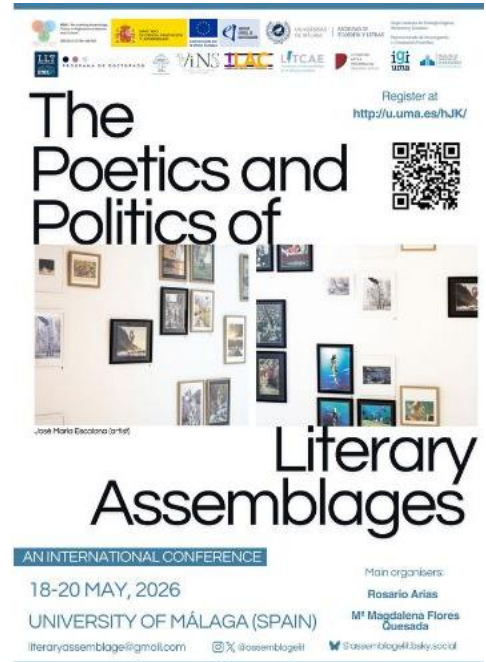


EVENT REPORT

“The Poetics and Politics of Literary Assemblages”

The international conference “The Poetics and Politics of Literary Assemblages” took place in the Faculty of Education, at the University of Málaga, from the 18th to the 20th May, 2026. As part of the helpers’ team and as interns of the External Practices programme we had the one-of-a-kind chance to attend this extraordinary event. This conference has united international researchers and specialists in the field to create a safe environment in which to discuss the new perspectives assemblage theory brings into literary criticism. The event has been organised by Professor Rosario Arias and Dr María Magdalena Flores, both researchers in the Department of English, French and German Philology, as part of the research project “Re-orienting Assemblage Theory in Anglophone Literature and Culture” ([RELY](#)), funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain (Ref. PID2022-137881NB-I00). The focus of RELY is the applicability of assemblage theory to the study of Anglophone literature and culture.



The international conference was structured around three plenary sessions, delivered by John McLeod, from the University of Leeds; Margarita Estévez Saá, from the University of Santiago de Compostela; and Xavier Aldana Reyes, from the Manchester Metropolitan University. To these, simultaneous panels were added within the spaces provided by the lecture hall building Juan Antonio Ramírez and structured around diverse topics. Further socialisation was encouraged within the coffee and lunch breaks fully provided in near the facilities, as well as in the social activities and gatherings programmed by the organising committee.

Prof. Rosario Arias and Dr María Magdalena Flores, organisers of the event.

Day 1 started at 10:00 with the official opening in the main lecture room at the faculty of education. Everybody was so excited with the start of the conference and, from 10:30 to 11:30 Professor John McLeod, from the University of Leeds, delivered his keynote lecture entitled “Adoption’s Agentic-An Assemblage”. This wonderful plenary, with Dr. Juan José Martín González as chair, left many of the attendants speechless, reflecting about Critical Adoption Studies and assemblage theory. This was followed by some questions and answers and a coffee break where we had the amazing opportunity of meeting excellent scholars.



Official Opening



John McLeod in his plenary session

From 12:00 to 13:30 three simultaneous sessions followed, of which I attended the second one. This session's panel was “Vulnerability, Care, Relationality”, chaired by Ana Belén Martínez. The first speaker was Elsa Adán Hernández from the University of Zaragoza who presented her paper: “Sally Rooney’s Kaleidoscopic Narratives and the Politics of Millennial Relationality”. The next speaker was Magdalena Flores Quesada, co-organizer of the event who delighted us with her paper “Assembled Identities in Maggie O’Farrell’s *The Hand that First Held Mine* (2010) and Emma Healey’s *Elizabeth Is Missing* (2016)”. The last speaker was Silvia Pellicer-Ortín from the University of Zaragoza with her paper: “Polyphonic and Relational Assemblages: Care, Vulnerability and Ethical Responsibility in Naomi Alderman’s *The Liars’ Gospel* (2012)”. This session was followed with some questions and answers which reflected on topics like sensorial assemblages, the materiality of memory, vulnerability and the ethics of care. After the sessions we had a lunch break from 13:30 to 15:00 at the Faculty of Education.



“Vulnerability, Care, Relationality” Q&A

From 15:00 to 16:30 I attended the second session, named “Stage and Entertainment”. The first speaker was Ester Díaz Morillo, an independent scholar who presented her wonderful paper: “Tales of Temptation and Redemption: Staging Christina Rossetti’s ‘Goblin Market’ for a Young Audience”. Then, Victoria Puchal, from the International University of Valencia talked about “Disassembling Female Identities: The Case of Mid-Victorian Widows on Stage”. Lastly, Laura Monrós Gaspar presented her paper: “Exploring ‘Assemblage Theory’ and the Concept of ‘Multiple Geographies’ in the Nineteenth-century Entertainment Industry”. After the session a round of interesting questions and answers followed.

After the afternoon coffee break, another slot of three simultaneous sessions started, of which I attended the second one, the panel “Queer studies”. The first paper was “Which Witch Is This Witch’s Stitch?: The Contemporary Fairy-Tale Witch as an Embodied Assemblage in Cregger’s *Weapons* (2025)” by César Más Sánchez from the University of Alicante. Then, Manuel Hueso from the University of Málaga presented a fascinating paper: “Breaking the Undesirable Machine: Desire and Resistance in E.M. Forster’s ‘The Machine Stops’ (1909)”. After him, the last speaker of the session, Beatriz Vega Alonso from the University of Oviedo presented her paper: “Reassembling Vita Sackville-West; Identity, Lesbian Genealogies, and Historical Responsibility”. These papers led to interesting questions and answers on the idea of the contemporary witch as an assemblage, desire as a concept of resistance and lesbian identity.

Alumnas en prácticas: Nuria Castro Jiménez, Laura Guerrero López y Cristina Ortega Suárez.



“Queer Theory” Q&A

At 18:30 started the last sessions of the day, of which I attended the first one: “More-than-Human Assemblages”. This panel started with Juan Ignacio Oliva, a wonderful scholar from the University of la Laguna that presented his paper: “Sympoietic or Symbiotic Rhizomes? New-Materialist Assemblages for a New Era”. Then, Mónica Calvo from the University of Zaragoza talked about her paper: “Complexity, Self-Organization and More-than-human Assemblages in Rivers Solomon’s *Sorrowland*”. After these last sessions we all went to the wonderfully organised welcome reception: wine and tapas at the University of Málaga’s Botanical Garden.



RELY team members in the lecture hall building

Day 2 started with three simultaneous sessions from 9:00 to 10:30, of which I attended the first one. I had the pleasure of hearing University of Málaga’s Ana Chapman discuss her paper “Dreams and Sleep

in Contemporary Science-Fiction: An Aesthetic Response to the Fear of Techno-Human Assemblages”, in which she exemplified her analysis through two novels: Laila Lalami’s *The Dream Hotel* and Victor Manibo’s *The Sleepless*. Chapman was followed by Ana Tejero, whom we had already heard at the *EcoStories* Conference in March. Tejero insightfully discussed her paper “An Anthropocene beyond the Earth? Entangled Spatio-Temporalities in Rivers Solomon’s *An Unkindness of Ghosts*”. During this same time frame, two other panels were taking place regarding Communities of Care and Material Assemblages.

The keynote of this second day was provided by Professor Margarita Estévez Saá, titled “From a Critique of the Violent Anthropocene to a World of Posthuman Matter and Affects in Contemporary Irish Writing: The Case of Sara Baume”. Her fascinating plenary wrapped up with a brief Q&A, and the discussion continued over the coffee break from 11:30 to 12:00.



Prof. Margarita Estévez Saá in her plenary session

From 12:00 to 13:30 we had the chance to attend different talks including Patrick Bixby’s “A Joycean Assemblage: National Tradition and Nietzschean Lines of Flight in *Ulysses*” in the session “Assemblage, Nation and Self”. Among these fascinating sessions that preceded the lunch break, we must highlight the one titled “Critical Theory and Contemporary Literature”, where Professor Jean-Michel Ganteau delivered his paper “Metalepsis beyond Resemblance: The Poetics and Ethics of Assemblage in Sarah Hall’s *Helm*”. In this same session, Professor Susana Onega brilliantly delivered her paper “Reading Naomi Alderman’s *The Power* (2016) as a Literary Assemblage: The Apocalyptic Struggle of Desiring and Social Machines between Being and Becoming, Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization, Schizophrenia and Paranoia”, and University of Surrey’s Bran Nicol concluded the session with his paper “The Novel as an Assemblage”.

Alumnas en prácticas: Nuria Castro Jiménez, Laura Guerrero López y Cristina Ortega Suárez.



Break for questions with Prof. Jean-Michel Ganteau, Prof. Susana Onega and Prof. Bran Nicol, and with Rosario Arias as the chair of the panel.

The lunch break was followed by the last set of sessions of the day, from 15:00 to 16:30, in which four parallel panels took place. I attended the “Film, audiovisual adaptations and other media” session that started with Anna Gutowska’s paper “Writer’s biopic as an assemblage: case study of recent biopics of Mary Shelley and Emily Brontë”. After that, Barbara Braid discussed her paper “Biofiction as an Assemblage of Biographemes in the Comic Book *Mary Shelley Monster Hunter* (2019)”. The session finished with Jacqueline Victoria Woroniec’s “Satan as Morph: Operationalising Digital Morphing for Literary Assemblage Analysis”, and after that, as usual, a Q&A took place.

The Conference ended at 16:30, earlier than the other two days, as the team visited the compelling exhibition *Composition and Fragments on Background*, by Noelia G^a Bandera & José M^a Escalona at MUCAC. The social schedule of this second day also included a dinner at Antonio Martín Restaurant.



Prof. Rosario Arias interviewing Noelia G^a Bandera & José M^a Escalona at MUCAC

Day 3, after such a lively conference social gathering, opened up with two simultaneous panels from 9:30 to 10:00, the first on refugee narratives with the interventions of María Eugenia Berio, binding together assemblage theory and spatial liminality in refugee camps, and Ana Belén Martínez García, from the University of Navarra, with her paper “Reassembling COVID-19: Viral Refugee Activist Testimony”. Meanwhile, the second panel was destined to postcolonial studies, following the papers delivered by Dolors Ortega, from the University of Barcelona, and Adrián Arana, from the University of the Basque Country.

These panels gave way to the last plenary session of the event, taking place from 10:30 to 11:30 and delivered by Dr. Xavier Aldana Reyes, from the Manchester Metropolitan University, who managed to engage exceptionally with all members of the audience while presenting "Queer Body Horror: From the Monster-Queer to Transformative Resilience". In this magnificent keynote Dr. Xavier Aldana drove away from assemblage theory to tackle issues of queer representation through body horror and provided in the process with invaluable recommendations of films and literary works. A brief Q&A gave closure to the last (but in no way least) plenary session and promised further discussion over the following coffee break.



Dr Xavier Aldana Reyes in his plenary session, chaired by Prof. Rosario Arias

Three more panels followed from 12:00 to 13:30 after the coffee break with very diverse topics. First, we could find the WE-CARE Roundtable, led by Rosario Arias, Cristina Gámez, Magdalena Flores and Teresa García, researchers from the University of Málaga and the University of Córdoba, who engaged and discussed on “Assemblage Thinking, World Ecology, and Communities of Care in WE-CARE Network”. Secondly, at the same time we had a panel on temporal assemblages, with the interventions of researchers like Sofía Muñoz, María Dolores Narbona, both from the University of Málaga, or Mónica Luca from the Complutense University of Madrid. The third panel was on audiovisual assemblages, and featured researchers such as Miguel Ángel González Campos, from the University of Málaga, Diana Ortega, from the University of Madrid, or Ana Barroso from the Lisbon University Centre for English Studies.

After the lunch break, the penultimate panel block took place, including topics ranging from urban assemblages, with the interventions of Carmen Lara and Senar Arcak, to ecologies of care, featuring the papers of Dolores García Pérez and Petr Chalupský. The last panel followed the coffee break, presenting the second session on temporal assemblages, led by Sophie Fennelly, Teresa García Salcedo and María Jesús Perea Villena, as well as the second session on posthuman assemblages, featuring the interventions of Miriam Fernández Santiago, Lucía Ramírez García and Lucía Bennett. The international conference ended with some emotional closing remarks delivered by the organisers Prof. Rosario Arias and Dr. María Magdalena Flores, after which we all rushed to take a group photo, which will remain as a core memory of this outstanding event.



This three-day conference has provided us with immeasurable knowledge on the applicability of assemblage theory on literature studies through diverse lenses such as those offered by ethics of care, queer studies, film and audiovisuals adaptations, more-than-human, and science-fiction, among many others. We will forever cherish this wonderful experience and we are so grateful for this opportunity that has allowed us to catch a glimpse of real cooperation and interaction between incredible scholars outside the classrooms. It has been our pleasure to help the organising team with such a wonderful international conference.