



Departamento de
Filología Inglesa
y Alemana
Universidad Zaragoza



CALL FOR PAPERS

17th International Conference on Contemporary Narratives in English **TRANSMODERN LITERATURES OF(F) THE LIMIT**

<http://eventos.unizar.es/go/transmodernlimits>

University of Zaragoza, Spain

30th March – 1st April 2022

The emergence of the transmodern paradigm has brought to the fore central concerns of contemporary life such as globalisation and its concomitant phenomena of cosmopolitanism, global interconnectedness and transnationalism, the latter implying a growing fluidity of spatial barriers. In the transmodern debate, these notions are not devoid of complexity. Thus, while borders become more and more permeable, the populist backlash against immigration is at the same time reinforcing national boundaries, creating an “era of walls” (Miller). Paradoxes like this should call attention to the fact that the apparent erosion of spatial and temporal borders derived from globalisation and digital technology runs the risk of projecting a premature celebratory vision of reality as one without restrictions. Our focus falls, therefore, on “transmodern narrative[s] of the limit”, which are narratives “of fracture” (Rodríguez Magda 26) that mirror the contradictions and fissures of our present transnational realities. In that vein, we call for papers that explore the tensions and the possibilities inherent in the concept of the limit, as illustrated by the following:

Limit as boundary

Crossing geo-political boundaries potentially creates a sense of dislocation, which, if voluntarily undertaken, may generate a sense of excitement and adventure while it is bound to be traumatic if forced on the individual. The latter instance can bring about feelings of uprootedness, homelessness and personal fragmentation that find artistic expression in much contemporary literature. To counteract these disrupting forces, new formulations of selfhood and community are needed, involving a new sense of communal belonging and of global human interconnection. Furthermore, fragmentation and dislocation intensify the vulnerability of human beings already increasingly exposed to institutionalised violence (due to economic deregulation, global warfare, sanitary pandemics, etc.), creating a growing need for global empathy and an ethics and politics of care.

Limit as exclusion (“off-limits”)

As Enrique Dussel argues, transmodernity “affirms ‘from *without*’ the essential components of modernity’s own excluded cultures in order to develop a new civilization for the twenty-first century” (224). The European Enlightenment favoured the consolidation of metanarratives structured around dichotomies: the human vs. the nonhuman, the rational vs. the brute, science vs. art, word vs. image, culture vs. nature, reality vs. fiction, etc. For Dussel, postmodernity does not really change this since it stays within a Eurocentric, neoliberal discourse. Yet, a wide new range of potentially transformative possibilities emerges when such binaries are overcome, subverting also their underlying Euro- and Anthropocentric vision of reality. Starting from these premises, we propose a consideration of those emerging transmodern narratives of(f) the limit that struggle “to think what has not been conceptualized yet, to say what still has no name” (Rodríguez Magda 21).

New trends and genres

The last decades have witnessed the proliferation of new literary trends and genres which both highlight and imagine solutions to the main challenges of our post-industrial, globalised world, such as “the cosmopolitan novel”, “climate fiction”, “asylum narratives”, the “translit novel”, the “world novel”, “planetary fiction” and the “networked novel”. In these emerging trends and genres, narrative form often evinces the strain of tackling these issues, as is the case with “the novel of the fragment”, and “the limit-case narratives” conflating fiction, testimony and (auto)biography. Similarly, the emergence of speculative genres such as “Indigenous Futurism” and “Native Apocalypse” are challenging hegemonic imperialist discourses in new ways and proving the importance of the pre-modern to understand our present and future. Other speculative

genres, such as “posthuman” and “transhuman” fiction, also bring to the fore the dangerous effects of our present socio-political and cultural dominants on the future. In all of the said literatures, the setting, transgression and/or blurring of temporal, spatial, symbolic, aesthetic and/or linguistic limits appear to be the pivotal common ground.

References:

- Dussel, Enrique. “World-System and ‘Trans’-Modernity.” *Nepantia: Views from South* vol. 3 no. 2, 2002, pp. 221–44.
- Miller, Todd. “The Era of Walls.” *TomDispatch.com*, 7 Dec. 2017, tomdispatch.com/todd-miller-the-market-in-walls-is-growing-in-a-warming-world/.
- Rodríguez Magda, Rosa María. “The Crossroads of Transmodernity.” *Transmodern Perspectives on Contemporary Literatures in English*, edited by Jessica Aliaga-Lavrijsen and José María Yebra-Pertusa, Routledge, 2019, pp. 21–29.

In light of the above, the main aim of this conference is to analyse and discuss the generic, formal, thematic and ideological features of “transmodern literatures of(f) the limit” written in English and published after 1990. Proposals are sought for papers that address such questions as: How does transmodern literature approach the notion of the limit? What generic, thematic, spatial, temporal and/or ideological borders are being transgressed and/or reconfirmed in transmodern literatures in English? To what extent does their use of innovative and/or canonised generic features differ from pre-modern, modern and postmodern literatures in English? What is the role of the off-limits of modernity in contemporary transmodern literatures in English? Do transmodern literatures of(f) the limit contribute to envisioning a transmodernity that, as predicted by Dussel, “will be multicultural, versatile, hybrid, postcolonial, pluralist, tolerant, and democratic (but beyond the modern liberal democracy of the European state)” (236), or, conversely, do they constitute a “melancholy loop” (Rodríguez-Magda 24) foregrounding a conservative essentialist vision of the past?

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers addressing these questions. Contributions are welcome that engage with, but are not limited to the following areas of interest and research:

- Transmodernity/Transmodern Studies
- Literatures of cosmopolitanism, transnationalism and globalisation
- Migration Studies
- Human Rights Studies
- Ecocriticism
- Postcolonial Studies
- Indigenous Studies
- Dalit Studies
- Gender and Queer Studies
- Trauma Studies
- Ethics Studies
- Memory Studies
- Posthumanist Studies

The conference, which will be held in a “hybrid” mode, with both online and onsite presentations, is organised by Claus Peter Neumann and Pilar Royo-Grasa on behalf of the research project “Literature in the Transmodern Era: Celebration, Limits and Transgression”, financed by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (MINECO) (FFI2017-84258-P), as part of the research carried out by the competitive group “Contemporary Narrative in English”, financed by the Government of Aragón and the European Social Fund (ESF) (code H03_20R), at the English and German Department of the University of Zaragoza, Spain.

Guidelines for submission: Please go to <http://eventos.unizar.es/go/transmodernlimits>, register in the “Abstract Submission” section and enter the title of your proposal, an abstract of 300-400 words, 5-6 keywords and a 100-150-word bionote, as well as author name(s) and affiliation(s), by the **15th of November**. The language of the conference is English.

For questions, please, contact us at: transmodernlimits@gmail.com.