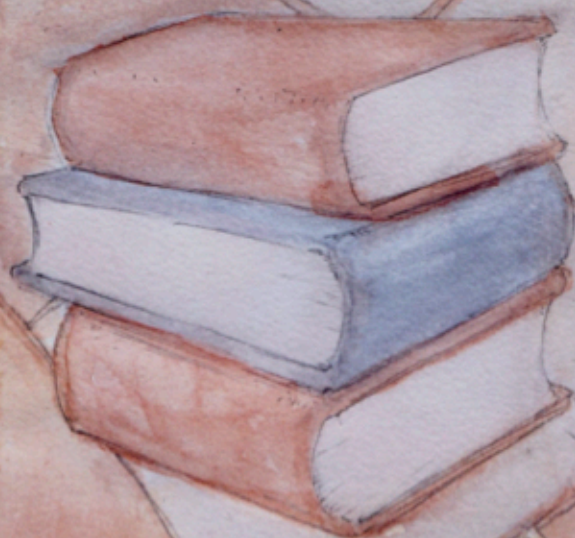


FRAGMENTS OF MEANING

Dialogues in Language,
Literature, and Culture



Montse Martínez Vázquez,
Daniel Nisa Cáceres
Sonia Casal Madinabeitia
(Editors)

Fragments of Meaning: Dialogues in Language, Literature, and Culture

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2024

Montse Martínez Vázquez, Daniel Nisa Cáceres, and Sonia Casal
Madinabeitia (Editors)

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Fragments of Meaning: Dialogues in Language, Literature, and Culture brings together a selection of peer-reviewed contributions originally presented at the 47th International Conference of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies (AEDEAN), held at Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Seville, from 6 to 8 November 2024. With the participation of over 500 scholars from Spain and abroad, the conference reaffirmed AEDEAN's role as a leading forum for scholarly dialogue in the fields of English linguistics, literature, and cultural studies.

For the first time, Universidad Pablo de Olavide had the privilege of hosting this distinguished event—an occasion of particular significance, as it marked the association's return to the city where it was founded in 1976. Organising the conference was both an honour and a considerable undertaking for our young institution.

We are deeply grateful to AEDEAN for the trust placed in us, and to the Executive Board for their guidance and steadfast support throughout the planning process. Our sincere thanks extend also to the panel coordinators for their dedication to the design and peer review of the papers that underpin this volume, and to all contributors whose work is presented herein. We are especially indebted to our colleagues in the organising committee and the student volunteers, whose commitment and professionalism were vital to the successful execution of the event. The support of the Vice-rector for Research, the Department of Philology and Translation, the Faculty of Humanities, and the contributing research groups is likewise gratefully acknowledged.

This volume reflects the intellectual vitality and interdisciplinary breadth of the conference. Its essays explore how meaning is constructed, contested, and transformed across linguistic, literary, and cultural domains. Taken together, they form a compelling academic contribution, attesting to the dynamic, plural, and fragmentary nature of meaning itself. We hope that this collection will serve as a valuable resource for scholars, educators, and students alike, and as a testimony to the ongoing relevance and vitality of English Studies within both Spanish and international contexts.

The Editors

Introduction

The volume *Fragments of Meaning: Dialogues in Language, Literature, and Culture* is divided into three sections: Language and Linguistics, Literature and Cultural Studies, and Roundtables.

The first section brings together contributions that address the study of language from diverse but interconnected perspectives, including historical dialectology, sociolinguistics, digital communication, and foreign language pedagogy. Uniting these papers is a shared commitment to empirical rigour and interdisciplinary inquiry. The authors explore how language is shaped by and embedded in social practices—whether through the documentation of regional dialects in literary texts, the evolution of idiomatic fragments in contemporary usage, or the metalinguistic awareness of learners navigating multilingual digital spaces. These studies address critical questions regarding identity construction, linguistic variation, and the affordances of new media, offering valuable insights into the dynamic processes by which language is learnt, used, and transformed in both historical and contemporary contexts.

The second section of this volume comprises a diverse range of contributions examining Anglophone literature, film, and cultural production through the lenses of gender, identity, postcolonialism, memory, and affect. Collectively, these essays explore how literary and visual narratives negotiate complex intersections between history and imagination, trauma and utopia, embodiment and ideology. The contributions span a wide temporal and geographical spectrum—from Victorian fiction to twenty-first-century Caribbean, African, and Indigenous voices, demonstrating how literature and cultural texts continue to function as vital spaces for contesting normative structures and reclaiming marginalised perspectives. Applying critical frameworks including feminist theory, affect studies, eco-criticism, and posthumanism, the authors examine how aesthetic form interacts with sociopolitical structures, and how representation becomes a terrain of both constraint and resistance. This section seeks to affirm the enduring role of narrative in shaping, challenging, and transforming cultural meaning across contexts.

The third and final section of this volume features roundtable discussions and collaborative inquiries that push the boundaries of disciplinary thought in literary and cultural studies. These contributions engage with evolving theoretical paradigms—assemblage theory, the network turn, environmental

humanities, and transnational media criticism—to reflect on how literary texts and cultural forms can be reconceived in light of new epistemologies. Moving beyond the analysis of individual works, these roundtables examine larger conceptual constellations that shape and reshape scholarly inquiry. Whether interrogating the philosophical implications of networks, the aesthetic functions of care, or the imaginative capacities of post-western narratives, the section provides a forum for interdisciplinary dialogue and methodological innovation.

Section I: Language and Linguistics

In “Late Modern Devonshire Speech: Exemplar Dialectal Realisations in Gwendoline Keats’ *On Trial* (1899)” René Tissens examines the literary representation of the Devonshire dialect in Keats’ novel *On Trial*, employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies within the theoretical framework of enregisterment as proposed by Agha. The study uncovers how specific phonological and morphological features—such as initial fricative voicing (*vrom* for “from,” *zeed* for “seen”) and pronoun shifts (*her* for “she”)—index a stereotypical Devonshire persona, particularly the figure of the farmer. Based on historical sources and corpus analysis, Tissens demonstrates that Keats’ use of dialect reflects a broader social process of dialect recognition and stylisation, which serves to both authenticate characterisation and participate in the linguistic codification of regional speech. The paper contributes to the growing body of research on Late Modern English dialectology by highlighting underexplored southwestern varieties. “This Fragment Has Become Idiomatic, *if at all*” investigates the construction *if at all* in contemporary American English from a Construction Grammar perspective. Based on a comprehensive corpus analysis of nearly a thousand examples from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA), Yolanda Fernández-Pena and Javier Pérez-Guerra trace the construction’s syntactic behaviour, semantic function, and diachronic development between 1990 and 2019. The authors posit that *if at all* functions as a construction in its own right, inheriting properties from conditional clauses and degree modifiers. It serves to ‘disfactualise’ propositions by introducing a gradient scale of likelihood, typically in final, anaphoric, and negatively polarised environments. Their analysis reveals a shift from written to speech-related registers and an increasing fixation of *if at all* in sentence-final position, suggesting ongoing conventionalisation.

The following four chapters deal with language teaching and acquisition. In “Exploring Social Media as Tools for English Language Teaching, Learning, and Research”, Ignacio M. Palacios Martínez and Paloma Núñez Pertejo present findings from an empirical study on the pedagogical and research potential of social media platforms in English language education. Conducted with over 230 undergraduate students at the University of Santiago de Compostela, the project encouraged learners to analyse their own social media discourse across platforms such as *WhatsApp*, *Instagram*, and *Twitter/X*. The results reveal high levels of engagement, linguistic creativity, and metalinguistic awareness among participants, many of whom operated plurilingually, which underscores the viability of integrating informal digital practices into formal academic instruction and linguistic inquiry. María Deseada López Fernández offers a critical overview of linguistic mediation in “Linguistic Mediation in Adult Language Education: Past, Present and Future”, aligning her discussion with the evolving descriptors introduced in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and its Companion Volume. The chapter traces the pedagogical trajectory of mediation—from marginal consideration to its current status as a core communicative competence—highlighting how adult learners engage with texts, meanings, and social contexts through mediatory practices. Emphasising tasks such as summarising, paraphrasing, and facilitating intercultural understanding, the author advocates for a more integrative and dialogic model of instruction. Through a historical lens and forward-looking pedagogical proposals, the paper reaffirms the centrality of mediation in fostering plurilingual and pluricultural competence in adult learners.

The contribution by Grace Westfall Talamo and Isabel Oltra-Massuet focuses on primary education. In their paper, “Using Social Stories and Coping Skills to Teach Vocabulary in Primary Education”, they explore the use of social stories—a strategy originally designed for children with autism spectrum conditions—as an innovative approach for teaching English vocabulary in primary education. Talamo and Oltra-Massuet propose that these narrative-based interventions, which are structured around socially meaningful scenarios, not only support lexical acquisition but also foster emotional regulation and contextual understanding. From the findings of a pilot study, the authors demonstrate that combining social stories with explicit coping strategies enhances learner motivation and retention, which highlights the pedagogical relevance of tailoring vocabulary instruction to developmental and affective needs, while suggesting that such hybrid methodologies can

benefit a broader spectrum of learners beyond their clinical origins. In “The Other Side of CLIL: When Fear Disrupts Collaboration”, Noelia Castro-Chao and Tamara Bouso investigate the emotional and interpersonal challenges faced by pre-service teachers participating in *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL) programmes. Based on a qualitative analysis of reflective journals and interviews, the authors expose the latent tensions and anxieties that often undermine collaborative teaching in CLIL settings. Rather than celebrating only the advantages of CLIL, the study reveals that fear—of linguistic inadequacy, of peer judgement, or of institutional expectations—frequently impairs cooperation and reduces teaching efficacy. The paper advocates for greater emotional awareness and institutional support in CLIL teacher training, calling for an approach that recognises vulnerability as a crucial factor in fostering genuine pedagogical collaboration.

The use of new technologies is discussed in the following two chapters. Rosana Villares and Carmen Pérez-Llantada investigate the intersection of digital literacy and science communication in “Digital Science Communication Training: Approaching Methods, Frameworks, and Outcomes”. By examining how digital tools are used to train early-career researchers in effective public engagement and framed within the theoretical paradigms of multimodality and genre theory, the authors present a synthesis of training models that equip scientists with communicative strategies for diverse audiences across online platforms. The study reveals a shift from traditional dissemination practices to more interactive and dialogic forms, such as blogs, video abstracts, and social media outreach. This shift emphasises the need for a pedagogy that combines rhetorical competence with technological fluency. Inmaculada Pineda studies in “Glance Back: Using Transmodal and Translingual Strategies in the Construction of Digital Identity” how users construct digital identities through transmodal and translingual practices across social media platforms. Using examples from *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and personal blogs, the study demonstrates how meaning-making in online spaces involves a dynamic interplay of visual, textual, and linguistic codes. Pineda adopts a semiotic and sociolinguistic perspective to show how users strategically navigate between languages and media modes to express affiliations, emotions, and stances. The paper posits that digital identity is co-constructed through interaction and shaped by audience design, technological affordances, and socio-discursive positioning, calling for pedagogical models that acknowledge and exploit these multimodal, multilingual resources as legitimate forms of communicative capital.

In their comparative study “Easy-to-Read in the UK, Ireland and Spain: Analogies and Differences”, Ana Medina Reguera and Desirée Avilés Márquez analyse the implementation of Easy-to-Read (E2R) guidelines across the UK, Ireland, and Spain, with a focus on accessibility in public discourse. Medina Reguera and Avilés Márquez examine policy documents, institutional initiatives, and sample texts to assess how E2R principles—aimed at enhancing linguistic accessibility for individuals with cognitive or linguistic challenges—are adapted within different sociocultural and legal frameworks. The findings reveal significant variation in the degree of institutional support, terminological consistency, and design approaches. The authors argue for the urgent need to harmonise E2R practices internationally and to reconceptualise them as tools for inclusive communication rather than mere technical accommodations. Finally, in “Motion Verbs in English Narratives: Is Manner Always the Most Frequent Verb Type?” Sílvia Garriga Galobardes investigates the use and distribution of motion verbs in English narrative texts, challenging the assumption that manner-of-motion verbs (e.g., *run*, *stroll*) are consistently dominant in English, a language typologically classified as manner-salient. Based on a corpus of fictional narratives, the study quantifies and categorises motion verbs according to Talmy’s motion event framework. While manner verbs remain prominent, Garriga’s nuanced analysis reveals contextual factors—such as genre conventions, narrative perspective, and characterisation—that influence the distribution of path and deictic verbs as well. The paper contributes to cognitive and typological linguistics by illustrating how pragmatic and stylistic considerations modulate the theoretical patterns established by motion typology.

Section II: Literature and Cultural Studies

Eduardo Varela Bravo’s “Joseph Blanco White’s Spanish and Irish Identities and Love: Rose Cusiack’s Symbolic Significance in *Second Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion* (1833)” revisits the nineteenth-century religious polemic *Second Travels of an Irish Gentleman* by Joseph Blanco White, examining the character of Rose Cusiack as a symbolic site where personal, national, and religious identities converge. The analysis elucidates how Blanco White—an exiled Spanish theologian with complex ties to both Catholicism and Anglicanism—constructs Cusiack not merely as a romantic figure but as an allegory of reconciled difference. A close reading of the text and its historical context suggests that that Cusiack’s representation mediates the author’s own bifurcated cultural affiliations, offering an idealised vision of

transnational and interfaith unity at a time of deep political and sectarian division. Francisco Muñoz Peláez's "The Utopian Solution to Feminist Dystopias: Reclaiming Women's Voices in Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* and Christina Dalcher's *Vox*" contrasts two feminist dystopian novels—Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984) and Dalcher's *Vox* (2018)—to explore how speculative fiction imagines language as both a tool of subjugation and a site of resistance. The analysis examines how each narrative constructs a linguistic dystopia in which women's speech is controlled or suppressed, and how both protagonists reclaim agency through linguistic innovation and subversion. The author contends that while *Native Tongue* posits a separatist, constructed language as utopian remedy, *Vox* relies on technological allegory and bio-political critique. Despite differing visions, both texts ultimately reclaim women's voices as a counter-discursive force capable of dismantling patriarchal structures, which highlights the enduring relevance of feminist linguistic utopias in a neoliberal age. Christina Angela Howes applies affect theory, particularly Lauren Berlant's notion of "cruel optimism" in "Ordinary Affects and Cruel Optimism: A Phenomenological Study of Affective Responses in Rachel Seiffert's 'Field Study'". The affective disorientation experienced by the protagonist as he confronts the aftermath of war and ethical complicity in post-conflict Bosnia is analysed. Through a phenomenological lens, Howes contends that Seiffert's prose enacts a slow temporality that resists narrative closure and accentuates affective ambivalence, contributing to the growing body of scholarship on affective ethics in contemporary literature and highlights how fiction can stage the fragility of moral perception in post-traumatic geographies.

In "Who Tightened the Umbilical Cord? A Gendered Reconstruction of Anja's Identity in Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*", Gema Maíz Villalta re-examines the Holocaust graphic novel *Maus* through a feminist lens, focusing on the underexplored character of Anja, Vladek Spiegelman's wife. While much scholarship has centred on paternal trauma and testimony, Maíz Villalta highlights Anja's fragmented, silenced presence as emblematic of gendered erasure in narratives of survival. The chapter employs a psychoanalytical framework, invoking trauma theory and feminist psychoanalysis, to interpret Anja's suicide, fragility, and textual absence as symbolic of the pressures exerted by patriarchal memory structures and maternal expectation. The author challenges the text's androcentric focus, arguing for a "gendered reconstruction" that honours Anja not only as a victim, but as a subject whose erasure demands critical redress. M.^a Ángeles Toda Iglesia's chapter "Reading

Food in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Passages from the French and Italian Notebooks* (1871)" examines Hawthorne's European travel writings to explore the symbolic and cultural functions of food in shaping national and moral perception. Analysing descriptions of meals and food encounters in Hawthorne's *Notebooks*, Toda Iglesia shows how culinary experiences become encoded with broader anxieties about otherness, civility, and cultural distance. Italian abundance is often filtered through Protestant discomfort, while French refinement is approached with ambivalence. Food thus becomes a medium through which Hawthorne articulates both aesthetic appreciation and moral judgment. The paper highlights how everyday acts such as eating reflect deeper discursive patterns of national identity formation and cross-cultural encounter in nineteenth-century American literature. Iván de la Torre Franco's "The Monstrous Mother: An Exploration of Afro-Caribbean Motherhood in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) and *Halsey Street* (2018)" explores maternal representation in two Afro-Caribbean diasporic novels: Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and Naima Coster's *Halsey Street*. De la Torre Franco analyses how both texts interrogate dominant narratives of idealised motherhood by presenting complex, often painful, mother-daughter relationships shaped by colonial legacies, migration, and gendered trauma. Examining theories of monstrosity and maternal ambivalence, the chapter foregrounds how these novels resist normative scripts by portraying mothers as neither purely nurturing nor villainous, but as conflicted agents shaped by structural violence. Ultimately, the paper asserts that the "monstrous mother" becomes a site of narrative and cultural re-signification in contemporary Caribbean-American literature. Paula García-Rodríguez investigates the fusion of magical realism and feminist critique in "Magical Feminism, Violence and Fairy Tales in Atkinson's *Human Croquet*", focusing on how the novel reconfigures fairy tale tropes to expose gendered violence and historical silencing. The chapter situates Atkinson's work within the tradition of "magical feminism", where fantastical elements serve not as escapism but as subversive tools for rewriting patriarchal narratives. García-Rodríguez analyses how motifs such as time travel, enchanted forests, and metamorphosis are used to interrogate domestic abuse, female madness, and genealogical trauma. Consequently, Atkinson's revisionist storytelling challenges linear historiography and restores narrative agency to female characters through imaginative reclamation.

Carmen Velasco-Montiel explores how the publication and subsequent adaptations of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* have transformed her

reception in the Spanish cultural and academic spheres in “Turning the Tide of Ambivalence: The Impact of *The Handmaid’s Tale* on Margaret Atwood’s Feminist Reception in Spain”. Through an analysis of critical essays, translations, media responses, and academic syllabi, a shift is traced from early ambivalence—characterised by reluctance to label Atwood as feminist—towards her more recent status as an iconic feminist author. The study examines how the socio-political climate in Spain, especially in the wake of the feminist mobilisations of the 2010s, contributed to this reframing. Velasco-Montiel positively argues that the novel’s dystopian resonances with contemporary gender politics catalysed a renewed engagement with Atwood’s work, reinforcing its relevance in global feminist discourse. Paula Rustarazo Garzón’s “Representing Infertility: Identity and the Body in Myriam Steinberg’s *Catalogue Baby: A Memoir of (In)Fertility*” analyses Canadian author Myriam Steinberg’s graphic memoir as a site where the affective and embodied dimensions of infertility are rendered visible and narratable. Blending visual rhetoric with autobiographical narrative, the memoir challenges dominant cultural silences around infertility by centring the female body as a space of agency, vulnerability, and perseverance. Steinberg uses the graphic form to depict bodily fragmentation, emotional cycles, and bureaucratic medical processes, thereby subverting the often-invisible experience of assisted reproduction. Ultimately, Rustarazo Garzón situates *Catalogue Baby* within a growing corpus of graphic pathographies that reclaim reproductive health as a feminist issue. In “‘We Have Our Own Black Heroes’: British Black Power and the Figure of Michael X in *Who Needs a Heart?* (1991) by Black Audio Film Collective”, María Piqueras Pérez examines the political and aesthetic strategies employed to recuperate and reimagine the figure of Michael X, a controversial British Black Power activist. Rather than offering a linear biographical account, the film constructs a fragmented, polyphonic meditation on memory, militancy, and the aesthetics of resistance. Accordingly, the chapter analyses how the film resists hegemonic historiography by deploying non-narrative montage, affective soundscapes, and a refusal of moral closure. Piqueras Pérez contends that the film embodies a radical form of Black British historiography that contests invisibility and reclaims agency through experimental form. Aitor Ibarrola-Armendáriz interrogates the deconstruction of racial and cultural stereotypes in “Challenging and Dismantling Stereotypes in Jones’s *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* and Edwards’s *Monsters*.” Ibarrola-Armendáriz’s argument is that both American films challenge the visual and narrative conventions through which Latinx and marginalised subjects are traditionally

portrayed in Anglo-American media. By subverting genre expectations—neo-western and science fiction, respectively—these films articulate a critique of border politics, imperialism, and xenophobia. The analysis employs postcolonial and film theory to show how both works create ethical encounters between characters that unsettle viewer assumptions and promote intercultural empathy, while underlining the power of cinema as a medium for ethical imagination and sociopolitical critique.

Next, in “Cabinets of Curiosities, Labyrinthine Gardens and Kitchens Full of Spices: Victorian Spaces Through the Child’s Gaze in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*” Andrea Valeiras-Fernández examines how Lewis Carroll reconfigures quintessentially Victorian domestic and natural spaces through the imaginative perspective of a child. Based on spatial theory and childhood studies, the chapter analyses how cabinets, gardens, and kitchens become sites of both wonder and epistemological instability when filtered through Alice’s curiosity. These spaces, traditionally associated with order and domestic femininity, are subverted by scale shifts, magical transformations, and absurd logics. Therefore, Carroll’s depiction of space resists adult rationalism and Victorian hierarchies, offering instead a poetics of spatial disorder that mirrors the fluidity of childhood subjectivity. Esther Jiménez Rodríguez examines in “The Battle Between Order and Chaos and Its Reconciliation in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland*” how this novel acts as a narrative meditation on the dialectic between political chaos and personal order across generations and geographies. Set against the backdrop of the Naxalite insurgency in 1960s Calcutta and the diasporic trajectories of its characters in the United States, Lahiri’s narrative navigates the aftermath of political violence within familial and affective realms. The tension between emotional withdrawal and ideological commitment structures the protagonists’ lives, ultimately proposing reconciliation through memory, transgenerational care, and quiet endurance. Lahiri’s minimalist style is read as a deliberate aesthetic of restraint that gives voice to submerged trauma and interstitial belonging. Violeta Duce’s “The Importance of (Self-)Representation: Adunni’s Herstory in Abi Daré’s *The Girl with the Louding Voice* (2020)” focuses on the narrative of Adunni, the Nigerian teenage protagonist of Abi Daré’s debut novel, who resists patriarchal and class oppression through linguistic and narrative empowerment. Written in a stylised, non-standard English that evolves alongside Adunni’s growth, the novel foregrounds self-representation as both theme and method. Duce argues that Adunni’s “lounding voice” reclaims narrative space for marginalised girls and critiques social structures

that silence them, while she situates the novel within African feminist traditions and global narratives of girlhood, emphasising the ethical and political stakes of allowing oppressed subjects to narrate their own lives in their own terms. In “‘Got My Loud Coat and Put It On Proudly’: Colour and Clothes in Anita Heiss’ *Avoiding Mr Right* (2008)”, Catalina Ribas Segura investigates the politics of dress and racial identity in Anita Heiss’s chick lit novel *Avoiding Mr Right*, focusing on how fashion functions as a performative marker of Aboriginal urban femininity. Ribas Segura reads clothing not simply as surface detail but as a symbolic system through which the protagonist asserts pride, resistance, and cultural hybridity in predominantly white spaces. She makes use of critical race theory and material culture studies to demonstrate how sartorial choices embody acts of defiance, visibility, and self-fashioning. The text challenges stereotypical depictions of Indigenous identity, presenting fashion as a site where postcolonial subjectivities are negotiated and affirmed.

Bárbara Arizti Martín “Competition and Cooperation in Peter Carey’s *A Long Way from Home*” is an analysis of the tension between competition and cooperation in Peter Carey’s novel *A Long Way from Home*, set during a 1950s car race that spans the Australian continent. The chapter investigates how the race allegorises national narratives of progress, settler colonialism, and Indigenous erasure, while also providing a space for unexpected solidarities and ethical reappraisals. Through shifting narrative perspectives and revelations about Aboriginal histories, Carey critiques white Australian mythologies and gestures toward reconciliation. Arizti Martín proposes that the novel stages a dialectic between individual ambition and collective responsibility, ultimately proposing a model of national identity grounded in historical reckoning and relational ethics. Lastly, in his historical investigation “Rafael Viera y Ayala y el nacimiento de *La Prensa de Nueva York*”, Juan Antonio Sánchez Jiménez rescues from obscurity the figure of Rafael Viera y Ayala (1880–1972), a Canarian immigrant and founder of *La Prensa* (1913), which would eventually become *El Diario/La Prensa*, a cornerstone of Spanish-language journalism in the United States. Using newly recovered archival material, including photographs and diplomatic correspondence, Sánchez Jiménez reconstructs Viera’s trajectory from Cuba to New York, tracing his entrepreneurial efforts and sociopolitical influence. The paper highlights Viera’s foundational role in shaping a modern, illustrated Spanish-language periodical intended to serve and represent the growing Hispanic community in early twentieth-century Manhattan. Sánchez Jiménez situates Viera’s work within a broader narrative of neglected Spanish contributions to U.S. media

history, calling for further academic attention to this overlooked yet foundational legacy.

Section III: Roundtables

The first roundtable, entitled “Assemblage Theory and the Network Turn: A Conceptual Framework for Anglophone Literature and Culture”, outlines the theoretical underpinnings and applications of assemblage theory within the ongoing research project “RELY” (Re-orienting Assemblage Theory in Anglophone Literature and Culture). Rosario Arias, Carmen Lara Rallo, Ana Belén Martínez García, and Raquel García-Cuevas García offer a genealogy of the term “assemblage,” invoking the works of Deleuze and Guattari, Latour, and DeLanda, and connect it to the broader “network turn” in the humanities. The discussion emphasises the concept’s relevance across ontology, materiality, aesthetics, and care ethics. Each speaker contributes a unique perspective: Rosario Arias on assemblage and feminist care; Carmen Lara Rallo on Actor-Network Theory and Bill Brown’s re-assemblage; Ana Belén Martínez on the literary assemblage as epistemic practice; and Raquel García-Cuevas on feminism-as-assemblage following Braidotti and Grosz. Together, they advocate for assemblage thinking as a flexible, generative tool for engaging with contemporary literary and cultural crises.

In “Resisting the Capitalocene: Narrative Representations of Hope across Genres”, Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández, Leonor María Martínez Serrano, María Porras Sánchez, Silvia Pilar Castro Borrego, and Susana Nicolás Román confront the environmental and ideological crises of the Capitalocene through literary and cultural texts that foreground resistance, resilience, and speculative hope. Engaging with works across multiple genres—from eco-fiction to Indigenous storytelling—the speakers explore how narrative strategies articulate alternative futures beyond capitalist extraction. Topics include feminist reimaginings of relationality, ecological grief and repair, and posthuman entanglements. The participants collectively assert that literature serves not only to document planetary degradation but also to stage affective and political responses rooted in care, interconnection, and transformative imagination.

Alberto Lázaro, Fernando Galván, Silvia García-Hernández, and Marta Martín Amor’s roundtable “Voices from the Past: Creating and Recreating Historical Worlds” addresses the resurgence of historical fiction as a critical genre for re-examining dominant narratives through the creative reanimation of the past.

Focusing on the role of female perspectives, marginalised voices, and mythological reinterpretation, the speakers assess how contemporary novels rework classical and historical settings to expose silenced experiences. From Pat Barker's re-voicing of Briseis in *The Silence of the Girls* to Elodie Harper's *The Wolf Den* series on enslaved women in Pompeii, these works exemplify how fiction can interrogate and recuperate women's roles within canonical histories. The discussion affirms that historical fiction can operate as a feminist and decolonial strategy of narrative revision.

Finally, in "Other West(ern)s: Representation(s), Twists, and Transnational Visions", Amaia Soroa-Bacaicoa, Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz, and David Río Raigadas reconsider the cultural form of the Western through its postmodern, hybrid, and transnational permutations. Contributions analyse *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs* as a fragmented meditation on justice and absurdity, Spanish "weird westerns" that blend gothic horror with frontier myth, and the podcast *Atlantic Express*, which revisits the American West from a Spanish perspective. The panel demonstrates how the West remains a productive symbolic terrain, capable of accommodating new media, hybrid genres, and global perspectives. By unsettling the mythic binary of savagery and civilisation, these texts reveal the elasticity and ongoing relevance of the Western in the twenty-first century.

Other West(ern)s: Representation(s), Twists, and Transnational Visions

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Abstract

The widely recognizable imagery of the American West has permeated countless artistic productions and nuanced reinterpretations that not only add complexity to the mythology of the territory, but they also enhance cultural forms and the reverberations across genres. In addition, they allow for a deeper reflection on certain social issues and some of its problematic aspects. This round table has analyzed some of these new visions of the West, as well as their contributions and implications for the evolving conception of this geographical and cultural territory. More specifically, has dealt with the western as a cultural form whose conventions can incorporate postmodern features to enhance the western genre and the imagery of the West. This roundtable has also underpinned the hybrid and transnational dimensions of the western, as featured in Spanish weird western literature of the twentieth century and in podcasts that incorporate a vision of the American West.

Keywords: American West; Western cinema; weird western; Western literature; podcasts

1. Introduction

This round table was created in order to analyze some contemporary representations of the American West that are illustrative of how the imagery of the West, arguably one of the most recognizable ones, continues to remain relevant and evolve across territories. The imaginations of the American West evolve together with literary tropes and genres, namely Western cinema, and it permeates new media and cultural forms such as podcasts. The three contributions to this roundtable attest to the social relevance of the American West, as well as to its transnational, intertextual and interdisciplinary dimensions.

2. A Postmodern Twist to the Western Film Tradition in *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs* by the Coen Brothers

The first speaker analyzed the postmodern features of *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs*. The Coen brothers are not unfamiliar with the Western genre; *True Grit* (2010) could be considered a traditional Western, and *No Country for Old Men* (2007) combined that genre with elements of noir psycho-thrillers. However, in both of those films they were adapting to the silver screen texts written by others. *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs* (2018) is a completely different story. In this Western anthology film (including six different stories), the Coen brothers have done most of the writing and one can see the directing duo's special touch in most of them. Besides digging into some of the themes that they have dealt with in much of their filmography—mortality, ethics, violence, justice, revenge, and existential despair, they provide the movie with a number of postmodern twists that seem to speak of an effort to work through some of the problems posed by the mythology of the American West. The parodic self-reflexivity that we have recognized as typical of postmodern representations is noticeable in many of the decisions taken in the making of the film. In this sense, “by both using and ironically abusing general conventions and specific forms of representation [of the Western], [the film] works to de-naturalize them” (Hutcheon 2002, 8). *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs* contains the use of vernacular materials, playfulness, irony, the continuity of cultures, and the breakdown of boundaries between diverse art forms that is highly characteristic of postmodern aesthetics and politics of representation. Assisted by the ideas of well-known scholars such as Hal Foster, Ihab Hassan, Linda Hutcheon or Jean-François Lyotard, this part of the round table delved into both the elements that connect the Coen film to the Western tradition and those others that push the genre in a new direction. Special attention was paid to the integration and intertextuality between different art forms, the inclusion of unusual perspectives that challenge our vision of the genre, the parodic treatment given to some of the conventional topics in the Western or “the streak of pitch-black nihilism” (Stevens 2018) that is observable in most of the stories.

3. A Transnational and Hybrid Genre: Spanish Weird Westerns

The second speaker explored the hybrid and transnational condition of the western genre as epitomized by the increasing popularity of the subgenre of the weird western both in the United States and in other countries. The term “weird western” has been called “a comparatively recent label of a genre that

incorporates supernatural, fantasy and sci-fi elements in a Western frontier theme” (Green 2016, 5). It is argued that the weirdness of the western, particularly prominent in American literature, cinema, and comics since the late 1980s, has also extended to other geographies and cultures, as epitomized by the increasing visibility of this subgenre in Spain. In fact, different examples of weird westerns may be found in Spanish popular literature since the 1920s. The speaker will pay particular attention to a series of novels published in Spain by Juan Gallardo Muñoz in the last decades of the twentieth century under different pen names (Donald Curtis, Curtis Garland, Kent Davies). In these novels the American West becomes populated with several malevolent creatures: Dracula, Frankenstein, the wolfman, the undead, etc. The blending of traditional western mythology and popular monster figures contributes to creating a particular landscape of fear, emphasizing the ruthless and violent features of the Wild West. Archetypal western themes and motifs are distorted by the introduction of gothic and supernatural elements that create a complex allegory of the Old West, intensifying its unrealistic and mythological dimension.

4. The West in Podcasts: A Transnational Example

This contribution to the round table delved into the portrayal of the American West in *Atlantic Express* (2021- present), a podcast hosted by journalist Paco Reyero and produced by the Spanish National broadcasting company that focuses on the historical ties between Spain and the US, while bringing back some conventions of the West through the testimonies of scholars and specialists. *Atlantic Express* is illustrative of the increasing consumption and proliferation of podcasts leading with the American West from within and beyond the territory, and of how podcasting has evolved into an “artistic, documentary and informational medium” (Sullivan 2024, 15) that is already established yet facing additional challenges. In this respect and borrowing Sullivan’s words, *Atlantic Express* is an example of how podcasting is not only an informational medium, but it can also be a space for academic- and non-academic dissemination, as well as an opportunity for the ongoing “democratization of media” (Izuzquiza 2019, 284) and of knowledge. In short, both the content and formal features of *Atlantic Express* epitomize the crossing of physical, cultural and media ‘borderlands,’ and it represents a strategy to bring aural media and the American West closer to certain audiences that may not otherwise seek any connection with it, while contributing to the “transnational” dimension of the territory (Campbell 2008, 4).

Through this analysis of social issues and reverberations across genres and contexts as portrayed in literature, cinema and podcasting, the investigations of the members of the round table have attempted to elucidate how certain narratives and conventions of the American West blend with new media and cultural forms to remain relevant. Put differently, the contributions to this round table have shown how old and new conventions and imagery of the western and the American West continue to expand and evolve in meaningful ways that attest to multiple realities.

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