marquesan, this paper will argue, firstly, that foreign language repeatedly works in Melville's texts as a dividing line between those who can and those who cannot understand—among characters and readers alike. Second, it will propose that in a number of texts, such as *Moby-Dick*, "Benito Cereno," "The Encantadas," and *Clarel*, Melville appears to be writing for a dual audience: one of "English-only" readers and one of readers who, like himself, would be willing and able to navigate across the various borders, (linguistic and otherwise) that separate people.

#### **Keywords:**

Herman Melville; translanguaging; readership.

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**Voices of Transgression in American Fin-de-Siècle Poetry: Overcoming Canonical Romantic-Idealist Poetics in the 1890s through Gelett Burgess' and Carolyn Wells' Nonsense Verse**

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The poet Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833-1908) asserted that the 1890s was a period of crisis in the history of American poetry (Stedman 1906, xix-xxviii). His view was echoed by contemporary intellectuals (Van Wyck Brooks 1915; Santayana 1967), as well as by critics throughout the twentieth century (Parrington 1958; Tomsich 1971). They attribute the supposed fin-de-siècle poetic “twilight” to American social elites occupying the leading positions in the country’s major literary institutions, the literary magazine and the publishing house; as a result, standards of canonical lyrical creation were imposed that continued the morally didactic and sentimental tradition of the Fireside poets, iconic authors in the genre since the antebellum period. However, the imposition of a traditional paradigm was anachronistic and hackneyed in the new urban, industrial and scientifically developed reality of 1890s America.

Recent studies (Renker 2011; Timberman 2015; Nurhusein 2020) suggest that a multiplicity of “poetic counter-discourses” developed parallel to the canonical discourse, transgressing its outdated conventions to give voice to the new concerns of the emerging American modernity and finding marginal institutions in the literary production market to reach the audience.

Following the theoretical assumption proposed by Renker (2011: 135) about the “poetic counter-discourse” as a form of poetry that rejects the romantic-idealistic principles still intervening in fin-de-siècle canonical verse, the aim of the present article is to analyze one of these transgressive poetic ideas: the nonsense verse practiced by the group of San Franciscan poets known as *Les Jeunes*. More specifically, we will focus on two main members of the group, Gelett Burgess (1866-1951) and Carolyn Wells (1862-1942), and on their poems published during the 1890s, all collected afterwards in the volumes *The Burgess Nonsense Book* (1901) and *At the Sign of the Sphinx* (1896), respectively.

The present study adheres to the following methodology: first, an analysis of the poetic strategies applied by both authors to transgress the didacticism and sentimentality typical of mainstream poetry, as well as of the innovative metrical patterns that distance them from nineteenth-century formal traditionalism; second, an investigation of how self-publication in a literary magazine created by themselves, *The Lark*, represents for both poets the only possible way to make their work reach the public.

Therefore, it will be shown not only that the late nineteenth century is not a period of crisis for poetry in America, but that the proliferation of non-canonical poetic discourses fosters a form of literary market peripheral to the mainstream milieu, which was still successful among readers.

### **Keywords:**

American poetry; fin-de-siècle poetry; romantic tradition; canonical poetry; poetic counter-discourse.

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## “The Repentant Devil’s Advocate: Narrating Slow Violence in *Michael Clayton* and *Dark Waters*”

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Gradual environmental violence, what Rob Nixon calls “slow violence,” poses obvious representational challenges for filmmakers due to its agential and temporal dispersion. In sharp contrast to the direct filmic appeal of “fast” violence, slow violence is not readily visible to the camera. That is why film directors who want to narrate slow violence are compelled to rethink their cinematic strategies and, on some occasions, create new ones. This paper intends to tease out the strategies employed by two American “whistleblower” films, Haynes’ *Dark Waters* and Gilroy’s *Michael Clayton*, in order to overcome the obstacles found when trying to represent slow violence.

The insidious threat of slow violence, I argue, can find an analogical equivalent in suspense: the baleful nature of slow violence would thus be extrapolated to the fear of physical violence that plagues thriller heroes. In thrillers the threat of conventional violence is always there, even when it does not eventually take place. Both *Dark Waters* and *Michael Clayton* can be considered legal ecothrillers and, as such, they resort to suspense. However, while Gilroy still makes concessions to fast violence, Haynes opts for a different set of strategies, starting with the very pace of his film, which echoes the rhythms of slow violence. In order to illustrate the different strategies deployed in these two “screen texts” I will engage in a close “reading” of a few scenes from each film, paying particular attention to the pivotal diatribes voiced by Arthur Edens (Wilkinson), in *Michael Clayton*, and Rob Bilott (Ruffalo), in *Dark Waters*. I will analyze the language in which these angry tirades are couched, as well as the rhetorical devices they resort to.

Despite their narrative and cinematographic differences, both *Dark Waters* and *Michael Clayton* share the same thematic concern: the malfeasance of corporations, the main agents of slow violence, and the complicity of lawyers. It is less clear, though, whether the movies’ indictment is aimed just at a few corrupt individuals or at the whole system. The aforementioned diatribes choose to foreground that tension between the collective nature of environmental violence (and of the legal case, a class action) and the individualist ethos typical of Hollywood movies and of American culture as a whole. When faced with “social evils” like the current capitalist system and the slow violence it produces, mainstream American cinema seems reluctant to ask viewers to rethink the system; instead, it often resorts to the individual hero(ine) and individual responsibility as the key to solve the problem. Although both *Dark Waters* and *Michael Clayton* tend to fall back on this easy fix, I argue that Arthur’s and Rob’s invectives help resolve this ambiguity. Last but not least, I intend to dwell on the significance of the fact that in both films slow violence is exposed precisely by those lawyers-janitors whose job is to sweep it under the rug; after all, it is the “repentance” of these corporate-devil’s advocates that makes these narratives possible.

### Keywords:

*Michael Clayton*; *Dark Waters*; slow violence; legal thrillers; whistleblower films.

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## **Criticism on the American Dream through Bruce Springsteen's Music**

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In 1972, The Watergate scandal exacerbated the anger and discontent of artists, and the career of the next 'working-class hero' was about to take off. Bruce Springsteen, who grew up in a working-class family and was inspired by a whole generation of folk musicians such as Bob Dylan, Van Morrison, and Woody Guthrie who protested against social inequalities in the United States, decided to represent his own idea of the American Dream in his songs.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how Springsteen manages to portray the failure of the American Dream with a sense of hope in his songs. An analysis of the artist's sociocultural background was undertaken. Among the key factors that might be taken into consideration are his youth at the height of the counterculture movements in the United States with a father, who had served in the army during the World War II. Douglas Springsteen rejected his son's more liberal ideas as a new kind of conservative populism was developing under the leadership of Richard Nixon, which became known as the 'New Era'. The clash of both ideologies also became Springsteen's main source of inspiration, especially in his first albums. In addition, this study also analyzes the influence of his contemporaries, as well as the influence of literature on his music, including Walt Whitman, John Steinbeck, Jack Kerouac or Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Reading between the lines of some of his well-known songs such as 'Thunder Road' (1975), 'The River' (1980), 'The Ghost of Tom Joad' (1995) or 'Land of Hope and Dreams' (2012), one can create a chronology of the evolution of the American dream from Springsteen's point of view. It is a concept that can change over time. This study analyzes the disappointment of the young Springsteen in the mid-1970s and how the arrival of Barack Obama in 2008 lead him to present a more optimistic view in his last albums: *Working on a Dream* (2009) and *Wrecking Ball* (2012) Through in-depth analysis of the aforementioned songs, this paper argues that his lyrics offer a nuanced and dynamic perspective on the American Dream, one that questions its myths and celebrates its possibilities. To engage with Springsteen's lyrics is to engage with the myth of the Promised Land, the hope and dreams that shaped an entire nation. As people identify with his lyrics, Springsteen has become one of the most prominent voices in American popular culture.

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**Chicanx Electric Dreams: Cyberpunk Borderlands and Rasquache Cosmovisions in *Tears of the Trufflepig***





In 2019, Mexican American author Fernando A. Flores published the novel *Tears of the Trufflepig*, a quintessentially borderland narrative that unfolds in a dystopic futuristic rendition of the Rio Grande Valley, Texas. Echoing Chicana works of borderland speculative fiction such as Ernesto Hogan's *High Aztech* (1992), Flores engages with a set of topics revolving around race and ethnic heritage deploying a cyberpunk mode deeply rooted in the border region. The novel's futuristic scenario takes place years after a famine led to the development of "filtering," the artificial production of animals and plants to deal with the pervasive food shortage—as well as to bring back extinct species as luxury commodities. High tech facilitates new forms of (neo/colonial) exploitation, while low tech characterizes the lower social strata's daily experience, fueling social fragmentation and the erosion of human rights.

Differently from *High Aztech*, in *Tears of the Trufflepig* Mexico remains bound to the United States through a complex network of inescapable, asymmetrical power relations that configure the exploitation of Mexican human and natural resources, as well as the commodification of Mexican Indigenous heritage. Departing from the depiction of biopolitical racial regimes that characterize other speculative Chicana novels (Kim 2020; Merla-Watson and Olguín 2017), Flores turns to the necropolitical reality of the border region and delves into its geopolitical and sociocultural mechanisms, producing a narrative that revolves around violence, death, and a permanent state of exception. Furthermore, the Mexican American mestizo quest for identity undergirds the protagonist's experience and his conflictive relationship with both the Indigenous and US elements that characterize it, shaping the readers' encounter with the borderlands. The so-called trufflepig is Huixtepelnicopatl, "el cerdo de los sueños," the dream god of the fictional Aranaña Indigenous tribe that functions as the embodiment of commodification and exploitation of both Mexican American heritages and bodies. In a rasquache-inspired exercise, Flores articulates a cosmogonic tale that reclaims Mesoamerican cosmology(s), cross-border migrant experience(s), and American hybrid identities, resignifying them within the context of extreme border violence and necrowriting (Rivera Garza 2013). The border infrastructure itself, as place and metaphor, is firmly present throughout the novel, echoing the Anzaldúan wound that marks the Mexican American experience.

Offering a possible dimension of respite from violence, Flores builds an oneiric realm reminiscent of the Fellinian fantarealismo, in which the bizarre intertwines reality, nostalgia, and a rediscovered perception of the self. The multifaceted dimension of dream directly relates to death, shamanism, and Mesoamerican cultures, affording space to epistemologies that are Other and can thrive beyond magic realism modes to find a peculiar cross-genre configuration of Chicana futurism. Using the main dream sequence in the novel as a tool to unravel the multilayered narrative, this paper will look at the ways in which *Tears of the Trufflepig* tackles and (re)signifies Mexican American hybrid identities while exposing the dynamics through which Mexico and Mexican Americans have served as a mirror image to reinforce whiteness (Bebout 2016).

**Keywords:**

Ethnicity; racial violence; Mexican American literature; speculative fiction; Indigenous heritage.

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## **"Down with These Racists!": *Magnesium*, Maciej Bochniak's Wild Ride on the Western Genre**

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The American West is not the sole setting for Westerns. In Jesús Ángel González's words, "although Westerns started out as a national genre, it is well known that they have become a transnational phenomenon, which has been received and interpreted differently in diverse national contexts" (2019, 257). In order to interpret these numerous iterations of the genre, to call them "transnational post-Westerns" (Campbell 2013) or "international Westerns" (Miller and Van Riper 2014), and to "situate the films amongst and between dominant national traditions," one must "take into account geopolitical, cultural, and financial aspects of each production" (Wessels qtd. in González 2019, 260).

One of the countries where the Western genre has held a particularly powerful allure is Poland, precisely due to the area's geopolitical and cultural peculiarities. The fact that this Central European country had for a long time its own frontier led to somehow uncommon Polish fascination with the American West and fostered the national historical myth of the "Wild East." The idealized image that entailed courageous Poles fighting against the barbarians took hold of Pole's minds; additionally, in some of the "polwesterns" shot in the People's Republic of Poland, given the films' historical settings and, thus, their political implications, the protagonists, these true heroes, "were not just fighting with some criminal elements but the enemies of the new system" (Haltorf 2015, 192). Hence, their heroism was perceived as even greater.

Oddly enough, Maciej Bochniak's *Magnesium* (2020) features none of such mythical characteristics. This "Western" inspired, according to Bochniak himself ("Interview"), by the likes of Tarantino and Leone, set in the 1920s in the borderland between Poland and the USSR, complies with the genre's formula mainly on the audiovisual level; it is rather construed as a mixture of black comedy, detective story and Spaghetti Western. Regarding the formula, the film is, indeed, set in the frontier area, with all that borderlands' lawlessness entails. Nonetheless, the remaining elements do not correspond to those of the Western genre; in fact, they are twisted to the point of looking like a caricature of themselves. The distortion encompasses such essential features as the clear separation line between the villains and the heroes, the traditional gender roles, the duel or the happy end, the hero riding off into the sunset with the girl. Instead, *Magnesium* abounds with iconoclastic scenes and characters, such as Siamese brothers' preposterous saloon fight, their sexual intercourse with a female character and the sheriff's coitus with a sheep, to mention just a few.

The aim of this paper is to explore the Western-like elements of the film, taking into consideration the socio-cultural context of the settings, namely, Polish-Soviet boarder in the inter-war period. In addition, the focus of the analysis is on the shattering of the Hollywood Western and Spaghetti Western formulas, and on the movie's whimsical inclusivity, its anti-ableism and feminism. With reference to methodology, cultural studies and, in particular, myth criticism are taken as critical foundation.

### **Keywords:**

Post-Western; Polish Cinema; Maciej Bochniak; *Magnesium*; Cultural Studies.

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### **Crafting Curses and Preaching Sermons: Magic and Religion in Afia Atakora's *Conjure Women* (2020)**

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Throughout history, magic and religion have been contested forces that shaped the world. The former was followed by many, until religious practices such as Christianity became the norm and took over the other, diminishing their influence and rejecting those who adopted pagan or other non-religious lifestyles. In the African American tradition, although these two worked well together, they clashed frequently, on account of their purpose within the community. Reflecting on the work of Michel Foucault *Power/Knowledge* (1980) where he defines subjugated knowledges as "a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated [...] located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" ([2020] 1980, 82), one can agree on the way magic turned into a subjugated knowledge or disqualified knowledge due to its social function, whereas religion became a 'well established' knowledge considering the power institutions held, and still hold. In *Conjure Women* (2020), Afia Atakora explores the intersections between magic and religion as both have been historically marginalized when adopted by blacks, they were what Toni Morrison calls "discredited knowledge" (1983, 342). The novel examines the dichotomies: personal/communal, secret/sacred, and belonging/unbelonging as two of its main characters Rue, a conjure woman, and Bruh Abel, a preacher, quarrel over the best way to bring the community back, particularly after the Civil War.

Since the novel fluctuates between slavery time and Reconstruction, Atakora utilizes the past and present to criticize the ongoing issues in American society while presenting magic and religion as forms of knowledge that even though they were opposing at times in the aftermath of the Civil War, they are now part and parcel of the African American cultural and literary tradition. Therefore, it is my aim to analyze the way in which Rue and Bruh Abel embody the subjugated knowledge and the popular knowledge respectively, defining the community on a sociocultural level. However, because of the powerful effect of religion on the plantation, Rue is alienated after failing to save the community from a curse. Atakora highlights how, even within the black community, there was a type of hierarchy of knowledge where religion was public and central, but magic was private and marginal (Chireau [2003] 2006, 3-4).

In this paper I seek to demonstrate why Rue and Bruh Abel dwell on two different spaces: the personal and the communal and the way these are critical for their community before and after the Civil War. Henry Louis Gates acknowledges that in the African American tradition, the Black Church was a site of change and possibility, providing a physical and psychological way out of the shackles of slavery ([2021] 2022, 4). Hence, Bruh Abel, in *Conjure Women* symbolizes the Black Church as a political institution. On the other hand, magic as seen through Rue, one can clearly observe the approach Atakora takes to delve into the African tradition that existed during slavery but that we can still find in contemporary African American literature and culture.

#### **Keywords:**

Afia Atakora; Magic; Religion; Slavery; African American.

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## From Traumatized Children to Heroic Saviours: The Resilience-building Power of the Cultural Roots in Two US Ethnic Bildungsromane of the 2010s

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Last decade has witnessed a gradual reorientation of the trauma paradigm towards a model which rather than focusing on the Eurocentric, psychoanalytic and aporetic view of classical trauma theory, now considers multiple understandings of and responses to trauma without discarding the possibility of healing and post-traumatic growth anymore. Traditionally, the Western view of trauma was one related to personal loss, disorder and melancholia instead of "growth, change or renewal" and even healing as happens in many non-Western/postcolonial communities (Borzaga 2012, 88) whose narratives have often shown that resilience and working through are possible (Visser 2015, 255, 261). In contrast, the new directions in trauma theory not only take into account the feasibility of healing, but also individual's and communities' capacity of being resilient to sudden or ongoing violent events through culturally-specific ways (Visser 2018).

Due to the aforementioned changes in the trauma model and the realisation that we are living in a global risk society (Beck 2009), there has lately been a rapid rise of the concept of resilience which has gone hand in hand with the proliferation of resistance stories both in Western and non-Western contexts (O'Brien 2017; Basseler 2019; Fraile-Marcos 2020). Commonly a resilience literary genre in the European tradition, the US ethnic Bildungsroman has often dealt, not with children's positive transformation through adversity, but rather with the traumatic effects of growing up in a country where widespread racial prejudice prevents racialised youngsters from seeing the future with optimism (Graham 2019, 118, 134-39). Trauma, displacement and shame are thus popular features found in US ethnic coming-of-age novels, yet, in some of these narratives, especially recent ones, there is room for resilience and post-traumatic growth too. This is the case of Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* (2012) and Ibi Zoboi's *American Street* (2017), two new millennium Bildungsromane in which, despite the traumatic blows suffered by their respective Native American Anishinaabe and Haitian American teenage protagonists on account of the sudden and racism-related absence of their loving mothers, these young characters turn into courageous heroes who fight for taking back their progenitors and for ensuring their safety as well as the community's well-being. In order to achieve their goal, these resilient children end up resorting to cultural resources (Anishinaabe stories and Haitian Vodou, respectively) which provide them with the necessary tools for fulfilling their purposes in a hostile society for non-white citizens. Thus, through a "transethnic comparative analysis" (Simal-González 2011), the aim of this paper is firstly, to explore the similarities and disparities in the two texts' use of narrative techniques and other formal choices to render the workings of resilience vis-à-vis the two young protagonists. Secondly, it is set to prove that, despite their evident thematic and cultural differences, the two novels offer not only a critique against the fallacy of the "all equal" myth, but also culturally-specific mechanisms of resilience and resistance for today's Native American and Haitian American communities.

**Keywords:**

Resilience; post-traumatic growth; US ethnic literature; contemporary literature; Bildungsroman.

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***The Good Lord Bird* (2013) de James McBride y la sátira quijotesca del entusiasmo religioso**

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La novela *The Good Lord Bird* [El pájaro carpintero], del novelista, guionista y músico norteamericano James McBride, ha obtenido desde su publicación en 2013 un reconocimiento general por parte de la crítica que le valió al autor el *National Book Award*, uno de los galardones literarios más prestigiosos de Estados Unidos. McBride, que por entonces ya contaba con una cierta trayectoria narrativa, tal y como evidencian su narración autobiográfica *The Color of Water* [El color del agua] (1995), *Miracle at St. Anna* [Milagro en Santa Ana] (2002) y *Song Yet Sung* [Canción todavía cantada] (2008), ya había abordado temas como la segregación racial, la otredad y la esclavitud desde el género de la novela histórica, o quizás desde la novela posthistórica, como señala Naughton (2018). Así lo atestiguan *Song Yet Sung*, una novela que narra un intento de huida masivo por esclavos de Maryland justo antes del inicio de la Guerra Civil norteamericana, y *Miracle at St. Anna*, en la que McBride narra a través de la figura de un soldado negro del 92º batallón de infantería de los Estados Unidos —compuesto únicamente por soldados afroamericanos— la interacción del batallón con la comunidad italiana de Santa Anna di Stazemma durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

*The Good Lord Bird* continua la línea ya iniciada por *Song Yet Sung*, retratando uno de los acontecimientos fundamentales previos a la irrupción de la Guerra Civil norteamericana, el ataque a la armería de Harper's Ferry por parte del reverendo John Brown (1800-1859). McBride novela este momento crucial de la historia norteamericana a través del relato de las aventuras de un joven esclavo huido, Henry "Onion" Shackelford, quien, a través de sus peripecias y de su intensa relación con Brown, una de las figuras clave en el movimiento abolicionista, ofrece un panorama

sumamente interesante de algunos personajes de relevancia dentro de la historia del abolicionismo norteamericano como Frederick Douglass (1818-1896), o Harriet Tubman (1820-1913). La novela, que se presenta como un híbrido entre la narración de esclavos, la novela histórica, la picaresca y el *western*, retrata a un John Brown profundamente quijotesco, cómico, ridículo y heroico a un tiempo. No en vano, el propio McBride ha declarado en más de una ocasión su gusto por los héroes tragicómicos, ya que, en su opinión, “heroes who are not flawed are not believable” (Goldenberg 2013).

Esta conexión cervantina, hasta ahora no reconocida por McBride, ha sido señalada por alguna de las reseñas de la novela, que destacan el carácter quijotesco tanto del reverendo Brown como de su particular cruzada antiesclavista. Pese a ello, la cuestión no ha sido abordada hasta la fecha ni por la crítica cervantina ni por los estudios norteamericanos, más centrados en examen de las cuestiones raciales o históricas en la novela de Brown, por lo que el propósito de esta comunicación no será otro que analizar la novela de McBride desde un prisma eminentemente cervantino, tratando de estudiar tanto los aspectos estructurales de clara raigambre cervantina presentes en la novela como el encuadre de la figura central de la misma, el reverendo John Brown, dentro de una de las tradiciones más fructíferas dentro de la recepción del *Quijote* en la narrativa anglo-norteamericana: la del quijotismo espiritual, destinada a ofrecer un retrato satírico del fanatismo religioso. Para ello, centraré mi análisis en torno a tres ejes fundamentales. En un primer lugar, trataré de realizar un breve recorrido por la tradición del quijotismo espiritual en las letras inglesas de los siglos XVII y XVIII, trazando un panorama diacrónico de la evolución de esta particular formulación de la figura quijotesca que surge en Inglaterra a comienzos del XVII. Posteriormente, vincularé al protagonista de la novela de McBride, el reverendo John Brown, con esta tradición, analizando los aspectos claramente quijotescos con los que el autor norteamericano inviste a su figura. Finalmente centraré la mirada algunos de los aspectos estructurales de clara raigambre cervantina que la novela de McBride evidencia, mostrando como la posible influencia cervantina que propongo va más allá del mero quijotismo, demostrando una evidente asimilación del modelo novelístico cervantino no señalada hasta este momento.

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#### **The peripheral novel of the Americas: Determinism and history in *Land of Love and Drowning* (2014) by Tiphonie Yanique**

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This presentation seeks to provide a hemispheric perspective on the materialist analysis of Caribbean contemporary art, utilising Tiphonie Yanique’s novel *Land of Love and Drowning* (2014) as a case studio. Furthermore, it also intends to identify Caribbean localised poetics in the novel’s mobilisation of magical realism. *Land of Love and Drowning* follows the story of a Caribbean family throughout the historical changes affecting their homeland, the American Virgin Islands, from 1916 well into the 70s. Of particular interest is the novel’s framing within key events in the makings of Americanness (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992) whilst maintaining a

particularly Caribbean voice and narrative independence. Its characters seem marked by deterministic fate shaped by the forces of obeah and what we could call the “Curse of the Caribbean,” as Junot Díaz would put it (2007, 327), symbolised by the pervasive motif of incest, which points towards the archipelago’s “grotesque genesis” (MacRae2007, 6). Nonetheless, the novel all the while makes an emphasis on the entanglement of the characters’ lives with US-American history, in particular the country’s imperial politics towards the archipelago, epitomised in the climax of the touristic industry.

Americanity describes the colonial politics of race and ethnicity peculiar to the American hemisphere and, more importantly for this analysis, the hierarchies operating across it (Quijano and Wallerstein, 1992). The concept is particularly useful to address the events that structure the novel, such as “Transfer Day,” which are key moments in the construction of said hierarchy and make a strong emphasis on the imperial politics of the United States with regards to the Caribbean archipelago (Russell Roberts 2021). It is my ultimate contention that novels such as Yanique’s urge us to (re)consider our analyses of Caribbean art and history as part of a much more hemispheric reality and inseparable from US-American history and politics. Partly in line with this argument, this novel demonstrates that considering the Caribbean part of the Americas does not strip it from its local flavour, as demonstrates its utilisation of creolised myths and legends as structuring elements in the narrative. Ultimately, the novel’s portrayal of Americanity also presents readers with a characteristically archipelagic poetics of entanglements where impermeable borders have never existed.

#### **Keywords:**

Caribbean literature; Tiphonie Yanique; contemporary novel; American literature; Virgin Islands.

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#### **“Seeing the Whole Me’: Anishinaabe Kwewag Identity in Angeline Boulley’s *Firekeeper’s Daughter*”**

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Positive role models are still needed to counter the demeaning stereotypes of Native American women, which today operate more subtly than in the past, through invisibility, misappropriation, and distortion of Native American identity (Mihtlo 2009, xi). This issue is particularly pronounced for Indigenous children and teenagers who struggle to find relatable representations in literature. To address this gap, writers belonging to the third wave of Native American literature are offering a range of young adult (YA) fiction, a form of counter-storytelling to challenge stereotypes and give voice to marginalized youth (Hughes-Hassell 2013). This is the stated motivation behind YA mystery *Firekeeper’s Daughter* (2021), an instant *New York Times* best-seller which has received various awards, and whose rights were purchased by the Obama’s production company Higher Ground to adapt it into a Netflix series. This is the debut novel of Angeline Boulley, a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians from Sugar Island, located between Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and Canada. Boulley’s intention was to Indigenize the YA canon and prove that tradition, present and youth are not incompatible (Boulley, 2021).

The novel is set within a fictional tribe inspired by Sault Ste. Marie in the year 2004, the time when meth trafficking and consumption exploded in the country (Clayson and Beiner, 2021), and when Indian gaming in Michigan was especially lucrative, which resulted in the delicate balance of “per cap” casino payments and enduring poverty and limited opportunities. The protagonist and first-person narrator, Daunis Lorenza Fontaine, is an eighteen-year-old young woman of mixed heritage, characterized by strength, intelligence and determination. Her Anishinaabe paternal family, the Firekeepers, hold a significant ceremonial role, while her mother, of White descent, hails from the affluent Fontaine family. The text explores Daunis’s navigation of two worlds and the process of becoming and feeling whole. While addressing common concerns of young individuals, such as friends, dating, choosing a degree in college, and finding one’s place in the world, the text delves into specific traumas experienced by Daunis’s tribal community, like racism, rape, drugs, and murder.

Following the deaths of her uncle and her best friend, Daunis becomes a confidential informant of the FBI to investigate the advance of methamphetamine in the community. In her investigation, Daunis grapples with two seemingly opposed—yet ultimately compatible—worldviews, summarized as her traditional knowledge and her scientific outlook. In this respect, the novel is tellingly didactic, offering insights into traditional medicine, cultural values, ceremonies, and the history of racism and boarding school experiences. My analysis will focus on Daunis’s process of self-definition, which I consider representative of Indigenous identity in the twenty-first century. Additionally, I aim to contribute to the definition of Indigenous resilience and resurgence as political (Simpson 2017), and culture-specific (Fraile-Marcos 2020). The final message that both the text and my paper convey is that, in the face of trauma, dispossession, or racism, the community needs to be part of the solution.

#### **Keywords:**

Indigenous YA fiction; Anishinaabe/Ojibwe literature; detective fiction; bi-racial Bildungsroman; Indigenous resilience.

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#### **Transborder Mobility and Radical Hospitality in Joy Harjo’s Poetic and Autobiographical Work**

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In one of her most recent poetry books, *An American Sunrise*, published by WW Norton and Co. in 2019, Muscogee Creek poet Joy Harjo engages land redress, migration, mobility justice, and home/land building from personal, tribal, and hemispheric perspectives. The former U.S. Poet Laureate considers the effects of Indigenous dislocation within a settler colonialist framework and brings attention to new kinds of displacements—those of the Central American migrant



caravans, whose precarious border crossing endeavors from Honduras and Guatemala to the United States shook human rights organizations, American citizens, and global media in 2017 and 2018. These caravans led to the extension of the wall across the US/Mexico border under the Trump administration and are still taking place (although less visibly) today. My presentation will specifically focus on the poetics and politics of Harjo's global solidarity and radical hospitality as expressed in some of the poems included in *An American Sunrise*. I also examine relevant sections of her two autobiographies: *Crazy Brave* (WW Norton and Co. 2012) and *Poet Warrior* (WW Norton and Co. 2021), which I believe can shed further light on some of her political decisions and on her poetic craft.

Using a blended methodology that respects Indigenous tribal contexts and intellectual/territorial sovereignty, I draw critical insights from Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's place-based solidarity framework (2016), and also from recent works in refugee, hospitality, and mobility studies (Mountz 2011; Watkins 2019; Sheller 2018). I also bring to the fore the history of forced relocation of the Muscogee Creek from Alabama and Georgia to Oklahoma in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and discuss Joy Harjo's own personal, humanitarian, and creative travels across the Americas and the Middle East during the last four decades. I ultimately argue that Joy Harjo's recent poetic work reconsiders Native American territories and land redress in relation to global mobility struggles as a form of radical solidarity, while keeping the more-than-human and the Earth herself as core agents in global debates on homeland, responsibility, hospitality, and territorial justice. Through 59 poetic texts (some of which directly quote from historical and familiar oral narratives and/or appeal to other kindred literary works across the centuries) and an anti/colonial map of the Muscogee Creek Removal, *An American Sunrise* reveals Harjo's struggles and challenges to convey complex experiences of movement, dwelling, and place. In this presentation, I aim to examine Harjo's inner tensions and revelations through close reading, memorial reverberations, and historical analysis.

#### **Keywords:**

Joy Harjo, *An American Sunrise*, global mobility, land redress, migration.

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#### **Periodista en Nueva York: Miguel Zárrega y la revista *La Tribuna***

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Miguel de Zárrega (Madrid, 1882 – Los Ángeles, 1941) se dio a conocer como joven periodista, novelista y dramaturgo en la España de principios del siglo XX. Después de trabajar para diversos medios de comunicación en Cuba, Zárrega se instala en Estados Unidos a partir de 1916. En Nueva York sustituye a Julio Camba como corresponsal del diario *ABC*, publica relatos en varias revistas y se convierte en un notable agente dinamizador del teatro producido en español en la gran manzana. En Nueva York Zárrega conoció y se relacionó con destacadas figuras de la cultura española de la época como Pablo Casals o Vicente Blasco Ibáñez.

Además de sus crónicas en *ABC*, Zárrega colaboró en otras publicaciones españolas desde el país norteamericano. Asimismo, participó en medios escritos en español lanzados desde EE.UU. Miguel de Zárrega se convierte por un periodo de tiempo en redactor jefe de la versión española de la revista neoyorquina, *Pictorial Review*, cuyo director era el escritor español, Rómulo Manuel de Mora. Muestras de ficción escritas por Miguel de Zárrega aparecerán durante este periodo en la revista *Cine Mundial*, versión en español de la *Moving Picture World*. Zárrega también llega a ser director de la edición en español de *The World's Work*, *La revista del mundo*.

Pero quizá la empresa periodística más innovadora que Miguel de Zárrega acomete en Nueva York es la de la fundación de un semanario escrito en español, dedicado a toda la población hispana y, muy especialmente, a la española, localizada sobre todo alrededor de la calle 14 de Manhattan, en lo que se llamaba "Little Spain". Precisamente allí se encontraba el Banco de Lago, propiedad del empresario Javier Vilar Lago, con el que el periodista se alió para fundar esta nueva publicación, *La Tribuna*.

Se trataba de una revista independiente, financiada con capital español, y no solo una filial hispana de publicaciones en inglés. Textos firmados por autores como Azorín, Jacinto Benavente o Mariano de Cavia, entre otros, aparecieron en esta nueva revista que supuso una revolución en el periodismo escrito en español de Nueva York. En la calle 42, frente al Bryant Park y la Biblioteca Pública se ubicaron las oficinas de este semanario del que Zárrega se convirtió en copropietario y al que contribuiría también con relatos o "cuentos". Miguel de Zárrega comienza a dirigir *La República* de forma directa a partir del 13 de marzo de 1920 (tras una etapa en la que figura como director, Pedro H. Briz).

Este artículo trata de analizar la labor periodística de Miguel Zárrega para medios de comunicación españoles en Estados Unidos. Muy especialmente, la investigación persigue convertirse en una primera aproximación al estudio de la creación y funcionamiento de la revista *La Tribuna*.

Tras su etapa neoyorquina, en los años 30, Miguel de Zárrega se traslada a Los Ángeles, donde ejercerá una labor destacada en la creación de películas dentro del fenómeno bautizado como "Hollywood español" y participando en la creación de films como *La cruz y la espada* o *Verbena trágica*.

#### **Keywords:**

Miguel de Zárrega; La Tribuna; periodismo; Estados Unidos; Nueva York.

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#### **"One Passion and Four Walls": Artistic Emancipation in Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark* (1915) and Bess Streeter Aldrich's *A Lantern in her Hand* (1928)**

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Space, economic independence, and material objects play a crucial role in the development of two twentieth-century fictional American women artists: Thea Kronborg, from Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark* (1915); and Abbie Deal, from Bess Streeter Aldrich's *A Lantern in her Hand* (1928). In *The Song of the Lark*, Thea only needs "one passion and four walls" (Cather 2018, 129) to become a celebrated opera singer. Her gift, effort, and the money she inherits contrast with Abbie, Aldrich's heroine from *A Lantern in her Hand* who, despite her struggles, is unable to develop her singing skills in the pioneering land of Nebraska.

As Virginia Woolf would later articulate in the widely quoted *A Room of One's Own* (1929), “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write” (2004, 4). Both characters, though similarly talented, do not equate in resources and, while Thea's success escalates, Abbie only finds time to sing once her household duties are done. The narrator of *The Song of the Lark* notes the importance that having a private room has on Thea's career: “the acquisition of this room was the beginning of a new era in Thea's life” (Cather 2018, 52). Abbie's singing practice, on the other hand, is relegated to “the old grassy knoll between the huge trees” (Aldrich 1997, 35). Thea, who rejects marriage and motherhood, manages to escape from her native town in Colorado and explore her musical instincts in Europe with an inheritance she receives. The wife of a pioneer in the unexplored territories of Nebraska, Abbie is economically unable to receive formal musical training. Her economic limitation is likewise hindered by her domestic chores and her role as wife and mother, an aspect that does not disturb Thea.

Drawing from material culture theories (Thompson 1979) and from Woolf's premises in *A Room of One's Own*, this paper explores the spaces in which Thea and Abbie can exploit their art, their economic means of survival, as well as the value of objects in their careers. During their lives, both Thea and Abbie encounter what I call “artistic tokens” that are crucial for the development of their singing careers: the Native American pottery that Thea finds in Panther Canyon acts as a material “epiphany” to propel her progress (Williams 2005, 167); the pearls that Abbie inherits from her mother symbolize the sacrifices she makes for the wellbeing of her family. Considering these ideas, I shall explore how *The Song of the Lark* and *A Lantern in her Hand* illustrate Woolf's theory on the necessary elements for female emancipation, although I shall also determine how they differ in their outcomes: Cather's Thea represents the ideal towards which artistic heroines should aspire, whereas Aldrich's Abbie represents a cautionary tale on the circumstances to avoid if one hopes to become a professional singer.

#### **Keywords:**

Küntslerroman; female artists; Virginia Woolf; Willa Cather; Bess Streeter Aldrich.

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#### **Use of “Liberty” in political discourse from the US Declaration of Independence**

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US political basis relies on the fundamental rights of the Declaration of Independence. The Enlightenment in America is sometimes conveyed in a single phrase: the political right of self-determination realized. Self-recognition, the assurance of independence, comes only with victory in arms between 1781 and 1783, and Americans have found a primal sense of identity in acts of special belligerence but rather a far more intrinsic sense of definition in the possibility and outcome of military conflict. In political speeches, a rich repertoire of discursive mechanisms

deployed, such as the positive self and the negative strategies of presentation of the other, serve to influence audiences. However, the notoriety of this genre goes beyond its rhetorical and persuasive impact. These speeches are brief and encapsulated, but quite revealing and eloquent, statements of the politicians' mentalities and their conception of fundamental values and principles.

The main question is the historical evolution in the way that the different US presidents have understood and expressed the right of "liberty" in their inaugural addresses, where they present their thoughts and objectives for their own term of office. The methodology adopted for this purpose is corpus driven. Based on robust statistical measures without any preconceived hypothesis we have automatically found in the texts of the speeches the keywords related to these two concepts appearing in the first propositions of the US Declaration of Independence. While corpus methods are widely used in linguistics (McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Biber, Conrad & Reppen, 1998), including gender analysis (Baker, 2012), we have used the NVivo software to generate a list of key words ranked by their keyness, i.e., the words that are related to the lemma of the four concepts most frequently used in our study corpus.

Thanks to computer tools such as NVivo and Sketch Engine, our analysis model starts from ideational and cognitive concepts studied from their semantic and discursive expression, systematically identifying their lexical-syntactic representation. The results of this analysis will first allow to observe through what type of lexical categories (codes) these CARs –categorization and connotative associations of this right—are expressed, in addition to counting, describing, and illustrating them. Furthermore, the results will allow to study the evolution of the expression of each CAR in the corpus according to its parameters of internal variation: the US presidents' ideological tendency, socio-political profile, historical framework, etc., from George Washington (1789) to Joe Biden (2021).

The conclusion we expect to reach is that differences in chronology and ideology have a direct relationship with the use of the concept of "liberty" in US political discourse and society in general when we look at the inaugural addresses from an evolutionary perspective.

#### **Keywords:**

Inaugural speeches, fundamental rights, corpus, CARs, semantic-cognitive analysis, lexical-syntactic representation, NVivo.

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#### **The Disintegration of Religion vis-à-vis Alien Reality in the Works of H. P. Lovecraft: The Sublime and the Demise of Anthropocentrism in "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1931)**

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“The Whisperer in Darkness” (1931), written by H. P. Lovecraft, is the subject of the present study, which explores the relationship between the notion of human-made religions with two elements that especially underlie the Lovecraft’s phase of the Cthulhu Mythos: the sublime and the demise of anthropocentrism. Lovecraft’s philosophical and scientific perceptions of reality are presented through these elements, which determine the aesthetic expression of this literary phase. The characterization of this expression is the objective of this analysis.

The theoretical frame of this study is based on the research of Christopher Soufas (1995), S.T. Joshi (2013), Michel Houellebecq (2019), and Vivian Ralickas (2007) who have analyzed respectively the sublime in literature and its evolution, the role of the alien creatures and their relevance as plot devices in Lovecraft’s stories, his characters’ primary role, and the relationship of these characters with the sublime. In addition, more authors such as Stephen Mariconda and Beatriz González Moreno will be added to this theoretical frame. The methodology of this research follows the writings of Houellebecq, Joshi, and Soufas in their reflections on Lovecraft’s writings, in the case of Houellebecq and Joshi, and on the sublime and literature, in the case of Soufas.

Lovecraft attributes a deep importance to the role of human-made religions vis-à-vis the cults built around the figure of his alien “gods,” coming from the infinite gulfs of space and time of the universe, present in his construction of horror and the weird. This construction is directly linked to his settings, presenting an accurate depiction of reality from his point of view, which took shape from his early readings of texts on modern science such as Hugh Elliot’s *Modern Science and Materialism* (1919). His conception of reality can be considered as one of the main reasons of the use of the sublime in his literary universe, and it is linked to his understanding of religions as a hoax and of the breaking of anthropocentrism in his writings.

This analysis of “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1931) shows the way in which the sublime and the demise of anthropocentrism become evident, and how this leads to the obsolescence of religion, being this a basic concept intrinsic to humans’ understanding of the environment. It is explained how these relationships create a devastating effect on the main characters of Lovecraft’s universe by relegating them to mere spectators of the main events of the story. Most of them end up dead, disappeared, or lose their minds.

#### **Keywords:**

Anthropocentrism; Cthulhu Mythos; time; religion; the sublime.

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### **A Proposal for an Analogical Literary Genre: the US Multicultural Immigration Literature**

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This paper proposes the configuration of a literary genre from the perspective of its perceived readability by analysing literary works from American authors that share a migrant background. The United States historical and cultural complexity is great and so is American literature. Nevertheless, during the last decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, there have been a resurgence of authors with a migrant background whose literary works have received a newly found recognition within American literature. By analysing some

of those author's works, this article studies the possibility of composing a literary genre following the analogical logic of genres proposed by Jean-Marie Schaeffer, whereby a genre is discovered from reading. Therefore, the first step will be to trace common criteria that will shape the genre from the selected texts. Said literary works belong to the traditions of Chicano literature and Asian-American literature, written by: Sandra Cisneros, Junot Díaz, Christina Henríquez, Maxine Hong Kingston and Jhumpa Lahiri.

Thematic unity is the first characteristic these works share: the account of the experience of being born in the US from migrant descent or being a migrant themselves. The experience of growing up shaped both by American culture and their ancestry's culture. Thus, context is worth considering as its own dimension, for the retelling of experience is framed in a specific location: the United States. Even though the narration is based on the authors' experience, these texts are not autobiographical nor pretend to be non-fiction, with one notable exception which deserves further study. Another significant consideration is that, although the protagonists are mostly young adults, these are not necessarily coming-of-age stories, but due to their account of experiences, some focus on a specific time during adolescence.

The selection of authors also warrants mention: they are mostly women with the exception of Díaz, so a gender comparison is an aspect that will be observed as well. However, there is no intention to frame this genre within the female experience, rather, there is an interest to observe whether the authors' gender has any influence. Besides, the two literary traditions comprise authors whose origin is diverse, which is reflected in their writing both in form and subject throughout the stories. As such, common aspects are not to be an excuse to eradicate the uniqueness and personal ways of artistic expressions that these authors offer. Incidentally, these literary works are mostly in the form of short-stories, which is also a common occurrence among authors of the period and might imply common features beyond format.

Finally, this proposal will offer a comparison with the Harlem Renaissance, an African-American literary movement whose origin during the first half of the twentieth century has been connected with the African-American literary tradition of the second half of the century. All in all, this study's main interest is to propose the configuration of a genre that is able to articulate these shared features in a transversal manner, considering their formal and thematic aspects.

#### **Keywords:**

American; Chicano; Asian-American; comparative literature.

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#### **"The Past Is Not Important": Resisting Assimilation in Andrea Hairston's "Dumb House"**

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In “Dumb House,” Andrea Hairston’s protagonist, Cinnamon, is persuaded by anonymous salesmen to turn her home into a smart house under the premise of a more comfortable living. Despite the character’s refusal, salesmen repeatedly insist on the benefits of incorporating new tech to her home, highlighting the dangers of living without it. Set in a futuristic world, the short story speculates on the effects of technology in the future, introducing a dystopian society in which tech surveillance is commonplace. Hence, Cinnamon’s refusal to get her home *upgraded* is read as open resistance to assimilation, which, echoing discourses on belonging, monitoring, and race (Browne 2015), serves to investigate present-day cultural anxieties while displaying a technological crisis that is as economic as it is social, political, and cultural. “Dumb House” therefore grapples with the painful aftereffects of cultural loss, identity erasure, resource scarcity, memory deletion, and lack of privacy, resisting the ideological premises that set them in place. Rather than embracing technological advancement, Hairston’s protagonist upholds the past as a repository of Black, ancestral—sometimes, ritualistic—knowledge, reclaiming its value as a means to resist political impositions. In the story, the author interprets the future and the past “as political counters” in need of re-envisioning and “re-stories” them by threading a narrative that premises the salvaging of the future on the recuperation of cultural heritage (Attebery 2022). This paper addresses Hairston’s renditions of the future, the present, and the past as representations of cultural resistance challenging dominant ideologies. It reads dystopian assimilation to an unfamiliar world as an imposition of displacement and unhomeliness that deprives racialized individuals of cultural identity, and understands the protagonist’s retrophilia as a path towards homeness, origins, and roots. As such, it re-traces the historical surveillance of Blackness through the story’s extrapolative protocols, interpreting Cinnamon’s refusal to assimilate as a counter-discourse, which reclaims cultural memory while “making legible modes of collective territoriality” that defy state norms (Rifkin 2019). After all, as Lisa Yaszek (2015) points out, Afrofuturism often engages with “the history of African-American technoscientific innovation” through stories that condition the survival of humankind on the building of alternative futures and relations, looking back on the past only to move forward.

**Keywords:**

Andrea Hairston; surveillance; un/homeliness; cultural heritage; Afrofuturism.

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**Herman Melville at *La Bola de Oro*: The Place of Lima in *Moby-Dick***

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Scholars have long identified in the work of Herman Melville (1819-1891) a fascination with Spanish America, and with the city of Lima in particular. Melville describes Lima in *Moby-Dick* (1851) as “the strangest, saddest city thou can’st see”, due to its appalling “whiteness”: “Old as Pizarro, this whiteness keeps her ruins for ever new” (Melville 1988, 193). In *The Spanish Background of American Literature*, Stanley Williams remarks “a curious emotional insistency in his allusions to everything connected with the white city of Lima” (Williams 1955, I.225). Hershel Parker similarly claims in his biography of Melville that “no other city in the Americas

[...] caught and haunted his imagination the way Lima did” (Parker 1996, I.281). On one hand, this catching and haunting has to do, as Williams and Parker suggest, with Lima’s identity as the former capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru. As such, its “emotional insistency” in Melville’s work comes from its associations with La Conquista, with Spanish Catholicism and the Inquisition, and with colonial customs that persist amid the ruins of empire in post-independence Peru.

On the other hand, as I will argue in this paper, Lima catches and haunts Melville’s imagination not just as a spectre of the imperial past but also as a counter-image of the American present, as the United States struggled to define its position in the so-called “Western Hemisphere” among a number of other emergent settler-colonial states. Lima is not merely a decadent backdrop for the projection of US ambitions and anxieties but also a dynamic site of encounter between hemispheric contemporaries. Nowhere is this clearer than in the chapter of *Moby-Dick* in which the narrator, Ishmael, decides to narrate a story about the infamous white whale in “the style in which I once narrated it at Lima, to a lounging circle of my Spanish friends, one saint’s eve, smoking upon the thick-gilt piazza of the Golden Inn” (Melville 1988, 243). Storytelling in this chapter becomes a collaborative event, as the young Peruvian “dons” interrupt Ishmael to ask questions, make comparisons, and crack jokes.

I have two specific arguments to make in this paper. First, I argue that Ishmael’s encounter at Lima’s Golden Inn deconstructs US American exceptionalism by collapsing the distance and difference between what Don Pedro wryly calls “this dull, warm, most lazy, and hereditary land” and Ishmael’s “vigorous north” (Melville 248). And second, I argue that Melville’s Lima is a composite production as collaborative and contingent as Ishmael’s act of storytelling, since it reflects Melville’s own first-hand experience of Lima and its famous “Fonda de la Bola de Oro”, as well as accounts and illustrations of the city by fellow sailors and the popular *costumbrista* watercolour illustrations of the Afro-Peruvian painter Francisco Fierro. This paper thus demonstrates that Melville uses the sociocultural particularities of post-independence Lima to present the city and its citizens not as a foil but rather as a dynamic counterpart to the nineteenth-century United States.

#### **Keywords:**

Herman Melville; *Moby-Dick*; Hemispheric American Studies; Lima, Peru; Francisco Fierro.

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3. *“Tales from the Border” : Global Change and Identity in Contemporary British Short Fiction*
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5. *Beyond Exclusions: The Power of Resistance and Interdependence*
6. *Cultural Representations of Destructive Practices: Contesting the Categorization of Bodies as Disposable?*
7. *Rethinking Human-Animal Boundaries through the Feminine Gaze*
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9. *“What’s Love Got to Do with It?”: Romancing the Postcolonial Syllabus*

10. *Present and Future Trends in African Studies*

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## ROUND TABLE

### *Activist Shakespeare in Performance*

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*Universitat d'Alacant*

*Juanjo Bermúdez de Castro Acaso*  
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In 2011, the political activist, philosopher and academic scholar Angela Davis related a fascinating anecdote that might illustrate this round table's interest. She was taking part in a Marcuse conference in Philadelphia, where scholars were discussing the various ways the philosopher's theories push people in the direction of a critical practice, when they realised that more than three hundred people had pitched their tents in the plaza outside the city hall, near the conference venue. They were supporters of the Occupy Movement. Almost all the attendants of the conference, more than one thousand scholars, were so captivated by this historical juncture that they spontaneously joined a night march in support of the protests (Davis, 2011). Interestingly, the Occupy movement was soon described as a "highly theatrical protest", with many camps featuring a dedicated theater space and commentators referring to the protest sites as "stages for dissent." For example, the Occupy London protesters took over the stage at the Arcola Theatre with a theatrical production dramatizing the demonstration outside St. Paul Cathedral. Similarly, the 15M in Spain was known for its theatricality, as there were performances in camps across the country. In Murcia, the 15-M movement staged an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* titled *Hamlet el Escaparate de la Locura* under the direction of Esther Ruiz and the Theatre Company Tabatha Laboratorio Experimental de Vanguardia. Furthermore, the 15M culture commissions actively promoted street art and organised art exhibitions in conjunction with the protests and occupation of spaces. This multifaceted approach to activism, combining actions, reflections, and creations, led to a "circulation of social energy" –to use Stephen Greenblatt's expression–, which continues to be evident today. The involvement of artists in the protests led to activism being brought into and beyond the traditional gallery spaces, encouraging the use of various forms of expression such as public reading and speaking, street painting, collective marching and performing. The main purpose of this round table is to discuss performative experiences like the ones abovementioned, focusing on the intersection of Shakespeare's adaptations and social activist experiences.

**Speaker 1** will present a theoretical framework on the connection between social movements and the notions of theatricality and performance (Rohd, 2012; Butler, 2015) in relation to politically-engaged adaptations of Shakespeare's works. One of the key features of these movements -for example, the *Occupy* Movement- was its use of performative tactics, such as public assemblies, marches, and protests, to draw attention to its message and mobilise participants. These tactics were seen as a form of "performative politics" that used symbolism, spectacle, and collective action to communicate the movement's message and build its identity. Elaborating on the notions of performative tactics and performative politics, Speaker 1's aim will be to demonstrate how Shakespeare has become a space of convergence between theoretical research and practice at present.

**Speaker 2** will focus on Shakespearean practices that address a variety of social concerns and even try to intervene in them. For instance, Speaker 2 will be discussing the work of La Trobe University Theatre Company (Melbourne), which presented an appropriation on *Cymbeline* in 2012, in which the protagonist king had to face a fire at a period of water scarcity and governmental incompetence. This production was chosen to be part of "Cymbeline in the Anthropocene", an international theatre research project coordinated by Randall Martin and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada. This project involved eight companies around the world exploring contemporary ecological values by

adapting *Cymbeline* to local environmental conditions and challenges. Another notable example in the field of Shakespeare and social activism that will be worth mentioning is Adrian Jackson's London-based theatre school and company, Cardboard Citizens. Established in 1991, Cardboard Citizens is the leading professional theatre group for homeless individuals in the UK. The company utilises Augusto Boal's techniques and the methodology of the Theatre of the Oppressed to unlock the potential of theatre and art for individuals experiencing homelessness, inequity, and poverty. In September 2003, Cardboard Citizens collaborated with the Royal Shakespeare Company to perform an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Pericles* in front of asylum seekers and refugees from Iraq, Kosovo, Kurdistan, Colombia, and Iran. The one-hour show was followed by the audience sharing their personal stories, which were then interwoven with the original text resulting in a more comprehensive version of *Pericles* as an asylum seekers' fable. These are two out of multiple theatrical experiences that Speaker 2 will discuss. After that, the attendants will be welcome to make comments, pose questions and, in brief, to take part in the round table. Potential topics for discussion during the session might be:

- How do adaptations of Shakespeare's works address social concerns and intervene in contemporary issues? What are some notable examples of Shakespearean practices that engage with social activism?
- The role of theatre in addressing social inequality: how can theatre be utilized as a tool to empower marginalized communities, such as the homeless population? What are some successful examples of theatre initiatives that have made a positive impact?
- The environmental dimension of Shakespearean adaptations: how have some Shakespearean adaptations explored contemporary ecological values?
- The potential for future collaborations between scholars, theatre practitioners and social activism: how can theatre continue to intersect with social activism in innovative ways? Can we think of ways of using performative tactics and Shakespearean adaptations to address pressing social issues in the future?

These questions are in consonance with the ideas generated in previous AEDEAN round tables; for instance, the 2017 presentation of *Teaching Literature in the 21st Century: The Challenges Ahead*. One of the main topics discussed in 2017 were how the Internet, the increasing technological advances, and the apparition of massive open coursewares, among other innovations, had caused a series of changes in the way we taught. Some of these ideas were updated in the 2022 round table titled *Critical Perspectives in English Studies Today: From the Classroom to the World*. The purpose of this round table was to engage in conversation about a variety of aspects related to activism and academia, focusing on the challenges of teaching Language and Literature in such context. On this occasion, our aim is to reflect collectively on the political changes occurred during the last decade (the LGTBIQA+ movement, the development of intersectional Feminism, the raise of awareness of the environmental crisis, etc.) in the specific context of Shakespeare Studies and its intersection with performance practices and activism.

**Keywords:**

Shakespeare; Activism; Performative tactics; Theatre; Social Justice.

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## ROUND TABLE

### *Women Writers and Sustainability: Anglo-Saxon Travelers in Spain on Nature and the Environment*

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*Universidade de Santiago de Compostela*

*Alberto Egea Fernández-Montesinos*  
*Universidad Pablo Olavide*

*María Losada Friend*  
*Universidad Pablo Olavide*

*Verónica Pacheco Costa*  
*Universidad Pablo Olavide*

#### **1. General description of round table: setting the scope**

The important number of women writers who traveled throughout Spain in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries provide an important contribution to the understanding of the history of the country. As Spain showed the first signs of modernity and industrialization, British and American women writers displayed a relative confrontation with all that meant pollution, industrialization and mechanization. In their constructive insights about various regions of Spain, their constructive views on the environment and the positive portrait they offer of the traditional balance between humankind and farming contrast with the negative picture on industrialization back home. For this reason, it is surprising that their texts have not been sufficiently explored. What is more, their descriptions on nature and landscape, biology and the diversity of flora and wildlife in the Iberian Peninsula is a pending tasks for literary scholars interested in the field of ecofeminism.

This round table contributes to the field of the study of British and American women writers in the contemporary period focusing on Virginia Woolf, Georgiana Goddard King, Gertrude Whitney and Katharine Lee Bates. Their texts explore an array of nature sites, agricultural spaces, gardens, heritage locations, and parks as a clear attempt to enter the realm of sciences. Their interests in exploring botany, biology, ornithology and zoology reveals an early concern about sustainability. The relationship of these women with Spanish natural environment includes collecting leaves and drawing plants as a form of botanical art, completing the pilgrimage Way of St James, participating in nature-based active trips, adventuring to climb Sierra Nevada by mule or documenting the types of fish of various rivers of the Iberian Peninsula.

These writers use narratives and descriptions of their contact with nature to reveal the ideal society as a rural one, carefully poised between the receding wilderness and a looming industrialization. Their texts supported the maintenance of a more traditional Spain and were sure to express the negative aspects of rapid industrial growth the loss of traditional national customs. While the contact with the natural environment was highly praised, modernity and industrialization were something much reviled and neglected. By knowing the places they visited, and by describing and documenting their natural sites, they helped readers to approach the land humbly and gratefully asserting the necessity of establishing a society that was sustainable in the natural world. What lies behind their texts is a moral obligation to deepen knowledge of the natural history of the environment.

#### **Open questions to engage with the audience**

Be that as it may, to study and analyze their texts considering notions such as sustainability and the environment is a major pending task and a challenge for scholars today. This round table will

try to engage the audience presenting these women writers as active contributors to the discourse of natural history. Their critical approach to the signs of industrialization is a step forward in rethinking progress as we see it today. Some of the open questions to engage with the audience are: If sustainability consists of fulfilling the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future ones, how are these women an example of early environmentalists? Can their texts be understood as precursors of contemporary notions such as sustainability? After listening to some examples of encounters with nature by these four writers, how can we rethink the literary canon in British and American Ecocriticism? And finally, can these texts present alternatives readings to the genre of Travel Literature traditionally associated with masculinity?

### **Summarizing previous research**

Previous research include articles such as “Constructing a Picturesque Spain: An Empirical Approach to Women Travelogues Written in English (1842-1949)” (2021), “Rewriting Stereotypes on Spain: Unveiling the Counter-Picturesque in Katharine Lee Bates” (2019), and also online exhibitions such as ‘The Image of Spain in Travel Literature’ sponsored by Instituto Cervantes by author 1. Author 2 has published on Virginia Woolf including a book chapter titled “La aventura andaluza de Virginia Woolf” (2017), and the prologue of a translation of the short stories and essays of the written in *Hacia el Sur. Viajes por España de Virginia Woolf, Itineraria* (2021). Author 3 has contributed with research in the area of Comparative Studies analyzing literary and cultural exchanges between Spanish and Anglo-American contexts. She has various publications on instructional, educational and travel narratives of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries: on the convergence of Erasmus Darwin and Jovellanos and Moratín (*Cuadernos Jovellanistas*, 2020), on Henry Field’s *Old Spain, New Spain* (in *Transatlantic Gazes: Studies on the Historical Links between Spain and Northamerica*, 2018), on Lady Tenison’s *Castille and Andaluca* (Peter Lang, 2020) or Jenny Ballou’s Pre-Revolutionary Spain (*Filología*, 2019). She has also translated Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney’s 1928-1929 diary in Spain (University of Huelva, 2020) and Mairin Mitchell’s “Scenes of Spain” (*Estudios Irlandeses*, 2023). She co-edited *1616-2016: Four Centuries of Spanish-British Cultural Exchanges* (2016) and *De Colón a la Alhambra: Washington Irving en España* (2014). Author 4 has contributed within the area of travel narratives with publications on Edith Wharton, as she translated and edited a facsimilar volume with Wharton’s “Last Journey of Spain with W. 1925” and her unfinished essay “Back to Compostela” titled *Back to Compostela/ Regreso a Compostela: the Woman, the Writer, the Way* (2011).

### **Abstract 1: Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney**

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney travels to Spain in 1920. She is ready for a time on her own and plans to enjoy the country’s cultural diversity. She had been in Spain several times before and would come back to the country again in 1928 to inaugurate her enormous Columbus Monument in Huelva. However, the time recalled in her diary “Spain 1920” stands out as a relevant travelling experience where she observes modernity slowly emerging in Spain. Her narrative falls into the stereotype of an underdeveloped country in its comparison with those in Europe, as many other traditional voices studied by Andreu and Bolufer (*European Modernity and the Passionate South*, 2023). Nevertheless, her subjective vision contributes to new aspects of 20th century travelling accounts if studied under the premises of an ecocritic perspective.

One would expect that as the granddaughter of the tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt, relevant exponent of the railway industry in the Gilded Age, Whitney was well aware of the benefits of transport opportunities (as much as of its weaknesses, symbolized in the Titanic disaster of 1912). Her view, therefore, should be far from ecological, sustainable proposals as we understand them today. Nevertheless, the observant gaze of this well-known sculptures discovers natural beauty in Spain and reveals her desire to safeguard it, as an incipient contribution to an early ecocritical consciousness. Urban and natural landscapes are carefully scrutinized between lines in her diary. As a *flâneuse*, she enjoys Madrid’s crowded streets, but sees their potential danger. Travelling by train, climbing into an old landau, taking an omnibus, in a horse coach, or driven by chauffeurs through different parts of Andalucía, her admiration on natural beautiful sites of Cordoba, Seville and Granada, is mixed with her awareness of environmental dangers as city noises or the lack of

water in dry, rough lands. Moreover, although her admiration for Blasco Ibanez's work *Sangre y Arena* (1908) makes her a good reporter to evoke scenes in a bullring, she proves along the diary her awareness on animal welfare, especially regarding horses and donkeys.

This analysis guides the reader of "Spain 1920" through a stereotypical and paradoxical representation of Spain's slow-paced entrance into modernity with the perspective of this elitist traveller. Capturing the combination of urban and wild spaces, Vanderbilt Whitney recreates in her diary portraits of natural beauty among incipient signs of progress and reflects somehow the observation of environmental values and the need to protect Nature and its beauties.

### **Abstract 2: Virginia Woolf**

Anyone interested in twentieth-century English literature who approaches 46 Gordon Square in London's Bloomsbury neighbourhood today will find it somewhat difficult to evoke the hectic literary, artistic and ideological world that took place within its walls a century ago. A brief stroll through the peaceful gardens that occupy that block can help us reconstruct in our imagination a microcosm in which Woolf lived, wrote and conversed with her fellow members of the so-called Bloomsbury Group.

From Gordon Square Virginia Woolf travelled to Spain on three occasions; the first of these trips she made when she was young, only 23 years old and accompanied by her brother Adrian. In the letters, diary entries and other texts she wrote as a result of this trip we glimpse a young Londoner, little or not at all accustomed to travel or to living in other places with other customs and other languages. We even perceive a certain dislike for the absence of the comforts to which she was accustomed and little interest in knowing and understanding what surrounds her in that first experience in our country. Woolf returned to Spain with her husband Leonard in 1912 on their honeymoon, during which they also visited France and Italy, and almost twenty years after the first visit, at the age of 41, accompanied again by Leonard. Through her writings of the third trip we can see that the inexperienced and somewhat prejudiced young woman of the first trip has disappeared. In her place, we find a woman who sees Spain with different eyes, marvelling at the landscapes of Granada, the freedom of wild nature, the smells and colours that fascinate her. Virginia Woolf no longer wishes to return home as soon as possible, as she comments in one of her letters on the first trip, but is eager to extend her stay in Granada, in the open air, surrounded by greenery and enjoying the absence of worries.

Virginia Woolf captures her visits to Spain in her essays, diaries and letters and helps us to recreate the streets, gardens and monuments from her gaze, more accustomed to Gordon Square than to the unpaved streets of Seville, or to the smell of orange blossoms. Although Woolf cannot be considered a travel writer, we could rather say that she traveled and wrote about the impressions and reflections that arose during her journeys. The aim of this contribution to the round table is to analyse the texts Virginia Woolf wrote about her trips to Spain from the 21st century perspective of nature and the environment.

### **Abstract 3: Georgiana Goddard King**

"On the Cape — the folk there speak of El Cabo as we of the North Cape and that of Good Hope — I found grey rock, and drenched heather, and a choking fog. "Más allá no hay más que las aguas del mar, cuyo término nadie más que Dios conoce." [King, vol III; p. 218]

These are some of the references to Finisterre (Lands' End) that Georgiana Goddard King wrote in her book, as she reached the place that today many pilgrims consider the final stages on the Pilgrim's way or the Way to St. James. King told the story of her "three years' wanderings, and places visited and revisited" along the Way of St James, in order to write a three-volume work. Her book, now considered the first authoritative guide on the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, was overshadowed at the time of publication by the voices of other (male) art historians, like A. Kingsley Porter, but the purpose of this paper is to explore, expose and vindicate King's work, a century later.

Even if the initial intention of the writer was to write an art history book, and ascertain the debt of Spanish art to other countries, especially France, her experience soon became "a very pilgrimage, to following ardently along the ancient way where all the centuries have gone." (King, vol I, p. 22), and as such, she created her own individual style of travel writing, mixing it with

local history, myths and legends, and a detailed description of geographical, artistic, cultural and even anthropological details.

We will then track down and analyse her references to nature in the text, and see what her impressions convey, not just as the art historian but the pilgrim about Spain at the beginning of the 20th century.

**Keywords:**

Women Writers; Sustainability; Anglo-Saxon Travelers; Spain; the Environment.

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## ROUND TABLE

### *“Tales from the Border”: Global Change and Identity in Contemporary British Short Fiction*

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*Laura Torres-Zúñiga*  
*Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*

*Isabel María Andrés-Cuevas*  
*Universidad de Granada*

*Carmen Lara-Rallo*  
*Universidad de Málaga*

The rising scale of forced human displacement constitutes a major global challenge in the twenty-first century. The conflicts raging in the Middle East, the current Russia-Ukraine war, the ongoing political unrest in the African continent or the humanitarian crises triggered by environmental collapse worldwide –the so-called “ecorefugee” or “environmental refugee” (Myers and Kent 1995:14), or those who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation and other environmental problems– have forced thousands of people to flee their homes in the new millennium.

**Speaker 1** (round table convenor) will suggest how the response to such global crisis has paradoxically resulted into enhanced forms of policing and the fortification of national borders to preserve national sovereignty and integrity, allegedly threatened by those who seek to trespass national borders, as exemplified by the policies of the Donald Trump administration, the Brexit referendum, or the image of Fortress Europe. Unsurprisingly, contemporary critical thinking has widely addressed the nature of borders as a response to a global anxiety concerning mobility, examining border phenomena not only as geopolitical realities, but also as figurations where otherness and difference are often negotiated. Julia Kristeva (1991), Giorgio Agamben (1995), Jacques Derrida (2000), Judith Butler (2004) or Rosi Braidotti (2013), among others, have deeply reflected on the ethical and political implications of the erection of new borders and consolidation of existing ones, on the repercussions of new and sophisticated forms of policing, antimigration politics and xenophobic discourses, which often result in suspending civil liberties and suppressing political dissent by seriously injuring our “fundamental dependency on anonymous others” in developing forms of aggression and “a primary vulnerability to others” (2004: xii, xiii). However, borders, border phenomena and borderscapes possess a dual – and even contradictory – nature as both sites of conflict and surveillance, but also of resistance and transformation (Schimanski and Wolfe, 2017; Schimanski and Nyman, 2021). Described by Georg Simmel as “invisible anthropological constellations” (1993: 55), borders simultaneously connect and separate; divide and welcome passage; entail sites of friction and conflict but also of hope and possibilities. Borders constitute a central human activity that creates both socially and symbolically a system of cultural structures, thus allowing a dynamic of mutual exchange among heterogeneous entities where otherness, difference and identity are negotiated. This round table aims to explore the constitution of borders operating at two major levels – geopolitical and ontological borders– as reflected in the contemporary British short story.

**Speaker 2** will address how borders and boundaries figure prominently in the short stories collected in the *Refugee Tales*. The Refugee Tales Project began in 2015, fostered by the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group, a UK charity that seeks for the welfare of refugees and immigrants

affected by the detention system. The project organises a yearly meeting of people of different ages, places, and backgrounds to walk and to share stories by victims of immigration detention, with the goal of exposing the humanitarian crisis involved in the process. Taking Chaucer's the *Canterbury Tales* as a model, the Refugee Tales Project sees storytelling as "a welcoming-in, [...] as a hospitable meeting of the needs of others", as suggested by Ali Smith, one of the patrons of the project. These stories have been published since 2016 in the successive volumes of the *Refugee Tales*. The latest one, *Refugee Tales IV*, was published in 2021, coinciding with the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the 1951 Refugee Convention in the UK. This volume is, moreover, the first post-Brexit and post-COVID-19 publication of the project, which has widened its geographical scope. Indeed, as a result of the increase in international participation in the online events of the project during the pandemic, *Refugee Tales IV* includes international tales alongside those set in the UK. One of them is Khodadad Mohammadi's "The Translator's Tale", which will be the focus of this contribution to the roundtable. Set in Greece and depicting the harsh conditions of life in Moria detention centre on Lesbos, this story is significant because it illustrates the articulation of different types of borders which recur in the course of the *Refugee Tales IV*. The speaker's contention is that, apart from addressing border-crossing experience in its primarily geographical or geopolitical dimension, the tales collected in the volume also reveal a sustained interest in the parameter of time, as already reflected in the Prologue to the collection, Shami Chakrabarti's "The Time Traveller's Tale". Indeed, the protagonists (and sometimes also narrators) of the stories display a tendency to feel dislocated or displaced not just from the spatial perspective, but also from the temporal one. Such is the case of the narrator-protagonist of "The Translator's Tale", who at different points of the narrative feels spatially and temporally disoriented: "very strange, frustrated and lost" and "very strange in this time that has changed the world" (Mohammadi 70, 73; my italics). In the light of this, this contribution to the roundtable will examine the articulation of spatial and temporal boundaries in "The Translator's Tale", with the aim of discovering how the experience of detention results in a disoriented perception of both parameters, exposing the devastating consequences of such an experience for refugees.

Similarly, **Speaker 3** will consider borders and frontiers as also central in Agnieszka Dale's collection *Fox Season and Other Short Stories* (2017), where mental borders seem to be more divisive than spatial boundaries. Most of these narratives feature Polish immigrants in Britain who struggle with their displaced condition in various ways. Perhaps one of the most illuminating cases is that of "A Happy Nation", which offers the scythed dialogue of Krystina, a woman at the Immigration Office – the text only allows access to her words, but never to those of her interviewer, who is evinced to be questioning her right to attain British nationality. The twist at the end provides one of the clues to understand Dale's position in the collection. Milka, the finicky mum in "Peek-a-Boo", is surprised to discover Bohdan, her ex-boyfriend from back home, is the new nurse at her daughter's kindergarten. When invited over for dinner at Milka's, the evening could not be more tense between Erik – Milka's husband – and Bohdan. Even when both men are Polish, they resort to nationality stereotypes in their duel to prove masculine superiority over the other. In other cases, whether contact with the hostland mores has been the reason or not, life in the UK is never shown as dreamlike. "Kaboom", a fairy-tale-like story, ushers us into the apparently idyllic life of a nameless woman utterly obsessed with her luxury shopping at Harrods and her profession as a writer, while her family try to meet her whims and eccentricities and everyone pretends to be happy. In "We All Marry Our Mothers", set in the context of an unspecified future war against France, Helena discusses with her mother her intention to divorce David. She meets though not only her opposition, but her attempt to persuade her daughter to keep working with her at porn. Back home, Helena decides to ask David to leave just to discover he'd been cheating on her with a French officer they have been hiding at home. Indeed, some of the stories in this collection provide a glimpse to a future which is not much more promising than the present. In "A Polish Joke", Magda, now a British citizen, is preparing a conference precisely on that topic in an attempt to present them as a thing of the past. Yet, the narrative progressively reveals the extent to which Magda herself has interiorized these stereotypes. "Hello Poland" shows an even more bleak and alienating future for Europe, in which democracy has been replaced by martial law and nationalities have been blurred into a globalized system called User

Experience – probably a mockery of the European Union and a new form of organization which enables, not the disappearance of boundaries, but a dictatorial regime where mental borders are at their height.

**Speaker 4** will consider how the establishment and breaching of borders and limits in the work of Sarah Hall points towards a more ontological reflection of how identities are formed and transformed, and how their embodied representations also suffer alterations and breachings of their boundaries. Known for her novels about the Cumbrian borderlands between England and Scotland, Hall shows in her short stories how these territories, and the events occurred there, brand her protagonists' bodies and minds and have a profound impact on their later lives. Her last collection, *Sudden Traveller* (2019), will be taken as a case in point to illustrate how some of the characteristics of Hall's fiction, such as the representation of "the instinctual, uninhibited, pleasure-in-pain contradictoriness of an abjected force" at the core of human behaviour (Lea, 163), "the varieties of female and bodily experience" (Vice, 75), and other "issues of gender and subjectivity" (Robinson, 200), are reflected in her short stories by the articulation of the blurring or breaching of different borders. In particular, two of the stories in the collection will receive special attention: the opening story "M.", supposedly named after its protagonist, and the story "Orton", placed in the homonymous village in Cumbria. On the surface, both stories seem quite different, as the geographically accurate details and the realist narration of "Orton" contrast with the mythical character that London acquires in the fantastic tale "M.", where the city literally becomes an asphalt jungle, "a map of the hunt" for predators and preys (Hall). Yet both these stories have in common that they feature women who experience a state of in-betweenness between life and death, the human and the non-human (animal or machine), connected in both cases to an emotional mark left by experiences of sexuality in their youth. However, whereas for M. this scar resurfaces as an unclosed wound whose monstrous evolution turns her into a fantastic human-animal hybrid reminiscent of a harpy, in the case of Sharon Lydford in "Orton" it acts as a moving memory that makes her, indeed, move from one territory to another in order to end the days she has "borrowed" from death thanks to the implantation of a pacemaker (Hall). As these women's bodies are subject to transgressions and transitions, so do their subjectivities reconfigure in a process that blurs the Cartesian dichotomy between body and mind and endows them with control over life and death to the extent of even defying their own "survival mechanisms" (Hall). To conclude, this round table seeks to critically explore the extent to which the short stories here examined address the "fortress mentality" which characterises our contemporary society (Marshall 2018, 1) and whether these narratives socially succeed in reassessing the "frightening heights of mass migration, the backlash against globalization, the resurgence of nationalism, the collapse of Communism and the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath" (Marshall 2018, 1), or whether borders are perceived as fault lines which will condition our lives both today and in years to come. In doing so, this round table also aims at raising questions that pertain to the consolidation of contemporary geopolitical borders, and whether such resurgence relates to a wider cultural disaffection regarding multiculturalism and to an increase in degree of national resistance to both legal and illegal forms of immigration, thus fuelling large-scale speculations about social insecurities and national trauma by giving racism, populism, resurgent nationalism, cultural prejudice and homophobia a free pass, an especially urgent question to be addressed in post-Brexit Britain. Last, but not least, we would likewonder whether the short story possesses some cultural and formal qualities which enable the issues here under examination to be conveyed and communicated to the reader in a rather distinct and urgent manner.

**Keywords:**

Borders; Short Story; *Refugee Tales*; Agnieszka Dale, Sarah Hall.

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## ROUND TABLE

### *The West Is the Place: New Reflections on Place and Identity in the American West*

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*Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea*

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The American West is place and more than place. The American West is geography and imagery; footprint and printing shops; roots and routes; borders and hope. From Frederick Jackson Turner's inward-looking, static, narrow perception of the nation's westward expansion to the fluid and complex approach implemented by contemporary revisionistic readings of the American West, the region has always been contested as that, as a region. The representation of the American West and the westward movement in art and culture was responsible, in part, for how the region became subjected as the revelatory exposition of certain ideologies and values. In REWEST Research group we have explored before the connections between the American West as setting or space and the personal and collective identities that we can find embedded in the territory and within its projected imagination. However, there is still space for fresh and innovative approaches. In this round table we provide a renewed vision on the topic that brings forward a varied and multilayered rendition of this debate. Accordingly, the four speakers in this roundtable would cover a broad range of perspectives within the realm of this association between place and identity in the American West. It is our intention to voice previous discussions in arrangement with new nuances or fresh materials. To start with, one different angle will come from the fact that each speaker will contribute with variations on the object of study, moving from literature to music, all the way through movies and TV shows. In those different investigations, the four speakers will deal with issues such as maturity, gender, cultural visibility and/or intercultural exchange, in a way, showing how we understand place here as John M. Findlay and Richard White did before: "as a spatial reality constructed by people", which always means and involves "the exercise of power" (x).

The elucidation of these four papers will not conclude the development of this round table. It is also our intention to ignite a deliberation among the participants and the attendants. We believe that the specific topic of this round table can be expanded to other contexts and realities, as much as it can be related to other aspects within this field of study. Among other questions, we will refer to the renovation of the myth, the relevance of place in identity construction, the permutations and/or consistencies of our personal and collective understanding of the American West, and other more specific questions that hopefully will engage the audience in a uplifting conversation with the members of the round table.

The first speaker will explore how place and identity have affected the production of music. More specifically, he will examine the representation of place in lyric writing. In his paper, the first speaker will move from the general to the specific, starting with a methodological contextualization in which he will both approach the relevance of place and identity to understand the complexity of the American West, and also the operational role of music in that examination. Music, as a cultural production, has been usually neglected or relativized in Western American studies, as David M. Wrobel and others have affirmed. In fact, music proves to be a rich and

useful tool to explore both the resilience of mythic interpretations of place in the American West and the revisionistic approaches that have complicated those interpretations today. Music is characterized for its “ambivalent form with no single trajectory, creating instead a series of lines and rhythms, always moving, crossing, and folding” (Campbell 321). That is, as Neil Campbell illustrates here, music opens a different perspective for Western studies because of the elasticity and fluidity of its poetic renditions.

Consequently, the first speaker will show how that elasticity and fluidity emerges through the examination of a broad range of bands, including all-kinds of Western bands that had represented in their songs issues related to Western topics, the American West as setting, the border, or issues related to aridity or the urban nature of the American West. In short, a varied perspective exposing different cases that will disclose the significant association with place that can be seen in Western American music. This will be a brief introduction that will be followed by a specific case in point. Specifically, the first speaker will focus his analysis on the study of Willy Vlautin’s lyric writing. Willy Vlautin is a well-known contemporary fiction writer from Oregon who is also the songwriter for the American band The Delines. Previously, he was also singer-songwriter for the Portland based-band Richmond Fontaine. The first speaker will explore and evaluate Willy Vlautin’s lyric writing career, examining his previous writing for Richmond Fontaine and considering as well his more recent work for The Delines. However, the focus of his analysis will be placed on the album *Thirteen Cities* which offers a rich examination of the interaction between place (the American West) and identity (a varied range of characters that protagonize the songs in this album) in music rendition. The album draws a musical journey through the emotional geography of the American West. Songs such as “The Water Wars” will be explored in depth and contrasted with the more recent work by Willy Vlautin, in order to evaluate if his exploration of place in these songs that he has written for his different bands has progressed, changed or remained constant and solid.

The second speaker will explore the interaction between place and identity in Robert Laxalt’s *The Basque Hotel* (1989), the best-known novel of the main literary interpreter of Basque immigration in the American West. The novel, set in Carson City (Nevada) in the early 1930s, shows the story of a Basque immigrant family through the eyes of an adolescent, Pete, whose maturation process becomes the main thematic trend of the book. It is argued that in this novel the protagonist’s subjective perceptions of geographical space play a pivotal role in the construction of his identity. In fact, his story somehow exemplifies Leonard Lutwack’s well-known call for placelessness based on the supposition that “the maturation of an individual is not possible without the successive abandonment of places” (236).

Place is experienced as a fundamental event in Laxalt’s novel, a story where modern American ways and Basque ancient values often clash. The novel illustrates the inseparability of public and private spaces due to the collapse of the traditional boundaries between public and private spaces, as illustrated by the Basque hotel itself. The hotel becomes “a space that at once exemplifies the flux and chaos of modernity in the early twentieth century, as well as the rationalization of space that was taking during the same period” (Short 1). Particular attention will be paid to the interaction between place and identity in other iconic places in this novel, such as the Basque family new house, the Sierra surrounding Carson City, and several spaces of power in this city such as the capitol, the church, and the school. The speaker will examine their connection to the main character’s ethnic identity and to his integration process into American society. Besides, Laxalt’s novel works as an insightful tool to approach issues such as place attachment, rootedness, and their relationship with the immigration experience. In general, the novel reveals the malleability of place and the unstable condition of tropes like home, “a source of comfort in a world otherwise replete with tension and conflict, and the only environment in which individuals can function as autonomous agents” (Sibley 93). After all, as Doreen Massey has claimed, “the identities of place are always unfixed, contested, and multiple” (5).

The third speaker will address the possibility of the existence of a “feminist Western” by analysing the 2017 Netflix production, *Godless*. Starting from the premise that the Western responds to a formula (Cawelti) which defines its plot, setting and characters as well as the use of violence, this paper will address whether the construction of the setting in the show turns it into what can be considered a “female/feminist” Western.

*Godless*, set in the New Mexico town of La Belle in the year 1880, tells the story of an “only-women” town, whose men have all died after an accident in the town mine. The sudden appearance of a solitary man, who will turn out to be an ex-member of a gang of criminals, who is being persecuted by them, also responds to a standard plot within the Western genre: the forces of good and evil’ struggle destabilize the *status quo*, stability needs to be regained, and guns and violence are brutally used for this purpose.

However, and mostly for the relevance of women as the allegedly main protagonists of the story, the 2017 Netflix miniseries has been considered by many a “feminist” Western. In a genre where women have traditionally represented the silent (but always present) secondary characters (or even tertiary ones, in some cases), women in La Belle are protagonists and “have had” to rule their lives without the/ir men. However, a more reflective reading of the series will prove that the male/female gender hierarchy is still prevalent both in the town and in the series at a conceptual and ideological level.

Following the analysis of the hypothesis that the series is a feminist one as related to its characters, the speaker will address the question of whether the setting also responds to the classical, “masculine” construction of the Western genre or redefines it as a feminine/feminist one. In this line, the speaker will observe that the town as well as the geographical area in which it is set, responds to the “classical” imaginary of a Western movie setting, and thus, clearly follows the previously mentioned formula. Similarly, the arrangement of the gender-based division of the private/public spheres is maintained in La Belle, regardless of the fact that the town is populated with women only (almost).

As a conclusion, the speaker will challenge the idea of whether an “essentially masculine genre” such as the Western may ever go through a profound ideological revision as to become a “feminist” (or even queer) one.

The last speaker will consider the interaction between place and identity from a transnational perspective: more specifically, he will look at the different spaces that Spanish Western and post-Western films have used to reflect about Spanish identity and conflicts. As it is well-known, although Westerns started as a regional genre, they soon became a transnational phenomenon (Miller and Van Riper). And once Westerns disappeared (with a few notable exceptions) from mainstream cinema, it is only natural that post-Westerns exploiting their heritage appeared all over the world. The case of Spanish post-Westerns is particularly interesting, not only because Spain has had a close relationship with the American West since the time of the conquest, but also because it later became the prototypical location for “spaghetti Westerns”.

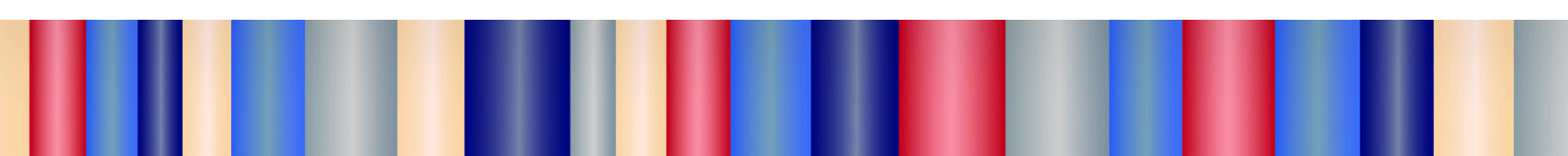
The fourth speaker will look at the places and spaces that recent post-Westerns have used as the setting for their stories: from the Almería sets in Álex de la Iglesia’s *800 balas* (2002) to the nearby deserts in Granada used by Benito Zambrano in *Intemperie* (2019); or from the Ronda mountains where Curro Jiménez fought against the French troops to the northern mountains where *maquis* took refuge in *Sordo* (Alfonso Cortés-Cavanillas, 2019). We will see how these different spaces have been used to articulate a discourse about Spanish national identity and conflicts, whether they are the contrast between “orientalism” and “occidentalism” described by Gabilondo (*800 balas*), or the foundational myths in the Spanish War of Independence (*Curro Jiménez*) or in the Spanish Civil War (*Sordo*, *Intemperie*). In the end, we will show that the relationship between place and identity is as close in transnational (post-)Westerns as it is in the original American genre.

The exposition will finish with an overall conclusion in which we will gather the different approaches from each speaker. It is our intention to provide a general perspective on the aforementioned topics: the transcendental operation of place in identity building, framed within the complex projection of the American West as region and as imagination. After the conclusions, we will move forward to discussion, trying to engage the audience in what we hope that will be a rich and inspiring conversation.

**Keywords:**

Western American literature; place; music; cinema; literature.

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## ROUND TABLE

### *Beyond Exclusions: The Power of Resistance and Interdependence*

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*Juan Carlos Hidalgo Ciudad*  
*Universidad de Sevilla*

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*Universidad de Sevilla*

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In this round table, two key notions will be addressed: resistance and interdependence, as they relate to trauma but also to redemptive affect. Thus, this round table will reveal the difficulties that vulnerable and othered individuals and communities have to face on a daily basis, but also how they manage to make use of strategies of inclusion such as resistance and bonding to ensure their personal and collective survival. In this way, they are able to cope with their traumas and stigmas, both individual or intergenerational, by finding alternative values based on resilience and affect.

Drawing from feminist, gender, queer, postcolonial and decolonial theories of the embodied self, this round table will also pay particular attention to how othered non-normative bodies are read as disposable, unlivable, turned into human waste and, hence, made redundant, as pointed out by Zygmunt Bauman (2004). These non-normative bodies are also rejected because they do not conform to conventional gender roles and mandates, and therefore excluded from socially sanctioned gender categories. So these bodies are reduced to their corporality as repositories and targets of exclusion, differentiation and stigmatization processes. In order to counteract these exclusionary practices, this round table intends to emphasize the importance of claiming valuable forms of corporality and new forms of relation by bringing to the forefront the crucial and empowering role of resistance and interdependence.

Specifically, this round table focuses on three groups: trans men, LBGTQ+ community and Afro-latinas, who share their marginalization and their vulnerable position in contemporary societies. These three cases precisely deconstruct the power dynamics and gender binarism that support the traditional patriarchal ideology by complicating issues of gender and sexuality. New definitions of masculinity, homosexuality and transnational mothering are proposed in order to question the neoliberal democratic regime and its ensuing plethora of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and disability discrimination, among others.

#### **Presenter 1: “What Makes a Man?”: Navigating Masculinity in Thomas Page McBee’s *Man Alive***

Trans narratives tend to use the journey as a motif to comment on both the inner and outer processes their protagonists go through, trying to reach a point of arrival where they could finally fix the psychic and somatic inconsistencies they perceive in their own selves. This pattern dictates the structure from classical narratives to recent ones where surgical intervention is read as “a coming home to the self through body” (Prosser 82-83), and where the body “journeys from negative to redemptive affect” (Keegan n.p.). Through this strategy, these narratives contribute to the creation of a transnormative subject that reproduces “the enduring assimilative power of liberal democratic ideology and its gendered logics.” (Keegan n.p.)

*Man Alive* may be read as an example of this transnormative trend in as much as McBee provides the reader with an autobiographical narrative where the protagonist redeems himself from both the traumatic molestation he went through as a child and the violent attack he suffered in the streets several years later. These two experiences lead him to embrace his own masculinity at the end of the memoir, regardless of the models of toxic masculinity he has been exposed to along his life, and the readers accompany the narrator in this journey “moving their bodies” (Keegan n.p.) at unison with him when adopting an empathic position that allows for an utter identification with the suffering McBee himself has experienced.

The excluded trans subject is thus assimilated into the liberal democratic ideology of the American nation which shows itself only too happy to embrace these dissident voices. Once the problematic relationship McBee establishes with his familial circle is solved, and the readers commune with him when recognising his new masculinity as just an update of this very same concept, the individual is ready to be welcomed into straight society on the condition of accepting and perpetuating what this society has already decided that is acceptable (Ahmed 106).

My contribution tries to open a debate on the strategies used by McBee in this memoir, considering the possibilities they offer as an act of resistance and contestation and/or a resilient process that ends up in a perpetuation of the gender binary. Using Ahmed’s concept of being a happy queer as distinct from being happily queer, we will discuss the way the author navigates masculinity as an in-betweenness or as an updated version of straight manhood.

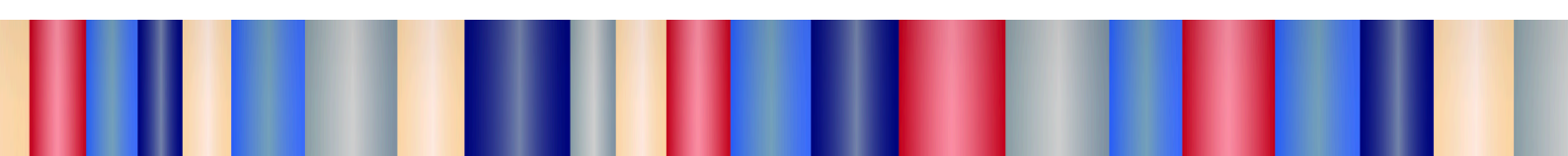
### **Presenter 2: “Illness as Punishment and *Angels in America*: Vulnerability, Exclusion and Resistance in the AIDS Crisis”**

The cultural responses to the HIV/AIDS crisis have universally been accompanied by shame (Canning 2011, 134). *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* (1995) presents the AIDS crisis as the framework for systematic exclusionary political and social practices from President Ronald Reagan’s government in the United States during the 80s and 90s towards the LGBTQ+ community. Firstly coined as GRID, Gay Related Immune Deficiency (Shilts 1987, 121), the history of the AIDS crisis is marked by stigma and silence. These have since then also been built into the identity politics and social discourses around the disease and the community up to the present day, which has resulted in an intergenerational trauma of vulnerability and exclusion.

Tony Kushner, the author of *Angels in America*, discusses AIDS representation in his production by stating how people, and society as a whole, believed for a long time that “we deserved to die because we had sex with each other” (Kushner in Pacheco 2006, 59). However, being acquainted with death, or marked by loss, is no surprise for the gay literary tradition (Woods 1999, 359). While gay literature before AIDS presented gay men as doomed for their sexuality, and given that AIDS literature already had a context in which to portray loss and grief (Pearl 2015, 8), the presence of sickness and politics is characteristic of this genre. A direct relationship between illness and homosexuality is established both in social discourse and the politics around HIV/AIDS, which is later portrayed in its literary response. In fact, following Susan Sontag’s work, and as illustrated in Kushner’s play, being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS was biologically and socially translated as a death sentence and even a divine punishment (Sontag 1991, 55).

This presentation will analyze *Angels* following Sontag’s work on the metaphors around the disease and issues of vulnerability and resistance as posed in the work of Judith Butler (2004; 2016) and Catriona Mackenzie, Wendy Rogers and Susan Dodds (2014). The illness as punishment metaphor will be observed through the experiences and scenes of Prior Walter, Louis Ironson and Roy Cohn. Intertwined with the struggles of these characters we will find Joe and Harper Pitt, a married heterosexual Mormon and White couple, through which vulnerability and resistance will be explored given that Joe is a closeted office clerk whose values forbid him to accept his homosexuality and Harper is becoming more aware of her unhappiness.

### **Presenter 3: “Interdependence and Affective Value in Afro-Latinxs Mothers”**



In US Latinx literature, mothers have always been regarded a symbol of and a mean for homeland and tradition, to a point that some characters become objectified as “belonging/ identity tools.” Migrant mothers are expected to pass on culture and education to their children. However, Afro-Latinas are denied their status as “*madrepatria*,” that is, as nurturers, bearers and emblems of the nation, since their Blackness cannot be associated with “*mestizos*” Latinx states (Cruz-Janzen 2010). As they compromise the Latinx whitening project, Latinegras are regarded as undesirable mothers, thus rendering their mothering subversive per se. I assert that, far from being a burden, their Blackness can be emancipatory, as it “de-objectifies” them by making them free from “motherhood” —a status, granted by patriarchy, as providers of dominant discourses—, and rather open a way for empowered “mothering” (Rich 1986, Gumbs, Martens and William 2016). Considering the intersection of migration, Black Latinidad, and gender, and drawing both from Dominican folklore and the fictional and non-fictional works by second-generation Dominican York authors Naima Coster (2018, 2021), Elizabeth Acevedo (2017, 2021), Lorraine Avila (2019), and Angie Cruz (2022), this presentation proposes a ciguapa maternity and genealogy. Like this Caribbean mythological figure -with feet and eyes in opposite directions, ciguapa feminism implies moving forward, that is, breaking with the motherhood-like reproduction of familiar/cultural/colonial “*fukú*” cycles of trauma, racism, and patriarchy, while at the same time taking an anti-US-assimilationist and decolonial look back to celebrate the positive differential aspect of Afro-Latinx culture.

According to the legend, ciguapas are community-based creatures. In this vein, “ciguapa feminism” challenges the “*madre no hay más que una*” notion. Migration makes US Afro-Latinas’ a transnational and social type of mothering. The spatial separation from their children makes mothers create alternative non-nuclear mothering(s) that involve “othermothers” (Collins 1990, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). While mothers migrate, aunts, grandmothers, neighbors, among others, take care of children in home-countries; or the other way round, aunts, neighbors, teachers act as “othermothers” for children in the US, while their biological mothers remain in their countries of origin.

Even within the same NY neighbors, groups of women organize to be able to communally take care of their kids and work, again revealing Afro-Latinx mothers’ interdependence. This is indeed a very anti-capitalist move, since it recurs to affective value over economic one. Rather than using paid babysitting or day-care, it relies on the care offered by other women of the community. Furthermore, “othermother system” provides different models of maternity, womanhood/femininity and female leadership for future generations, as there is not just one mother figure or role model, but several. As gentrification is unfortunately compromising *barrio*-centered social mothering, Avila, Coster and Acevedo’s works show how net is being used as a tool for new forms of other-mothering. Internet has also allowed new forms of transnational over-seas communal mothering.

### **Keywords:**

Exclusions; Resistance; Interdependence; Transmasculinity; AIDS literature.

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## ROUND TABLE

### *Cultural Representations of Destructive Practices: Contesting the Categorization of Bodies as Disposable?*

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*Universidad de Almería*

*María Auxiliadora Pérez Vides*  
*Universidad de Huelva*

*María Isabel Romero Ruiz*  
*Universidad de Málaga*

That material conditions shape our everyday lives and play “a vital role in the social production of gender” (Wicke, 1994) has been acknowledged by gender theorists since the last century. In this sense, recent theorizations about how material conditions have encapsulated the classifications of beings (human or otherwise) into their usefulness; according to Ahmed, mis/ab/use is the result of processes of classification carried out by cultural structures and power agents. So, our main concern will be to meditate upon our daily relationship with use and the categorization of bodies as useful or disposable, with what is undesirable, what lacks “value”, their multiple meanings, and the way in which our practices could change to reach more sustainability, which is intimately related to a sense of ethics. In that interaction with use, misuse and/or abuse, traditionally invisibilized with the aim of eliminating them (distance, disposability, denial), bodies must be considered, as well as the effects and affects that they generate. Thus, it is crucial to reflect upon our way to relate with the different ways in which bodies are used, which would ultimately overcome feelings of abjection. According to Ahmed, though, these processes are not permanent, but fluid and bodies can be re-signified; she names this “queer use.” It is important, then, to understand how we can change destructive practices and cultural representations, constructing instead an inclusive and holistic ethics that may embrace not only humans but also non-humans, that is, both understanding the grammar of exclusion and learning how to re-assemble its elements into an alternative grammar of inclusion.

#### **Participant 1. The ethos of disposability in *The Spinning Heart* by Donald Ryan”**

My contribution to the round table aims at examining how “disposable” people are represented in the social novel *The Spinning Heart*, published by one of the most prominent Irish writers, Donal Ryan, in 2012. This literary work describes the collapse of the Celtic Tiger and its dreadful effects in a small rural town in Ireland, where a substantial number of men, who had worked for a building firm during Ireland property bubble, find themselves unemployed and broke as a consequence of the economic crisis.

The financial crash transforms the condition of these construction workers, who are no longer useful but “disposable” elements, that is, elements that are meant to be thrown away once they have been used. This collectivity, treated as human waste when made redundant, neglected by both private and state institutions when resorting to them for assistance in order to overcome their critical economic situation, end up perceiving themselves as valueless, a condition that implies marginality and stigma in societies with materialistic values.

Focal attention will be given to the destructive effects that politics and grammar of exclusion cause on these construction workers that are regarded as disposable and to the strategies that these implement to resist commodification and social exclusion. The existing relation between social

tension derived from unfair socio-economic structures and violence in the novel will also be examined.

### **Participant 2. New-Victorian Wasted Lives and Detection in Lee Jackson's *A Metropolitan Murder* (2004)**

In one of his seminal works, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (2004), Zygmunt Bauman defines the idea of "wasted lives" as a ripple of modernity creating the figure of "the outcast". According to him, the production of "human waste" - or more precisely, wasted lives, the "superfluous" populations of migrants, refugees and other outcasts - is an inevitable outcome of modernisation. This notion of wasted lives unravels the impact of this transformation on our contemporary culture and politics and shows that the problem of coping with "human waste" provides a key for understanding some otherwise baffling features of our shared life, from the strategies of global domination to the most intimate aspects of human relationships. However, we have many of these consequences in common with the Victorians. They believed themselves to be the paragon of civilisation and progress, whereas, at the same time, a growing population of "undesirable people" was invading their public life and culture, representing a threat to their class values.

On the other hand, stigma has become an outstanding marker of contemporary and past populations that have suffered discrimination for various social and political reasons. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, stigma can be defined as "a mark of disgrace or infamy; a sign of severe censure or condemnation, regarded as impressed on a person or thing; a 'brand'". In the light of this concept, Imogan Tyler in his work *Stigma, The Machinery of Inequality* (2020) reflects on how stigma changes the ways in which people think about themselves and others, and on how this concept represents an assault on human dignity through its technologies of division and dehumanisation. Victorians believed that people living in poverty had chosen their fates, so their disenfranchisement and distress was the result of their poor behaviour, indiscipline and shamelessness.

Neo-Victorianism has come to re-write the Victorian past, focusing on recovering the gaps in the traces and the archives and hearing the voices of those people whose lives were considered wasted and whose bodies had stigma inscribed as a scar of their lack of humanity. Poverty and prostitution were some of the most important concerns for the Victorian mind. At the same time, violence against women was another issue that provoked social uproar, especially when murder in strange circumstances happened. Many of the victims of this gender and sexual violence were fallen women marked by the stigma of their lack of respectability. Their bodies were disposable bodies, and their lives were considered wasted lives not deserving the human condition.

*A Metropolitan Murder* (2004) is part of Lee Jackson's neo-Victorian trilogy whose protagonist Inspector Decimus Webb has as his aim to solve mysteries associated with the dark side of Victorian London. Also, he tries to restore order in the metropolis and clean it of the contamination and pollution that poverty and depravity convey. These characteristics find their echo in our current societies in the wasted lives of individuals who belong to the category of the "outcasts". The aim of this paper is to analyse the lives of women in the Victorian past who carried the stigma of poverty and prostitution and were victims of all kinds of violence and discrimination, to conclude that they find reflection in our current societies which have a similar avidity for crime news and detection.

### **Participant 3. The Scapegoating of Women in Ireland: A Crime Fiction Approach in Benjamin Black's *Christine Falls***

Throughout the twentieth century and as a result of its process of decolonisation, Ireland was characterised by a social order in which women's bodies were conceived as mere instruments of nationalist cultural articulation. From the trope of "Mother Ireland" to the reiterated curtailing of women's reproductive rights, the prevailing logic of female corporality was informed by systemic patriarchy-oriented and morally loaded elements of control and repression. Such structural ideology, of which the Catholic Church and the Irish State have correspondingly participated, generated evident gender asymmetries whereby the objectification and commodification of women's bodies capitalized the interests of the ruling male class.

This paper focusses on the terms in which these practices of categorization are predicated in the crime fiction novels that the acclaimed Irish novelist John Banville has published under his

pseudonym: Benjamin Black. I will particularly concentrate on *Christine Falls* (2007), the first title of the so-called “Quirke series”, where the author introduces the main protagonist, Quirke, a consultant pathologist working at the Holy Family Hospital in 1950s Dublin. Through his investigation of the mysterious death of the eponymous woman, the book portrays the victimization that the confessional and power-based milieu of the period enacted over women, whose bodies are repeatedly used and abused by the artifacts of the State that are depicted in the story.

In my analysis, I will first draw from Sarah Ahmed’s postulates about how the traditional notions of “use” have negatively impacted individuals (2019) as an appropriate lens from which to explore Black’s portrayal of the multifarious offenses carried out over women’s bodies in Ireland. Secondly, by examining how the particularities of the crime fiction genre enable the author to render visible the practices of women’s corporeal exploitation I will be following Mary Evans, Sarah Moore and Hazel Johnstone in their claim that in this type of narratives there is a structural component behind the crimes that they describe (2019). In this sense, I argue that with its description of different forms of physical violence over women *Christine Falls* offers a critique to the scapegoating practices that have been executed through misuses of the female body in Ireland in order to perpetuate the ideological tenets that, on the contrary, need to be resignified so as to reach a more sustainable, gender-balanced and fair cultural order. (381)

#### **Participant 4. Symbolic Dehumanization in Atkinson’s *Shrines of Gaiety* (2022)**

Atkinson’s oeuvre is deeply concerned with the depiction of beings that endure a dehumanization based on their value in society. Her latest novel, *Shrines of Gaiety* (2022), continues with the portrayal of these human beings and their invisibility due to their disposability. The novel, set at the end of the 1920s in London, follows the adventures of several characters, among them women and young girls. Relying loosely in the detection genre and police procedural, the stories that unfold throughout the narrative establish the threatening environment of the Soho nightclubs for women and young girls in a period in which drug dealing and using was in its beginnings.

In this sense, it seems that depicting different layers of society in which humans are used according to their classification as assets is useful to state how these traditional forms of class classification are maintaining a certain status quo, especially for vulnerable populations—in the novel, women and young girls. By establishing the category nonhuman as an equivalent of disposable, the analysis that follows tries to advocate for an inclusive understanding of humanness that critically signals the unethical position of the dominant set of the population depicted in the novel. The lack of power of some of the characters in the novel possess and the representation of the police force as the one in control establish not only the unequal situation of these social groups but also their dependence on the governing institutions. This presentation of oppressed social groups reinforces the anxieties of contemporary societies about their disenfranchisement, dependence, and dehumanization. Hence, inequality and oppression are perceived as the basis for inhuman treatment and classification. As the analysis provided will try to demonstrate, the dehumanization of the female body places them outside the human paradigm and closer to the inhuman one. This “symbolic dehumanization” does not only point out to the marginalized inhabitants of the London portrayed in the novel, but also to the distorted image of autonomous femininity that the protagonist embodies. To achieve this goal Ahmed’s articulation on the uses of use, together with Shaw’s insights into the construction of the city and its inhabitants are key to understand this dehumanization present in the narrative. Besides, by establishing Atkinson’s preference for working in the detection genre as the means to represent the modes of female coercion and invisibilisation, so familiar in Atkinson’s detective series. From *Case Histories* (2004) to *Big Sky* (2019), the last instalment so far, gender violence is central to the novels because the female who appear are always victims, sometimes survivors, of this type of violence.

#### **Conclusion**

The participants in this round table will analyse how the concept of “use” can be a valid category to understand the classification of bodies in contemporary narratives, with special attention to the way in which physical appearance or behaviour render difference visible, and how it turns into an excuse for exclusion, violence, and discrimination. Likewise, they will investigate the representation of bodies, identifying forms of violence, subjection, or exploitation in relation to

anthropocentric ideological discourses that establish how bodies can be used and/or abused or misused, searching for the ethical implications.

Questions that would be considered are:

- how gender, social class and national identity ideologically endorse and maintain categorizations and hierarchies which lead to the stigmatization and the different forms of victimization that some collectivities have been subjected to and are re/presented in these narratives in a gradation that presides neoliberal discourses;
- how the concept of use, when deprived of its neoliberal sense in order to become a contested term, as Ahmed proposes with her coinage “queer use”, invalidates the categorization of bodies as useful or useless in regards to their stigmatization by reason of health, age, gender, ableism, beliefs, class and identity.

**Keywords:**

Use; disposable beings; stigma.

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## ROUND TABLE

### *Rethinking Human-Animal Boundaries through the Feminine Gaze*

Lorraine Kerlake  
Universitat d'Alacant

Gala Arias  
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Irene Sanz  
Universidad de Alcalá

This panel presents the research project “Women Who Write Animals: Animal Alterities and their Creators in Anglophone Literature: An Ecofeminist Approach” (CIGE/2021/153), financed by the Generalitat Valenciana, Spain. The project’s aim is to rethink and recover the history and future of English-speaking female authors who wrote about animals (as scientists, popularizers, storytellers, novelists and poets) from the late eighteenth century to the early twenty-first century. The project pays tribute to what Anglophone female writers did in the name of nature and local wildlife by recovering their contributions and reviewing history, whilst rethinking our relationship with the more-than-human across disciplinary boundaries.

One of the questions Cheryl Glotfelty asks in the introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader* is whether women write about nature differently than men (1996, xix). Much of women’s nature writing has been informed by the understandings of ecofeminism. Many of the earliest women writers seemed to describe a nature that existed “out there”, separate from themselves. Following this, we seek to explore the question of how female writers conceive nature and represent animals from a feminist perspective by examining their role in the reconstruction of nature and looking at how they represent non-human animals and their/our relationship with them.

Drawing on the theoretical fields and framework of ecofeminism, posthumanism and animal studies, we will argue that Western society’s non-caring anthropocentric attitudes towards animal suffering urges for a biocentric rethinking of human relationships to non- humans and a more holistic planetary consciousness to help build bridges across the artificial boundaries that we have established between humans and nature.

This round table will offer a historical overview of literary representations (in both fiction and nonfiction) of animals in literature from the nineteenth century to the present day in works written by female writers that raise ecological empathy and an ethics of care and contribute towards environmental citizenship. Through a critical literary analysis of contemporary and classic works we will analyze these representations as a reflection of our own cultural attitudes and the ethical implications that this brings to society.

We begin in the late-eighteenth, early-nineteenth century when the first animal biographies began to emerge and animals became narrators of their own story, often marked by mistreatment, as in Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877). It was also at this time that the Victorian fascination with natural history and Darwinian imagination gave way to the rise of animal stories promoting the message that all living beings have feelings and the right to be treated with dignity, coinciding with the first laws against cruelty to animals, and the creation of the RSPCA/ The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and NAVS/ The National Association Against Vivisection. From an ecofeminist perspective it is important to point out that the anti-vivisection movement in Britain was largely made up of feminists who were also involved in the suffragist movement. It was also in the Victorian Edwardian era that the first female voices in the scientific world were heard and, arguably, the first seeds of ecofeminism through those women who wrote about nature and animals and who often endured the ostracism of science for being a woman.

As Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger and Brenda Peterson remind us in *Intimate Nature: The Bond between Women and Animals* “Women have been vital in reestablishing the relationships with

animals and the rest of nature” (1998, xii). Following this, we propose to analyse the works of female voices who often dared to defy the norms imposed by the society or their time and managed to make themselves heard. We will look at the different narrative strategies and approaches used by female writers in order to specifically observe in their works the literary representations of nature and animals and study the cultural attitudes and ethical implications that these writers transmitted to the reader through their imaginary worlds.

A central question that we will consider is whether and how the representation of animals is influenced by politics of gender and/ or social conventions. By studying the cultural attitudes and ethical implications that are conveyed to the reader through the author’s work and by looking at the literary representations of nature and animals, we aim to give voice to and make visible women’s role in the reconstruction of nature and analyse how these representations were also a reflection of the society in which they lived.

Through our discussion we will raise and attempt to resolve some of the following questions: - Is the representation of animals influenced or determined in literature by our cultural attitudes? What ethical implications does this representation have on society? - Can the way of representing them convey certain moral values to the reader? - Is there a faithful reflection in the literature of human impact on the animal world? - How can the reader be challenged to reconsider what humans have done to nature and the animal world? - Can the relations between anthropomorphism and animal rights be rethread? - Can literature help us rethink our relationship with nature?

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Hogan, Linda, Deena Metzger and Brenda Peterson (eds.) 1998. *Intimate Nature: The Bond between Women and Animals*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.

Lorraine Kerslake will introduce the project and focus her analysis on the development of the dog story, as a subgenre of the animal story, by exploring the complex question of human-animal relations in the context of Victorian England, in the wake of the anti- vivisection movement. To do so she will look at works such as Frances Power Cobbe’s canine autobiography *Confessions of a Lost Dog* (1867) and *Puck* (1870) and *A Dog of Flanders* (1872) by Ouida (Maria Louise Ramé).

Gala Arias will look at the figure of the wolf through Ursula K Le Guin’s “The Wife’s Story” and analyse how the author uses reverse lycanthropy as a tool to blur boundaries between the human and non-human.

Irene Sanz uses science fiction and looks at the human and non-human others in Karen Traviss’s *The Wess’har War Series* in order to question human exceptionality by analysing how we define ourselves in relation to other species.

#### **Nature Red in Tooth and Paw: Women Writing Dogs in Victorian Britain**

*Lorraine Kerslake*

*Universidad de Alicante GIECO, Franklin Institute, UAH*

During the Victorian and Edwardian ages many women were in the forefront of movements such as the NAVS -National Anti-Vivisection Society (1875) the RSPCA - Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (1824) or the RSPB -Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (1889). By seeking the right to vote, women also became active in protecting animals from threats like vivisection, hunting and deforestation and took a special interest in a number of issues surrounding nature study and natural history such as the protection of species, the introduction of plants and animals into the home, and of course the animal story. Sarah Trimmer’s *Fabulous Histories* (1786) reads as an early example of teaching morality to young readers through sympathy towards the non-human. Her book paved the way during the nineteenth century for writers such as Mary Sherwood’s *Soffrona and Her Cat Muff* (1828), which also instructs children

in kindness towards animals and Anna Sewell's famous animal "autobiography" *Black Beauty* (1877), used to address the issue of how humans treat animals.

Within the genre of animal stories, the dog story is one that abounds and has long been deeply entangled with that of domestication and humanity. From Homer's faithful companion Argos, Jack London's *Call of the Wild* (1903) or *White Fang* (1906), to Virginia Woolf's canine biography *Flush* (1933), Eric Knight's *Lassie Come Home* (1943), Sheila Bunford's *The Incredible Journey* (1961) to Paul Auster's novella *Timbuktu* (2000), the dog story has long been deeply entangled with that of domestication and humanity. All praise the dogs' innate loyalty towards their human companions. As Yi Fu-Tuan suggests, dogs are the pet par excellence because they exhibit "uniquely a set of relationships we wish to explore: dominance and affection, love and abuse, cruelty and kindness." (1984, 107).

Using the framework of ecofeminism and (critical) animal studies, I propose to look at the complex question of human-animal relations and the makings of the dog story in the context of Victorian England and in the wake of the feminist anti-vivisection movement. Many saw women as being victimized by men in the same ways that animals were by humans and considered vivisection as a crime. To do so I will draw on Frances Power Cobbe's canine autobiography *Confessions of a Lost Dog* (1867) and *Puck* (1870) and *A Dog of Flanders* (1872) by Ouida (Maria Louise Ramé) which I argue can be aligned with more recent efforts to rethink the scope of human-animal relationships whilst contributing towards an ethics of care in the context of the feminist antivivisection movement in Britain.

**Keywords:**

Victorian Britain; Ouida; Frances Power Cobbe; the dog story; the anti- vivisection movement.

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## **Who Fears the Big Bad Wolf? Ursula K Le Guin's "The Wife's Story"**

Gala Arias Rubio

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The American writer Ursula K Le Guin (1929-2018) is well known for her commitment to nature which can be found in both her fictional works and essays. Non-human animals, and our relationship to them has always been a subject of exploration for her, but it is in *Buffalo Gals and Other Animal Presences* (1987) where we find the largest compilation of her writings on animals. This compilation includes the 1979 tale "The Wife Story", where Le Guin uses reverse lycanthropy as a means of blurring the boundaries between human and non-human animals. The tale tells a story full of love and tenderness, the typical story of a couple who are in love. And, as the plot progresses, the story of the terror we feel if a loved one is transformed into a stranger, a monster. Thus, the story confronts us with the question of monstrosity and whether humans are monsters, which leads us irremediably to the following question: then, are wolves monsters? Judging by the negative image through which they have been portrayed in folk tales and fairy tales they definitely represent the villain. They have also become a metaphor for our relationship with nature. Despite the reality of the ecosystem services they provide, in Spain for example, their protection has become a source of controversy, as sections of society claim the right to control their population (that is, exterminate them) for the sake of an alleged economic development.

We propose to explore the parallelism that the author raises between the atavistic horror that an animal such as the wolf causes from the human gaze and the terror that the she- wolf protagonist of the story shows at the conversion of her partner into a human. These paradoxical parallels and contrasts, present in many of Le Guin's works on animals (like, for example, "Mazes" (1971), and *My life so far* (2016)), are intended to bring us closer to the animal's emotional experience and thus encourage a more empathetic behaviour towards them, by "making the alien familiar" (2013, p. 49). We will look at the extent to which these literary strategies can be successful using the theoretical framework of empirical ecocriticism and ecofeminism. We will include a brief

review of the cultural motivations of this fear of wolves and their literary reflection, and some clarifying examples of the reality of these animals in the case of our country.

**Keywords:** Ursula K Le Guin, *Buffalo Gals and Other Animal Presences*, non-human world, raising empathy

**References:**

“I saw him, I had to see him, my own dear love, turned into the hateful one.”

“The wife story”, Ursula K Le Guin, 1979

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### Human and Non-Human Others in Karen Traviss's *The Wess'har War Series*

Irene Sanz Alonso

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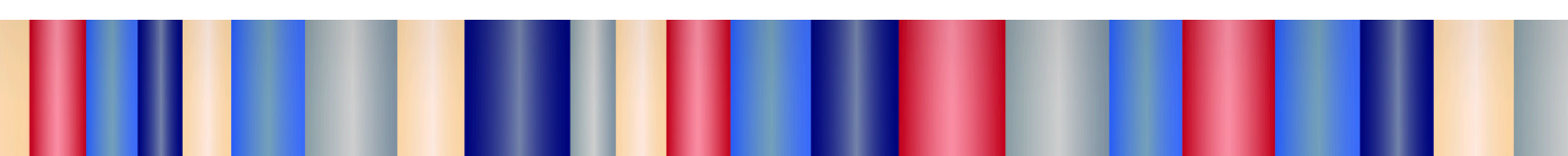
Science fiction is a genre defined by its extrapolative nature, as it approaches our reality from the vantage point of an outsider. Science fiction works use monsters, aliens and futuristic or invented worlds to actually reflect on how we relate to what is different from us, whether it is a person from another country or a non-human animal near us. Women writers of the genre, like Octavia E. Butler or Joan Slonczewski, have particularly explored this encounter with difference by making use of such a science fictional character as the alien. The figure of the alien allows writers and readers to reimagine and redefine what it means to be human and how humans relate with the other beings, whether sentient or not, we share our planet with. In *Animal Alterity* (2014), Sherryl Vint comments on how interesting the relationship between science fiction and animal studies is as: “Both take seriously the question of what it means to communicate with a being whose embodied, communicative, emotional and cultural life – perhaps even physical environment – is radically different from our own” (2014, 1).

Considering theories of science fiction, animal studies and ecofeminism, the aim of this proposal is to explore the relationships between human and non-human (alien and animal) characters in Karen Traviss's *The Wess'har Wars* series. These six novels, starting with *City of Pearl* (2006) portray the conflict between different human and alien civilizations, while depicting their complexity and the way they imagine the world and relate to other species in terms of religion, morality and diet. Traviss offers a rich universe in which each civilization has different physical attributes and ways of thinking, on some occasions completely incompatible. Some of the alien species in the novels are physically similar to animal species on Earth – the *bezeri* look like giant squids, for example – but with the ability to reason and communicate, thus challenging our idea of non-human animals. The author also plays with the boundary between species by presenting a microorganism, the *c'naatat*, which establishes a symbiotic relationship with its host, making them practically immortal while also in constant evolution as this microscopic entity extracts and incorporates genetic information from the species the host is in contact with. This series question human exceptionality and human uniqueness and how we define ourselves in relation to other species. Therefore, the analysis will focus on how each species is presented and how they all perceive each other in terms of agency and hierarchy, leaving human readers with a feeling of inferiority when compared to what the universe may have to offer.

**Keywords:**

The *Wess'har War* series; Karen Traviss; science fiction; alien; interspecies dialogue.

**References:**



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## ROUND TABLE

*Ecofeminist Perspectives in Contemporary Himalayan Literatures in English*

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Universidad de Córdoba*



*Carolina Núñez Puente*  
*Universidade da Coruña*

*María Concepción Brito Vera*  
*Universidad de La Laguna*

*María Luz González Rodríguez*  
*Universidad de La Laguna*

This round table proposal seeks to discuss how Himalayan fiction in English expresses feminist environmental values. Both human and non-human beings cross political divides, hills and rivers know no boundaries, and as Fleetwood states, geographical features like mountains can serve as scales for new histories of empire. Concretely, this proposal aspires to introduce contemporary South Asian women writers in the Himalayan regions such as Mamang Dai, Janice Pariat, and Anuradha Roy. Moreover, panelists intend to engage the connections between two neologisms: Stacy Alaimo's transcorporeality and Ranjan Ghosh's transplasticity, applied to how these Himalayan women writers narrate life stories amidst the rivers and hills.

The geographical areas these women authors write from are surrounded by mountains and water, with several wildlife sanctuaries and reserved forests around, which also are very present in their fictional works. Thus, this proposal explores both the imagery of rivers and mountains in their symbolic dimension as receptacles of emotions, and the relationship with the animal and plant worlds. It also analyses the mutually constitutive non-hierarchical relationship between binaries—such as human/non-human, material/non-material or animate/non-animate—to displace the cardinal role of the male and human dimension, whose centrality is at the base of the environmental imbalance in which our world is enmeshed.

Panelists from various universities will look into the issues of solidarity and intersectionality in relation to the ecofeminist ethics that seeks to end the logic of domination inherent in the patriarchal system, along with any binary and anthropocentric system of existence that prevents the perception of reality as a whole. Panelists will also examine the interconnections and interrelations of tribal knowledge, the environment, and the ethics of care, but also how local folklore and tradition weaves together with unfolding social and political events.

To engender this urgent debate, the round table will present the following position papers:

### **Transcorporeality and Transplasticity: An Ecofeminist Approach**

Indian authors such as Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, Medha Patkar, Bina Agarwal, Meera Nanda or Gaura Devi, among many other scholars, have contributed to the development of ecofeminism in India. This critical theory is rooted in the country's history of colonialism—which has had significant impacts on the environment and marginalized communities—and was initiated in the Carhwal-Himalayan region in the 70s. As ecofeminism focuses on the need to challenge the dominant Eurocentric worldview—which has contributed to the exploitation of women, indigenous communities and the environment—this contribution seeks to propose a methodology that discusses the practices of knowledge production that have historically been ignored or silenced, from an ecofeminist perspective.

As a theoretical framework, Stacy Alaimo's transcorporeality and Ranjan Ghosh's transplasticity offer an attempt to engage in dialogues across cultures. As Alaimo argues, theories of corporeality, environmental theories and scientific studies come together and mix productively, offering new solutions to existing environmental and ethical problems. Therefore, the theories of materialist ecocriticism on the "transcorporeality" of matter seem to be a useful methodological tool to approach Himalayan literature. On the other hand, Ghosh's theoretical and conceptual position on plastic studies is the perfect match for the interpretation of our literary corpus. Grounded on the plastic metaphor, Ghosh argues that the chemical-organic-material-



experimental-global-structural-technological outgrowth and ramification of plastic correspond, theoretically and organically, with our thinking about arts, metaphysics, ecologies, poetics, and literature through the last two centuries. The term “transplasticity” will be transferred to the tropes of water and mountain present in our literary corpus to study the dimensions of the damage that neoliberal politics and capitalism have caused on the planet and, concretely, in the daily life of the Himalayan women belonging to tribal communities.

The methodology that puts together the interrelated theoretical neologisms mentioned above challenges a distributive model that has traditionally ignored relations of gender, class, caste, sexuality, species, and environments. It contributes to our area of study by shedding light on the fraught yet understudied connection between gender, indigeneity and knowledge production in the Himalayan literary context. This intervention will try to demonstrate that this transnational methodology seeks to go beyond the colonial binaries to develop connected solidarities of epistemologies and praxis in the regional imaginary of the Himalaya from an ecofeminist perspective.

### **Exploring the Impact of Hyperobjects on the Human-Nature Relationship in Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*: An Ecofeminist and New Materialist Analysis**

This paper offers a new critical perspective on Mamang Dai's novel *The Black Hill* (2014) by adopting a theoretical framework that combines new materialism and ecofeminism. Karen Barad's theory of agential realism and Stacy Alaimo's concept of transcorporeality offer valuable tools for analyzing the novel, as they reveal the mutual dependence of human characters and the natural environment. Furthermore, by incorporating Barad's and Alaimo's perspectives within the broader framework of ecofeminism, this paper intends to investigate how Dai's novel sheds light on the intricate interrelationships among gender, nature, knowledge and culture in the specific context of Northeast India.

The novel is set during the British colonization of the Himalayan Mountains, at a moment when local tribes were fighting to preserve their ancestral way of life against the overwhelming power of the colonizers. Dai's use of vivid and sensory language to describe the codependences between the tribal characters and their environment creates an atmosphere which underlines the agential and transcorporeal properties of the material world. According to Karen Barad, agency is not something that individuals possess, but rather, it emerges from the ongoing interactions between human and nonhuman actors. These interactions are made possible through the transcorporeal quality of matter, that is, through the capacity of all living beings to be fundamentally interconnected and entangled with one another at a bodily level (Alaimo). In *The Black Hill*, these deep interconnections between the tribal characters and their surrounding world are interrupted by the impending menace of British colonization. Because it is distant and difficult to comprehend, the fact of colonization seems to share the same attributes of what Timothy Morton (2013) has called hyperobjects. According to Morton, a hyperobject is an entity or process that exceeds the limits of human perception, making it challenging to fully comprehend and grasp its magnitude and implications. The final aim of this paper is to examine the novel's emphasis on the relationship between the human and nature, and how hyperobjects such as colonization seem to counteract the balance between the two. If it is true that the boundaries that we conventionally draw between the human and non-human worlds are in many ways arbitrary, then indigenous and tribal ways of knowing, because they are more attentive to the complex and dynamic relationships between the human and nonhuman realms, may provide alternative strategies for confronting the intractable challenges posed by other hyperobjects such as global warming or environmental degradation. By exploring the interplay between ruthless colonization and matter's transcorporeality, this paper illuminates the complex and intricate relationships between the human and non-human realms, demonstrating the need for a more ecologically sustainable and socially just world.

### **Fluid Bodies, Fluid Narratives: Unveiling Water's Ecofeminist Dimensions in *An Atlas of Impossible Longing***



In Anuradha Roy's novel *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* (2008) tribal life is presented as an integral part of the social and cultural fabric of the region, offering glimpses into their traditions, customs and struggles. The tribal communities rely on the land, forests, and rivers for their livelihoods and cultural practices, portraying their intimate relationship with nature and highlighting their knowledge of local ecosystems. However, Roy also depicts the marginalisation and displacement they suffer at the hands of more powerful social groups who take possession of their ancestral lands and attempt to erase their identity in the face of rapid social and economic change. On the other hand, the female characters in the novel are central actors in navigating and challenging the oppressive systems that perpetuate both gender inequality and ecological degradation. Their traditional environmental knowledge exhibits a deep understanding of the land, plants, and animals. By adopting sustainable practices and preserving the natural resources for future generations, they demonstrate a unique responsibility to conserve and advocate for environmental justice, playing a nurturing role.

My aim in this paper is to analyse this novel from an ecofeminist lens, paying special attention to the role of female characters as caregivers; and how their experiences of marginalisation intersect with ecological issues, justifying the need for an intersectional ecofeminist approach that addresses these interconnected forms of oppression. Similarly, I will use Alaimo's concept of transcorporeality to explain how "our bodies are not simply contained within our skin but are also constituted by and through complex entanglements with the larger material world" (Alaimo). Based on this notion, I will explore how bodies are embedded in a complex web of multiple ecological, biocultural and socio-power relations and how humans are emotionally affected by the blind ambition for money and power. Finally, I will study how Rajan Ghosh's term "transplasticity" fits into this ecofeminist transcorporeal analysis of *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*. The overwhelming presence of plastic transcends all boundaries of gender, race, caste and class, provoking unwanted and unavoidable connections in this global and damaged world. As a backdrop to all this interweaving of human and non-human intricacies, I will explore the central agentic role that the trope of the river plays in the novel as the Ganges floods and destroys all those constructions and properties that humans have blindly built to the detriment of environmental ecosystems.

### **Writing (with) Ecofeminist Love and Care: Janice Pariat's Transcorporeal Literature**

Literature discloses the entanglement (Barad) between human beings and the so-called nature, or in Haraway's terms, naturecultures. Furthermore, literature urges readers' imagination to go across disciplines (Ghosh), inviting scholars to combine several approaches in their research. Stemming from these premises, this paper examines Janice Pariat's "Boats on Land" (2012) from a triple ecofeminist, posthuman, and ethics-of-care perspective. My main goal is to examine the transcorporeal dimensions in Pariat's narrative, not only in terms of form—as its lyricism goes across the border of prose—but also because it builds other conceptual and experiential bridges. "Boats on Land" achieves to create transcorporeal links between readers and the landscape it poetically describes, as well as between the main characters' feelings and those vibrating in other-than-human nature (Bennett). On the one hand, the said interconnections seek to disarm the human/non-human binary that causes so much destruction in the world (Shiva); on the other, the ecosystem is both a place that embeds the human, and a being that experiences and transmits emotions. Moreover, the protagonists' love and care for each other, together with the author's careful and loving treatment of them, fulfill an ecofeminist task; for example, supporting the sexuality spectrum functions as an ecofeminist defense of biosocial diversity. Therein, Pariat establishes intersubjective love as a basis for ecofeminism and other kindred practices like care (Gilligan).

While bearing the traces of its lived history—e.g. colonialism—, the lush outdoors mirrors the heroines' lesbianic relation, which is subtly portrayed. As mentioned above, although tribal peoples coexist peacefully with natural spaces, the protagonists' "boats" remain "on land" instead of flowing with the water, which entails a criticism of having to live sexuality in secret. The author's attention to taboo topics—e.g. mental health—and socioeconomic class—e.g. servants—



criticizes hierarchical divisions and reveals the interdependence among all that exists. In the end, love and care are more important than money, as can be deduced from the hunger for affection of the wealthier but lonely girl. Taking responsibility for the world (Tronto) involves building an ecofeminist ethic where the supposedly human and non-human are treated as subjects. Parlat thus underlines the transcorporeal links between “self” and “other,” helping readers gain a deeper comprehension of reality.

**Keywords:**

Himalayan literature in English; ecofeminism; transcorporeality; transplasticity.

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## ROUND TABLE

### *“What’s Love Got to Do with It?”: Romancing the Postcolonial Syllabus*

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Popular romance has traditionally been decried as low-quality and escapist genre by conservative canon gatekeepers and feminist scholars alike, scornfully repudiated on account of its allegedly endless recreation of old-fashioned romantic fantasies and harmful gender stereotypes, and generally understood as stubbornly impervious to politics and, as a result, unworthy of academic attention. In spite of the complex evolution experienced by the genre in the last few decades and its indisputable popularity, romance fiction continues to be perceived by many as unsuitable for classroom discussion and critical thinking. These long-held beliefs would invite to write it off as a notoriously inadequate teaching tool for the postcolonial classroom. Yet our aim in this session is to prove the opposite: that the genre can be put to very good use in our classes by bringing postcolonial theory and politics home to students.

Despite their market-oriented and their best-selling formats, contemporary romance is going through a process of transformation and diversification that reverberates social and cultural changes occurring beyond the gates, but not under the market’s radar. As the third wave of romantic criticism (Teo 2018) has demonstrated, modern popular romantic narratives are shaking the formulae and even re-evaluating the very idea of romantic love as a cultural construct and are, therefore, articulating some of the recurrent preoccupations found in the corpus of works which conform the postcolonial literary canon. In the last two decades, we have witnessed a proliferation and increasing diversification of the romantic narratives that populate bookshops, library shelves and readers’ apps. Encouraged by the genre’s popularity and spurred on the demand for new voices, authors from various postcolonial, diasporic, Indigenous and minority backgrounds have embraced romance in its various subgenres and formats, infiltrating and reshaping it to accommodate their particular stories and advance their own political agendas. Parallel to other subsets of historical fiction, historical romances produced by writers from various parts of the so-called postcolonial world have proved effective to revise hegemonic historical narratives, reimagine or recover silenced stories, and seek redress via romantic plots which favour reparation and reconciliation. Likewise, contemporary romance fiction set in urban and rural locations in various locations and cultural contexts has also proved an extremely effective tool to discuss interracial tensions, national identity conflicts and intercultural negotiations; specific subgenres (like paranormal or fantasy romances) have similarly been appropriated by postcolonial and diasporic authors to imagine alternative post-racial worlds and explore topics which range from ecocritical thinking to effective decolonisation. Not less significantly, readers across the world have eagerly embraced these romantic narratives either for their novelty or, in the case of readers from marginalized postcolonial communities, because these new voices provided them with joyful stories in which they can finally see themselves reflected. Postcolonial romance incorporates stories that indulge in narrating love in all its diversity and complexity, that refuse to reiterate hegemonic and white visions of love and that employ the romantic framework to articulate positive visions of hope, solidarity and affective justice in alternative and previously unrecorded versions of the “happily ever after” (Pryde 2022; Young 2021; Teo 2021). Far from trivializing the topics dealt with in our classes, we are firmly convinced that adding a thoughtfully chosen selection of materials from these new romantic authors to our reading lists can prove an

extremely attractive way to introduce and engage our students with the histories and cultural contexts they portray.

Each of the speakers will be focusing on a sample of areas and topics. Speaker one will trace the recent interest for Black British romance in the United Kingdom and discuss how the literary works of Bolu Babalola (*Love in Colour* [2020] and *Honey and Spice* [2022]) and the collection of short stories *Who's Loving You: Love Stories by Women of Colour* edited by Sareeta Domingo (2021) can be examined in the Postcolonial classroom as works which do much more than fill a substantial gap in the British publishing industry. By celebrating diversity in romance, highlighting the importance of family and community alliances in the growth of the love story and depicting underrepresented collectives in the British context, these works challenge the culture of emotional imperialism and capitalism, where the particular experience of white, Eurocentric love has been taken as universal and “emotions have become entities to be evaluated, inspected, discussed, bargained, quantified, and commodified” (Illouz 2007, 109). These literary works infuse traditional romantic narratives and genres with aesthetic innovation and are also charged with politics; they change readers’ perspectives, help imagine better societies, and infiltrate and decolonise the traditional literary canon in the English language by “offer[ing] a corrective to reverse the dominance of white-dominant literary canons” (Anim-Addo, Osborne & Sesay 2021, 4). The novels also serve to de-centre non-Black readers’ expectations and allegedly universal Western conceptions about love. What is more, through a genre long deemed irrelevant and largely apolitical, these writers dismantle myths of post-racial societies by forcing readers to acknowledge that “whiteness and white privilege dominate all aspects of society” (Bhopal 2018, 27) and to understand “that those from non-white backgrounds, because of their identity, are position as inferior to whites in a society in which white identities predominate” (Bhopal 2018, 27), which in itself is a decolonial form of activism.

Speaker two will illustrate the main points of the session in relation to popular literature produced in the Pacific region through a discussion of the romantic novels by Samoan author Lani Wendt Young and, in particular, her Telesā trilogy (*The Covenant Keeper*, 2011; *When Water Burns*, 2012; and *The Bone Bearer*, 2013). Wendt Young’s YA paranormal romances have integrated an increasingly large corpus of romantic and fantastic novels for young readers which Caryn Lesuma has defined as “Young Adult Literature of Oceania (YALO)” (2018). The novels engage with topics and concerns similar to those found in well-known “literary” postcolonial novels from the Pacific and appropriate accessible and highly recognizable romantic and fantasy subgenres to serve a specific decolonial agenda. Wendt Young then manages to infiltrate the format and call attention to the “habits of Whiteness” (H. Young 2016) which continue to dominate popular fiction resulting, among other things, in the marginalization of Indigenous authors of fantasy (H. Young 2016, 12) and romance. The Telesā novels work as ideal teaching material because they explore some of the recurrent topics which define the canonical works that integrate our syllabus: they provide young Pasifika readers with relatable and positive role models, they shatter the long history of harmful neo-orientalist representations of the region, they resignify mythological and cultural traditions as pertinent to contemporary times, they illustrate common intergenerational and intercultural tensions experienced by members of the Pacific diaspora, and they implement a decolonial agenda which encompasses discussions of, among other, nuclear imperialism, cultural and economic neocolonialism and the impact of climate change in the region.

Speaker three will also engage with romantic fiction written by Indigenous writers, in this case from Australia and Canada, who have infiltrated the romantic genre in defiance of the enduring emotional disenfranchisement of First Nations peoples (Anita Heiss’ choc-lit novels) or to (re)discover and offer their cultural conception of love as a liberating and fluid alternative to the heteronormative and racist strictures of romantic love that they were —and still are— forced to assimilate to. Those very strictures may explain the reluctance of Indigenous writers to embrace the romantic formula in full and their preference for incorporating the romantic element in more complex and multi-layered stories whose protagonists are allowed to delve into broader emotional structures that not only include the individual, but also the community and the land itself, as seen in Katherena Vermette’s *The Break* (2016) in Canada, or Terry Jank’s *Butterfly Song* (2005). By contrast, authors such as Maggie Blackbird in her Matawapit Family series present romantic love as the force to confront the religious colonial legacy, while Giselle Renarde’s lesbian love stories

in her collection *Don't You Savage Me* (2014) vindicates the sophistication of First Nations cultures in their respect for same-sex love relationships and Two-Spirit people, which can also be found in the works of very young writers, such as Joshua Whitehead (*Jonny Applesed*, 2018). Their works invite not only a decolonial but also an intersectional gaze which is more than likely to debunk students' misconceptions about Indigenous cultures and bring them closer to understand the importance of emotions in the context of reparative justice.

Collectively, we aim to explore some of the following questions:

- What criteria can we use to select our romantic corpus?
- How can these works help us articulate common debates found in “serious” or canonical postcolonial texts?
- What kind of thematic or formal writing back tools and strategies are employed by these authors?
- How can these novels serve as effective tools of cultural analysis?
- Can these novels be used to explore and/or reinforce students' understanding of postcolonial/decolonial/intersectional critical theories and concepts?

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## ROUND TABLE

### *Present and Future Trends in African Studies*

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Understanding that almost 25 years have passed since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we think that it is necessary to evaluate some particular trends which are strongly significant for the scope of research in the African frame. Conscious that the label African Studies may cover a great range of topics and issues, our intention is to focus on those aspects that convey to the contemporary frame of cultural studies. In order to explore this, we will elaborate our round table on three basic matters: Migration, LGBTI+, and Futurism with the particular intention of transferring them to the areas of literature and cinema.

Under this frame, we will cast a glance at African literature, which implies updating the critical theories that may enrich our knowledge as well as our interpretation of the African literary context. Bearing in mind that many of these literary currents deepen its roots into the African theoretical background of critics like Franz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, or Es'kia Mphahlele, the new complex realities of the African context encompass an explanation of the new currents in depth. None of the previous movements that were designed from an African context is absent in the new developments, so we intend to trace a path from the 20th-century African critical representations to the 21st ones.

Critical views like Afropolitanism or the new trends in African literature, as well as the new challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the context cultural studies (African Futurism) allow us to draw different paths on African Studies.

One of the most important aspects in the development of African fiction in English concerns the shift from an early national/nationalist concern to a more recent focus that goes beyond the African continent, thus placing African literature in the context of global literature and as engaged with global issues (Thomas 2009). Different critical terms have been used to discuss this trend - postnationalism, transnationalism, Afropolitanism, global Africa or the new African diaspora – by critics such as Nnolim(2006), Zeleza (2007), Habila (2011), Krishnan (2014), Mwesigire (2018) or Balakrishnan (2017, 2019). In my contribution to this round table, we would like to discuss the main critical implications that this debate has for our contemporary understanding and reception of African fiction in English, focusing on the engagement of these transnational African narratives with processes of migration, diaspora and exile.

We will be paying special attention to novels focused on the experience of African migrants in the United States, such as *The Beautiful Things that Heavens Bear* (2007), by Dinaw Mengestu, *Open City* (2011), by Teju Cole, and *We Need New Names* (2013), by NoViolet Bulawayo. Following Yoyita Gogal (2019), I intend to discuss how these migration narratives demand new conceptualizations of diaspora, as well as are consideration of received notions of what constitutes African literature. In order to do so, attention will be paid to these novels' depiction of the positionality of African subjectivity as affected by processes of diaspora and exile, and in relation to discourses and conceptualizations of race and nation.

Regarding these new trends, the intention of this research is to present a new way of reading the Nigerian prolific writer, Akwaeke Emezi, who could be regarded as a trailblazer when it comes to writing about non-binary characters circumscribed by an Igbo ontological dimension. This proposal will exemplify with a researcher's approach in her process of analyzing this author's works.

Emezi has brought forward a new way of dealing with LGTBI+ Igbo people from Nigeria. Their writing, according to their own words in an interview with Trevor Noah, is their own mission in their life on this side of existence. They consider themselves to be an *ogbanje*, that is, not a human being, but rather a being that has one foot engulfed in a metaphysical realm and the other one on the unstable physical realm. Emezi's assignment is to accomplish her ontological commitment with the community of Igbo deities of which they form part. Their task is to write books using different genres to inform, teach and propagate their knowledge about their Igbo ontology and spirituality. They have written already more than 10 books in less than 5 years and have many manuscripts waiting to be published. Emezi is the recipient of numerous awards and prizes since their works have been appreciated for their originality and amazing new ways of dealing with many topics about the lives of the LGTBI groups in many societies, be they African or non-African.

Being a non-binary author, they have demanded the use of all personal pronouns, possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns. The African Literature scholars face in their researches a new way of writing about identity, self and entities quite foreign to the western ontology. They also encounter narratives about experience under different perceptions, as for example in Emezi's non-fiction genre, according to them, their memoir: *Dear Sethuran: A Black Spirit Memoire*. In their first book, *Freshwater* they have introduced the Niger wife, the main character's mother, who comes from Tamil. This fact will allow Emezi to intertwine mystical figures from both Indian and Nigerian cultures. The scholar will have to rely on Ogunyemi's seminal work where she introduces the concept of *Ogbanje* or *Abiku* in Igbo and Yoruba cultures respectively. Ogunyemi (1996) as well as Misty Bastian (2002) explore and exploit writings by Buchi Emecheta, Ben Okri and Wole Soyinka, among others to bring together ideas to discuss and explain the Igbo and Yoruba ontologies, on which our author is basing most of their definition of identity and existence. Emezi also delves into new safety friendly third spaces for LGTBI+ Igbo that can be approached, critically speaking, with a new vision of Homi Bhabha's concept "liminal space." They also include the specific Igbo elements necessary for the development of the *Ogbanje*'s physical and metaphysical existence, which reinforce the idea that these topics do not belong to any fantasy genre, but instead, they are based on Igbo traditional beliefs and reality.

Finally, though the "idea of science fiction even at its most elementary levels has eluded African writers" (Nnolim, 2006: 5) we want to end our approach with a journey into African Futurism (to be distinguished from Afro-futurism).

*Black Panther*'s entry into Marvel Cinematographic Universe became a ground-breaking point in mainstream speculative fiction with a promising representation of blackness and Africanism that scrutinises the Western cultural schemata and brings empowering histories of counter-futures. Indeed, the creation of the fictional nation of Wakanda has served as a catalyst to raise consciousness on identity matters in our globalised era as well as debates over exemplary sociability, which prompt the audience to strive for a utopian tomorrow. And yet, scholars like Jonathan Ward denounce the underlying opportunistic capitalist moves: "while the film ostensibly celebrates a celebration of black excellence and represents a disruption of anti-black racism, a closer look reveals that there is still much more to be done" (2020, 25).

The aim of this last part is two-fold: first, an interpretation of Wakanda's cartographic, architectonic and sociopolitical features facilitates its categorisation as a customary utopian place. Moreover, its historical transition from the tribal origin myth towards a technocratic global power helps us envision the old and new trends in the conception of utopia as a human projection of desired sociability—from the reclusive land towards a transnational affective understanding of utopianism—and the effects that this brings to African futurism. This issue correlates with the second objective, which opens room for discussion on whether the employment of Wakanda as a utopia is an effective tool for resistance against white supremacy. The absorption of *Black Panther*'s anti-colonial messages within the Western hegemonic discourses ultimately

strengthens what James refers to as the MRWaSP (multi-racial white supremacist patriarchy) privilege, insofar as this apparent inclusiveness of the Other in mainstream global affairs must be “always conditional and always instrumental” (2014, p. 13) in order to ultimately secure the hyperelites’ status at the cost of the precarity of those ungrievable lives, using Butler’s terminology (2009). This way, the optimistic endnote of the film about sharing the Wakandian technology and wealth with the world to make it a better place is ultimately prompted by conventional solidarity, which Dean described as “exclusionary and repressive” (1996, 15). This strategy exonerates the Western powers from centuries of exploitation of African resources and forces Wakanda to comply with neoliberal interventionist intergalactic policies.

The predicament of building contemporary utopianisms within African studies as counterhegemonic further revisits issues such as Afropolitanism, Pan-Africanism or national identities, which seem to be core in the characters’ arc within the film. Particularly on the configuration of Wakanda as an Afropolitan ideal, this study juxtaposes dissenting opinions, as while this African utopia will be depicted as a “society comprised [by] people from diverse ethnicities [...] in the ever expanding universe” (Eze 2016, 117), it also raises criticism about the dangers of using this tale of black excellence as the representation of Africa, since “the narratives of a privileged few telling us how great everything is, how much opportunity and potential is available, may drown out the voices of a majority who remain denied basic life chances” (Dabiri 2016, 106).

The debate is open to discuss on these issues as well as the variety of questions associated to the development of African literature.

#### **Keywords:**

African literature; Migration; Transnationalism; Vernacular Ontology Identity; African Futurism.

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## ROUND TABLE

### *Transnational Solidarities in Times of Crisis*

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Previous research on migration literature has focused on transnational solidarity, affective relations, and the transformative power of empathy within literary works. Scholars have explored how these narratives illuminate the complexities of human connections and alliances across borders. Transnational solidarity emphasizes ties beyond national boundaries (Pedwell 2014), while literature is recognised for fostering solidarity and bridging differences (Everitt 2022). Ahmed (2010) and Kosmalka (2022) demonstrate how literary narratives challenge stereotypes and promote empathy, fostering shared humanity and transnational connectivity. Affective relations transcend linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries, nurturing belonging and solidarity (Mohanty 2003; Gaztambide-Fernández 2012). Brah (1996) and Anthias (2001) examine how gender, race, and class intersections shape social relationships and identities. Postcolonialism and cosmopolitanism frameworks (Gilroy 2004; Bhabha 1994) provide critical lenses to analyse transnational solidarity and affective relations within broader sociopolitical contexts. Previous research has contributed valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of migration experiences, emphasizing the potential for fostering solidarity and understanding across borders through empathy, human connections, and power dynamics within migrant communities. This panel aims to further explore the intersectionality of gender roles and identities within literary works focusing on migration, and their connection to the themes of solidarity, cosmopolitanism, and strangeness. We will delve into the implications of depicting solidarity among migrants and refugees in literature, considering the power dynamics and hierarchies within migrant and diasporic communities. Additionally, we will address the experiences and challenges faced by migrant women, examining the role of solidarity in shaping their agency and empowerment. By examining the intersections of gender, cosmopolitanism, strangeness, and solidarity in the context of migration, this panel seeks to foster empathy and understanding among readers. Through critical discussions and literary analysis of these texts, we aim to shed light on the complexities of migration experiences and contribute to building a more inclusive and compassionate society. Our goal is to showcase the transformative power of storytelling and relationality in promoting transnational solidarities in times of crisis.

These questions aim to stimulate thoughtful discussions about the portrayal of solidarity, cosmopolitanism, strangeness, and gender in literature centered around migration, allowing for deeper explorations of the complexities and nuances of these themes in fictional narratives.

1. How does *Autumn* contribute to the broader discussion on transnational dialogues, conviviality, and diverse forms of solidarity in the context of Brexit?
2. In what ways does *Minaret* depict Islam as an anti-imperialist alternative to Euro-American domination and highlight the potential for creating alliances among diasporic Muslim women?
3. How can a “narrative solidarity” approach encourage readers to take responsibility for the production, consumption, and analysis of stories to create a more inclusive social landscape?

4. How do literary narratives portray acts of solidarity among migrants and their impact on our understanding of the complexities of migration experiences?
5. How does literature challenge or reinforce cosmopolitan ideals by depicting encounters between migrants and host communities?
6. How do literary works explore the theme of strangeness in the context of migration and provide insights into familiarity, alienation, and the construction of identity?

**Keywords:**

transnational solidarities; affective relations; post-Brexit literature; diasporic religious spaces; intersectional refugee narratives.

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**"It's About History and Being Neighbours": Transnational and Affective Solidarity in Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016)**

The political and social climate in which the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union — commonly known as Brexit — originates and eventually occurs has given rise to a post-referendum literary movement by the name of BrexLit or post-referendum literature. The works belonging to this genre are concerned with either reflecting imaginatively, responding directly or dealing with the socio-cultural, economic and racial consequences that followed the vote (Shaw 2021). A number of these literary works have been faulted for attending to the consequences of the referendum from an English perspective, reinforcing the portrayal of migrants as marginal and "disenfranchised outsiders" in British society (Berberich 2021). This characterisation is in line with the debates surrounding the referendum, which were often driven by xenophobic stances based on a long-standing Eurosceptic tradition. Yet there are other works that suggest diverse forms of conviviality. This paper, titled "It's About History and Being Neighbours": Transnational and Affective Solidarity in Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016)" will examine, from a gender, postcolonial and affect theory perspective, the representation of transnational forms of solidarity in the first installment of Ali Smith's seasonal quintet, *Autumn* (2016). Smith's quintet is situated within a particular strand of BrexLit that is headed towards the creation of spaces that encourage (trans)national dialogues (Everitt 2022). In order to do so, I will draw on Carolyn Pedwell's conceptualisation of solidarity as transnational and rising above boundaries that range from nation-states, categories and even languages (2014). Thus, this paper will contend that one way of exposing the instability of the frontiers that (de)limit the rights of those who inhabit the same territory, whether they are native to it or not, is to shed light on the affective relations and transnational links that emerge among them. I will also apply Sandra Mohany Tapalde's (2003)

notion of historical agency and responsibility to study the individual and collective differences with the aim of gaining a deep understanding of others and building bridges across boundaries. This paper will also delve into the value of relationality in solidary relations, the acknowledgement that subjects are not self-made but are constantly being shaped “in and through relationships” (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012). I will argue that in *Autumn* it is not chronological linearity that gives meaning to the narrative, but a series of affective links established through the driving plot: the blossoming friendship between an elderly European migrant and a young and inquisitive British girl. Given the link between migration and strangeness, the representation and interactions of the character embodied by a European migrant will be explored through the lens of strange(r)ness theories (Bauman 1995; Bauman 1991; Ahmed 2000). In the case of our protagonist, it will be contended that his identity cannot be pinned to a migrant perspective, as it provides insights that foster the acquisition of a relational point of view based on empathy, a sense of communitarianism and critical thinking. Despite avoiding categorisations and binaries at all costs, it will be argued that he meets his own definition not in opposition to others, but in the solidary acts and traits that every person has the potential to develop.

**Keywords:**

Ali Smith; post-Brexit literature; euroscepticism; migration studies; transnational solidarity.

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**A feminist umma? Transnational Solidarities in Leila Aboulela’s *Minaret* (2006)**

This paper, entitled “A feminist umma? Transnational solidarities in Leila Aboulela’s *Minaret* (2006)”, will analyse the mosque as a diasporic religious space that enables the creation of transnational coalitions in *Minaret* (2006), a novel written by British-Sudanese author Leila Aboulela. The concept of solidarity primarily refers to “relations and ties in society that bind people together” (Krunke and Petersen 2020, 1). Its collectivist goals have allowed different conceptualizations of solidarity to emerge from feminist and anti-racist theories (Gould 2007; Pedwell 2014). Solidarity is also a key concern of Islamic feminism: as a form of religiously-informed collective resistance, its project is to become “one of the best platforms from which to resist the effects of global capitalism and contribute to a rich, egalitarian polycentric world” (Majid 1998, 355). With respect to the novel under analysis, one of the diasporic spaces in which this Islamic solidarity is more powerfully enacted is the London Central Mosque. It has been argued that mosques have undergone a transformation from mere places of worship to spaces of political mobilisation and promotion of both fundamentalist and progressive doctrines of Islam (Tsourlaki 2020). In these spaces of worship, then, classical markers of identity such as ethnicity

or social class are contested and renegotiated in favour of a form of solidarity based on identitarian faith-based associational forms among Muslims (Ahmed et al. 2015). This is especially true for diasporic Muslim communities living in Britain, who are said to have adopted the collective identification of ‘British Muslim’ in the face of increasing religious prejudice and cultural marginalization in the years following the Rushdie affair, 9/11, and the 7/7 bombings (Modood 2010). In light of this view, the affective politics of Islamophobia in British political and public discourse have fostered a religious solidarity reminiscent of the Islamic concept of the *umma*, the global imagined community of Muslims. Thus, the novel analysed in this paper, written by a devout conservative Muslim woman in the diaspora, explores the Quranic vision of a post-national framework of belonging that “provides comfort and solace that are otherwise absent in the lonely West” (Abbas 2011, 445). Indeed, Regent’s Park mosque and its community of Muslim women are fundamental to the main character’s eventual overcoming of loss and estrangement that marks her experience of political exile from Sudan. Finally, this paper will also study the representation of displaced migrant Muslim women in cosmopolitan London and how *Minaret* depicts Islam as the anti-imperialist alternative to Euro-American domination, and as a system of beliefs with the potential for creating important alliances among diasporic Muslim women of different ethnic, cultural or national origins.

### **Keywords:**

British Muslim fiction; solidarity; Islamic feminism; affect theory; cosmopolitanism.

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### **Solidarity *With* or *Among* Refugees? Crisis, Solidarity and Migration in British Refugee Narratives**

The presentation “Solidarity *With* or *Among* Refugees? Crisis, Solidarity and Migration in British Refugee Narratives” will contend that solidarity must be a transnational and feminist practice (Gould 2007; Kurasawa 2007). In empowering and accountability-enabling environments, solidary relations seek out the refugee voice to recognise, reimagine and rehabilitate refugee women as active subjects and leaders of political, cultural and social counternarratives of inclusive and sustainable representations. Drawing on intersectional theoretical frameworks that bring together feminist, decolonial and affective approaches into the principles of solidarity, cosmopolitanism and strangeness, this paper challenges certain parasitical forms of the concept “solidarity with refugees” (Scholz 2008; Woods 2020). In order to do so, the paper analyses The

European Migration 'Crisis' and focuses on its "language of crisis" and subsequent "culture of victimage." Public and political discourse inscribed refugee migration to Europe into the narrative of crisis, as a crisis of migration, a crisis of European integration, or rather, disintegration and a crisis of reception (Agarín and Nancheva 2018; Trimikliniotis 2020). Treating the assumed 'crisis' as a problem that needs to be fixed ignites a sense of panic and strong rejection through which asylum seekers and refugees are contextualized as a threat. The dominant narrative surrounding refugees and asylum seekers views them as either victims or villains and gives rise to charitable or hostile responses, respectively. As such, top-down anti-refugee discourses represent the self as an active citizen or an exceptional migrant and the refugee as a passive other. In the UK, dominant narratives give rise to "stories of resistance" that subvert power dynamics (Smith 2015). These Foucauldian "subjugated knowledges" can contradict cultural and patriarchal assumptions on female migrants, reconfigure the limits of truth and unfold a transformative power for building "imagined communities" (Erel 2007). If ethically engaged with, story-telling can be a practice of solidarity and a valuable tool for discerning identity affirmations and disruptions that cut through presumed iterative processes on refugee identity. For this reason, finding contextualized and humanized narratives that represent the intersectional complexity of refugeeness is of paramount importance to reach a greater conscience of the refugee experience and to develop empathic processes. The discussion will focus on whether solidarity (and sorority) with refugees can be conceived and enacted as an egalitarian process or whether a "solidarity among refugees" should be encouraged to avoid repeating processes of subordination and paternalism that suppress effective (and affective) actions and comprehensive representations (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019). Finally, the value of endorsing a "narrative solidarity" will be highlighted to push the readership into taking responsibility for the production, consumption and analysis of stories in order to form an alternative more inclusive social landscape in the future.

**Keywords:**

Transnational feminist solidarity; subjugated knowledges; refugee narratives; narrative solidarity; language of crisis.

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