

Economy and Literature in Spain and Beyond: From the Middle Ages to the Present

Cuando no entiendas algo, cuando se te escape algo
que no sepas por qué ocurre, qué es lo que está pasando,
piensa en el dinero, o, mejor aún, en la falta de dinero...

Rafael Chirbes, *Crematorio*

Although it could be argued that this opening quote merely reflects the cynicism of Rubén, protagonist of contemporary Spanish author Rafael Chirbes's *Crematorio* (2007), the truth is that economic factors underpin many actions in life, something that literary and other cultural creations have been able to reflect. Far from turning economic thought into some kind of Gordian knot that, when untied or cut, provides a holistic explanation of either the human condition or literature, we must admit that for centuries, authors have been engaging with and exploring economic ideas, and many economists have gained significant insights into economics through the reading of literary works. The use of Jane Austen and Honoré de Balzac by Thomas Piketty in *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* (2013) is well-known, but we don't need to look beyond Rubén in *Crematorio* to run into the openly admitted connection: "Detrás de la fortuna, el crimen, ¿no es eso lo que dice tu querido Balzac? Se limitaba a decir lo mismo que Marx, que, por cierto, era un entregado lector suyo; lo que diría unos cuantos años después Lenin, que los leyó a los dos: a Marx y a Balzac" (386).

Many literary works encompass, in one way or another, an economic problem, accordingly, the economic world has long been a subject of cultural allure, criticism, fear, and interest. For instance, in *The 'Cantar de mio Cid': Poetic Creation in its Economic and Social Contexts* (1989) J. Duggan has highlighted the possibility of reading the oldest preserved Castilian epic poem, the *Cantar de Mío Cid*, as a narrative of economic ascent. Similarly, the picaresque novel, typically considered a genre developed in Spain and crucial to understanding the birth of *Don Quixote* and the modern novel, foreshadowed the recurring storyline of the antihero who tries to reverse an inherited socio-economic status in nineteenth- and twentieth-century

narratives and even in the current “literature of the crisis.” All these works reveal the flaws of the economic system in place.

In a previous special issue of *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* devoted to Alonso de Ercilla’s *La Araucana* (45.1), Luis Gómez Canseco studied the transformation of this epic poem into a market product in the context of the sixteenth-century publishing world, reminding us “que los libros se escriben y se imprimen para ser vendidos, que el autor aspira a obtener beneficios de su escritura y que el editor pretende, como poco, recuperar su inversión” (93). Having acknowledged the primary economic circumstances compelling writing, production, distribution, and reception, two claims make their way across this special issue. The first is interdisciplinary and based on the belief that the process of exchanging ideas, methods and languages across different disciplines and cultural areas (i.e., literature, culture, history, economics) is valuable and provides enriching results. To Michael Watts this seems only natural: “just as economic historians and historians of economic thought have long cited writing by literary authors, literary critics and historians have studied the influence of economic conditions, institutions, and even economic thought on literary works” (327). There is no doubt that economics, among other things, also has a rhetorical, discursive, and significant fictional component. This is exemplified by Ricardo Piglia, in his “Introduction” to Roberto Arlt’s *El juguete rabioso*, astutely characterizing money as a machine of producing fiction and as fiction itself (and he was not referring to the fiduciary component of the monetary system). Money, according to Piglia, removes the sense of realness from the world: to possess it, one must invent, falsify, cheat, and *create fiction*, and the pursuit of wealth is perpetually driven by the illusion of what could be obtained with money (17-18).

This exchange of ideas among disciplines and cultural domains has been challenging, particularly since the mid-twentieth century. The distrust, prejudices, and academic protectionism of some literary critics are compounded by what Çinla Akdere, Christine Baron, and Bruna Ingraio (2018) describe as a predominant view of economics as a “hard science” dominated by mathematical models and “divorced” from the humanities, literature, and the arts (4). Nevertheless, some economists such as Picketty or, lately, in Spain, Xosé Carlos Arias and Antón Costas advocate for using literary and cultural texts and looking at the humanities as a refreshing break from the rigid conceptualization of rational and quantitative models imposed by prevailing economic theories. In *La nueva piel del capitalismo* (2016), Arias and Costas defend the need for a critical stance against dogmatic scientific positivism, recalling its “fictional” consequences:

La ilusión de infalibilidad cientifista de la teoría económica, absolutamente predominante en las décadas de expansión, llevó a muchos de los más laureados economistas a pregonar que al fin habíamos alcanzado un estado de progreso indefinido y sin sobresaltos, en el cual la propia noción de ciclo, o la posibilidad de una desestabilización profunda, estaban fuera de lugar. (4)

Right before the Great Recession, the economists Manuel Santos Redondo and Luis Perdiges Blas published *Economía y literatura* (2007), a volume of contributions by professional economists encouraging cross-disciplinary dialogue and affirming the significance of literature for economics and vice versa.

The call to make literary criticism more “economic” and critical economics more “humanistic” and “social” is accompanied by the *historical* assertion that the past, pre-seventeenth century, including its cultural and literary production, is also relevant to today’s economic issues, particularly in a context of systemic transformations. The famous economist Joseph Schumpeter asked whether we should have safely left the old stuff to the care of a few specialists, emphasizing right away the gains that could emerge from it under three headings: pedagogical advantages, new ideas, and insights into the ways of the human mind (4). There are many instances of this relevance. Félix Martín, for example, provides cases to illustrate a proper idea of money in *Money: The Unauthorized Biography. From Coinage to Cryptocurrencies* (2015). Likewise, Osteen and Woodmansee discuss the current significance of the old debate on whether gift giving is motivated by altruism or is merely camouflage for self-interest (see 29).

The idea that literature and economics are mutually revealing cannot be more pertinent in an era conditioned by the post-Great Recession, the post-COVID-19 pandemic inflationary downturn, and the current economic decoupling between the world’s two largest economies. If these events have exposed economic disruptions and inequalities, they have also uncovered the capital importance of the economy as well as the limitations of the sole use of hard science and econometric methodologies in economics.¹ Alan Greenspan’s failed prediction that maximizing rational choice and self-interest would self-regulate markets ended up with his admission of a “flaw” in his free market ideology. This meant actually questioning the cult of self-regulation by self-interest as the path to prosperity articulated by Ayn Rand in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964). The rift between individual interest and the common good was built on the “objective” assumption that economic actors will not act against their own interest, a wrong proved by literary texts such as Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground* (1864) or, centuries before, by the self-deceptive characters of Fernando de Rojas’s *La Celestina* (1499-1501).

In this regard, approached with disciplinary flexibility, literary texts from different time periods have the potential “to challenge the simplified representation of rational behaviour proposed in so many economic models” (Akdere et al. 4). Furthermore, literature can provide revealing case studies to look at the economy with new eyes by exploring the multiple ways in which plots and characters thoughts, choices, decisions, and actions are shaped or constrained by economic practices and circumstances. As we suggested before, this extends to the conditions and motivations behind the production of writing. Authors craft narratives to depict social behavior and individual desires often influenced by economic factors, and publishers operate under similar constraints. Literary texts also provide opportunities to explore how their very code, language (the analogy between linguistic and economic systems is common since Saussure), genres, and even literary styles are themselves subject to the economic determinants they seek to represent. Literature also constitutes a powerful medium to explore economic concepts and ideas, since literary passages are often used to illustrate them (Watts xvi). Drama, stories, novels, and poetry provide snapshots of the societies in which they emerged, frequently reflecting, in sophisticated ways, “the values, opinions and conflicts about economic life which writers perceive in contemporary societies and bring to light in their writings” (Akdere et al. 2). However, this relationship is a two-way street: literature has long had – and continues to have – the capacity to shape individual behavior and influence the economic world, as evidenced by anti-mercantile ideologies of the Middle Ages or, more recently, by John Maynard Keynes’s own acknowledgment.² In this sense, Marc Bloch’s well-known comparison of money to a seismograph “that not only registers earth tremors, but sometimes brings them about” (186) could still be valid for the interactions between literature and economy.

Keeping all this in mind, the collection of articles we are introducing relies on the capacity of both fields, literary studies and economics (economic thought, history, rhetoric, and discourse), to provide significant insights to one another. In addition to the reciprocal explanatory value, this special issue also assumes that, while Spanish authors cannot be considered economists (except for some like José Luis Sampedro, who advocated for a more caring economy aligned with human dignity...), many, such as Gonzalo de Berceo, Miguel de Cervantes, Benito Pérez Galdós, or Lourdes Ortiz, often out of necessity or personal interest or simply by default, were keenly aware of economic matters. Likewise, the contributions gathered in this volume benefit from the expansion of academic exchanges between economics and literature, which materialized mainly towards the end of the twentieth century under the tenets of the sometimes termed “new economic criticism.” These encounters have been facilitated by the interdisciplinary

nature of literature and its study. Intellectuals, art and economic historians, sociologists, moral philosophers, and cultural materialists, among others, were pioneers in examining literary and cultural texts through an economic lens, often influenced by the Marxist tradition. Walter Benjamin or, in Spain, José Antonio Maravall, are notable examples. Still, prior to these transformations, as Akdere et al. note, the linguistic shift and the development of cultural studies made the fluctuation of boundaries between academic disciplines easier, “allowing combined fields of knowledge to emerge” (6).

The latter critics, as well as Chichara and Seybold in the Introduction to their *Companion to Literature and Economics* (2019), provide a brief and up-to-date historical overview of the main approaches, explanations, correspondences, and perspectives in the exchanges between economics and literature. Akdere et al.’s Introduction focuses on English-language scholarship featuring French critical theory and deals with their behavioral approach to the topic, but it includes the main milestones in the field laid out in different sections corresponding to the contributions of economists, historians of ideas, and literary critics (2-8). As for Chichara and Sybold, in their introductory piece, they comment on the Keynesian attention to narrative structure, linguistic precision, metaphor, and style and discuss the tempestuous marriage between literary studies and economics, a synthesis of their shared roots. They also present some of the debates and scholars from different disciplines who paved the way to the above-mentioned exchanges.

Some of these include the chief topic of the analogy between language and money in terms of sign and as mediums of exchange elaborated by Marc Shell (see *The Economy of Literature* [1978], and *Money, Language, and Thought* [1982]), the focus on the rhetorical aspects of the economic discourse by Deidre McCloskey’s “rhetorical of economics,” the study of the connection between symbolic values in linguistics and notions of value in economics by Pierre Bourdieu in *Language and Symbolic Power* (1993), or Fredric Jameson’s inquiry into the failures of postmodern cultural logic and on potential alternatives to the capitalist economy (*Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1991). The collection *The New Economic Criticism: Studies at The Intersection of Literature and Economics* (1999) by Mark Osteen and Martha Woodmansee consolidated the interdisciplinary intersections as a current of research in literary studies called “new economic criticism” (NEC). Although NEC seems to depart from the above-mentioned analogy or “homology” (i.e., the conventional nature shared by economic and linguistic signs, systems, and discourses), the twenty-seven essays by economists and literary critics gathered by Osteen and Woodmansee combine such a diversity of methods and approaches

(formalist, isomorphic, historical, behavioral, moral, political, psychoanalytical...) that to Akdere et al. the variety “doesn’t allow us to describe this new current as a unified, coherent field in literary criticism” (6). On the other hand, Chichara and Sybold regard NEC as “the subfield of literary criticism” that preceded the brands of scholarship contained in their *Companion* (2), which they seem to encompass under the term “econo-literary criticism” (4).

New or not, it is undeniable that there is a growing body of literary and cultural criticism based on economic paradigms, events, models, tropes, and ideas, paralleled by a movement in economics that values literary and artistic sources and where literary, linguistic, and rhetorical methods are used to uncover the discipline’s hidden metaphors and fictions. Starting with language, the NEC’s initial focus on “intersections” bridges Kurt Heinzelman’s terminological split between “poetic economics,” which reads literature economically and “imaginative economics,” concerned with reading economics literarily (see Osteen and Woodmansee 3). It also provides a flexible enough umbrella for designations such as “rhetorical economics” (McCloskey might have easily been a contributor to this volume) or “econopoetics,” applied, for instance, by Giancarlo Maiorino to the Picaresque and focused on the centrality of the socioeconomic factors to the poetics of literary works, in particular how literary and economic modes of production feed off one another (3). This flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and methodological diversity can be also seen as a strength for offering a scholarly platform for critical dialogue (e.g., is the *homo economicus* a description of human behavior or a fictional construction from economic discourse?) as well as the broadening and deepening of the different fields.

As its precursor, the NEC, contemporary econo-literary criticism also provides room for different lines of political engagement with texts. Focused on the social and political, anticapitalistic and oppositional scholarship has traditionally taken precedent by using postmodern theoretical subfields, such as gift theory (Mauss, Lyotard), consumption theory (Baudrillard, Bataille), or discourse theory to “re-socialize” economic thought and overcome the model of monadic individuals making economic decisions. These approaches use cultural productions (i.e., literature) to expose power relations, challenge the wealthy, or define culture as the product of hegemonic ideologies. Within this political line, scholars from various backgrounds (mainly sociology and anthropology, but also cultural and literary studies) have come together in recent years under the term Critical Finance Studies. Their goal is to subject finance, which they equate with economics and Neoclassical models, to critical and heterodox scrutiny in order to ignite change.³ Others such as Craig Bertolet and Robert Epstein have also turned to the above-mentioned scholars or other post-medieval

thinkers (Veblen, Simmel) to go beyond the Marxist historical causality model that left preindustrial economies unaccounted for (post-historicist turn). Conversely, more focused on the individual choices and morality, other literary scholars such as Paul Cantor and Stephen Cox in *Literature and the Economics of Liberty* (2009) or Matthew Spivey's 2015 dissertation *Re-Reading Economics in Literature: A Capitalist Critical Perspective* turned their attention to the possibilities of capitalist perspectives. They believe that forms of economic thinking sympathetic to capitalism, such as the Austrian School of Economics, may be able to illuminate our understanding of literature in new ways, and to reinvigorate the juncture of literature and economics by reevaluating the Neoclassical *homo economicus*. For them, historical analysis and praxeology (the study of human action) problematize economic decisions as the result of rational singular individuals or deterministic social structures, and the market is not perfect nor evil, but a good platform to explain behaviors by using ideas such as transactional cost (North), the calculus of pleasure and pain (Jevons), or Pascal Boyer's concept of cognitive relevance.

As Akdere et al. acknowledge, since the publication of Osteen and Woodmansee's book, additional interdisciplinary initiatives have surfaced within literary studies "with the purpose of creating a joint field of study for economists, historians of economics, and literary scholars" (7). Fortunately, the scope has expanded with illuminating scholarship and additional ramifications, such as studies relating the economy to minorities, gender, race, or the environment, and to national literatures from any period. These contributions share a desire to understand past and present connections between literature and human attitudes regarding the economy. They can mostly be categorized by their focus on specific authors (e.g., Chaucer, Dante, Shakespeare, Faulkner)⁴, works (e.g., *Les Fleurs du mal*, *The Grapes of Wrath*)⁵, subjects (e.g., money, money and morality, need, workers, business and the figure of the businessman)⁶, perspectives (e.g., Marxist Shakespeare, Capitalism and Whitman)⁷, geographic areas (e.g., China, Germany)⁸ or periods (e.g., Renaissance England, Nicholas I's Russia)⁹, sometimes blending one or more categories.¹⁰ There are also articles, chapters and volumes with general studies that approach the topic broadly, such as those by Czarniawska-Joerges and Guillet (*Good Novels, Better Management*, 1994), Watts (*The Literary Book of Economics*, 2003), Hewitt ("The Vexed Story of Economic Criticism," 2009) or Saybold et al. (*The Routledge Companion to Literature and Economics*, 2019), who promoted their *Companion* as the first authoritative guide tying together both seemingly disparate areas of study. More recently, by asserting that a literary work is both a work of art and a commodity, Fessenbecker and Yazell ("Literature, Economics, and a Turn to Content," 2021) have highlighted that major

insights into the relationship between literature and economics arise more out of the ordinary representation of economic life in literary works along with economic sources (emphasizing content) than from the application of complex literary theories (focusing on form) to uncover truths in the field of economics.

The developing body of studies imbricating literary and economic knowledge that we can call econo-literary criticism has taken place mostly in the British, North American, and French literary contexts and mainly in areas such as the nineteenth century novel or post-2008 literature. Nonetheless, scholarship in Hispanic studies has been no stranger to this critical reflection with studies from other literatures sometimes serving as theoretical or application models. For example, in recent years, Peninsular and Trans-Atlantic historical, economic, cultural, and literary criticism have moved beyond persistent historical *clichés*, such as the supposed absence of Catholicism's role in the economy or the alleged Spanish disinterest in business. Additionally, scholars have been overcoming traditional approaches that relegated economic matters to anecdotic information or mere incidental backdrops to literary texts. Without forgetting pioneer economists, historians, or literary critics that drew on Spanish literature to explain popular economic thought such as Marjorie Grice-Hutchison (*Economic Thought in Spain*, 1978), Maravall's use of Veblen in *La Celestina* (*El mundo social de La Celestina*, 1964), or Blanco Aguinaga et al.'s focus on socio-economic literary history (*Historia social de la literatura española*, 1978), more recent scholars – some of them contributors of this issue – have increasingly posed questions about the use of literary evidence to understand the impact of economics or to show how economic issues impinge on literature and other cultural production. Some examples, for illustration purposes and without aiming to be comprehensive, include, for the medieval period, contributions by Ben Liu (*Medieval Joke Poetry*, 2004), Carmen Benito-Vessells (*Lenguaje y valor en la literatura medieval española*, 2014), López González ("Stereotypes and the Unpaid Debt in the Episode of Rachel and Vidas in *Cantar de Mio Cid*," 2019), and Simon Pinet ("Rhetorical Economics," 2016; *The Task of the Cleric*, 2021). The Golden Age has attracted the attention of scholars such as Miguel Ángel Galindo (*Cervantes y la economía*, 2007), Elvira Vilches (*New World Gold*, 2009), Felipe Ruan (*Pícaro and Cortesano*, 2011), and Brian Brewer ("Quixotic Economy," 2013). Moving into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, researchers like Jo Labanyi ("Adultery and the Exchange Economy," 1997), Sara Muñoz-Muriana ("The Modern Usurer Consecrates the City: Circulation and Displacements in the Torquemada Series," 2016), and Inma Ridao Carlini (*Rich and Poor in Nineteenth-Century Spain*, 2018) have offered important insights. Contemporary texts, in turn, have been examined by Carlos M. Coria-

Sánchez (*Temas del comercio y la economía en la narrativa hispana*, 2008), Pablo Valdivia (“Literature, Crisis, and Spanish Rural Space in the Context of the 2008 Financial Recession,” 2017), and Luis I. Prádanos-García (*Post-growth Imaginaries*, 2018), among others.

Thus, if José L. Bermejo’s 2011 statement from his monograph on economy and taxation in Spanish literature – “Se trata en principio de una investigación que contaba con escasos antecedentes en España sobre temas similares – no así en el extranjero-centrados todo lo más en figuras concretas muy relevantes de nuestra literatura, un Cervantes o un Palacio Valdés, por ejemplo” (305) – is no longer accurate, it is still somewhat true regarding comprehensive volumes. In fact, despite remarkable contributions on the topic like the ones mentioned above and others, the critical field still lacks collective efforts and comprehensive works that explore the connections between economics and literature, featuring varied subjects and perspectives while systematically covering all major time periods. As noted for other contexts, critics examining economic aspects in Spanish or Transatlantic texts have typically focused on particular authors (Santa Teresa, Cervantes, Galdós, José Luis San Pedro)¹¹; works (*Cantar de Mío Cid*, *Don Quixote*, *Greguerías*, *Crematorio*)¹²; subjects (analogy money and language, poverty and prostitution, property, merchants and commerce),¹³ or periods (thirteenth century, seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, post-2008 crisis).¹⁴ On the other hand, the most wide-ranging attempts we consulted, even though they are very valuable contributions, tend to omit some periods. Bermejo only covers until the seventeenth century. The most common practice for volumes of this kind, though, is to overlook or barely pay attention to the most recent literary production – which is understandable, since some are not too recent. But especially to neglect the relations between medieval literature and the economy, such as Santos Redondo y Perdices or Coria-Sánchez, partly due to Marx and Weber’s minimal focus on the Middle Ages in their accounts of capitalism and partly due to the persistence of historical *clichés* noted.

This collection contributes to the expanding field of econo-literary criticism by applying economic approaches to Spanish literary texts. While such texts, like those in other traditions, reflect authors’ responses to economic issues, a comprehensive, updated overview of case studies spanning from the Middle Ages to the present – where economics is treated as an integral element, not just explicit occurrences – remains largely unexplored.¹⁵

By presenting a coherent and illustrative overview of econo-literary criticism within the Peninsular subfield of Hispanic studies and beyond, we hope to make a plausible case for the relevance of economics to literature and literary activity, and vice versa. The assembly of essays also aims to

promote fruitful critical exchanges and dialogue among specialists from various backgrounds and ideologies. Likewise, we anticipate advancing readers' understanding of the complex socio-economic transformations that have shaped Spanish society over the centuries (i.e., commercialization, crisis, colonization, role of women...), identifying how authors both reflected and influenced economic behaviors and wider economic practices, and providing new insights, interpretations, and perspectives on canonical and less canonical works. Additionally, by putting forward a representative selection of specific examples and cross-chronological case studies, we seek to illustrate the application of various methodological and analytical principles of econo-literary criticism, demonstrating both the approach's productive possibilities and its prospective applicability to other authors, works, and contexts. This potential for extension and expansion underscores the need for further studies in Hispanic studies. For instance, future research areas could combine Peninsular and Latin American literary works, explore the economic interconnections of a specific time period (e.g., the interfaith economic links in the Iberian Middle Ages) or compare Spanish and/or Latin American works with contemporaneous literature from other regions. Finally, we intend for this compilation of studies to provide the historical context and perspective to encourage readers to reassess long-standing ethical and political questions in light of current economic circumstances. Along with the oracular powers to predict crises, the capacity to explore socio-economic problems and even to conceive possible solutions or alternatives to prevalent economic patterns, literature has the ability to make visible the invisible and render the comfortable uncomfortable. In *Feria* (2020), a novel examined by one of the contributors, Ana Iris Simón reminds us how the biggest achievement of neoliberalism,

además de haberse hecho pasar por la neutralidad, por la ausencia de ideología, por lo normal y aséptico, ha sido hacernos olvidar que en paralelo a su modelo económico corren también unos valores. Y que parece compatible decir que uno rechaza lo primero y celebrar y vivir de acuerdo a los segundos y que de hecho en esas estamos muchos. (24-25)

For this reason, more than ever, it is pertinent to highlight for some the ethical origins of economics and its connections with theology, philosophy, rhetoric, and politics. At the same time, we should remind the readers that reality is so complex that, without being conformist, total purity and all-or-nothing morality are often not possible. As Galdós reveals about Doña Lupe, a character from another work analyzed in this special issue: "Era su lema que debemos partir siempre de la realidad de las cosas, y sacrificar lo mejor a lo bueno, y lo bueno a lo posible. Esto lo había aprendido en la experiencia

de los negocios, la cual se aplica con éxito a los asuntos morales" (*Fortunata II* 439).

We present here a balanced mix of eight contributions by established scholars with diverse backgrounds and expertise in different chronological periods. Due to space constraints and in an effort to balance thematic and methodological diversity with consistency, this issue includes only essays dealing with Spain. However, recognizing the country's historical, literary, and economic connections with other parts of the world, two of the articles relate the Peninsula to the Americas and to Africa. The compilation is divided into four sections with one article on the Middle Ages, two on the Golden Age, two on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and three on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in an attempt to include essays engaging directly with the impact of the Great Recession and/or the COVID-19 pandemic in literary production.

The articles gathered here offer a consistent thematic and chronological coverage on how economic developments influenced and were influenced by writing from varied perspectives. They are in dialogue with genre studies and econopoetics (Brewer); gender studies (Ridao Carlini); Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Metaphor Field Loop Theory (Valdivia); literary criticism (Pinet, Armon, and Bezhanova); affect studies (Vater); as well as transatlantic and colonial approaches, putting Spain in dialogue with Latin America and Equatorial Guinea (Arbaiza). The issue also includes essays that explore the overlap between diverse concepts, such as moral and economic debt (Pinet); domestic and public social economies (Brewer and Ridao Carlini); slave and free wage labor (Arbaiza); quantitative and qualitative data (Valdivia); emotions and neoliberal productivity (Vater); and pedagogical and political utility (Bezhanova). Embracing a cross-disciplinary approach, a number of essays explore the relationship between seemingly disparate objects of study, including a dialogized guide to the Dutch stock exchange and a collection of courtly novels (Armon), as well as two contemporary novels and a corpus of 1000 press articles (Valdivia). Similarly, other contributions highlight the hybrid nature of single texts, such as an epic comedy and modern novel (Brewer); a travel book and *costumbrista* narrative (Arbaiza); and a historical and campus novel (Vater). Addressing a range of themes, we hope each contribution opens new lines of inquiry by examining how the complex relationship between literature and economics is shaped and continually reshaped.

In "Debt and the Miracle: On the Economy of Grace and Conversion in Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*," Simone Pinet recounts how economic operations, in particular, debt, find expression in moral concepts and the idea of conversion in medieval Iberia. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, while renewed circulation of coins mediated numerous

developments, ranging from the movement of pilgrims to the consolidation of noble houses and management of feudal territories, debasement at the hands of the crown fomented insecurity regarding the fluctuating role of money, whose use value was dependent on varying social ranks and relations. Within this context, the poet Gonzalo de Berceo, remembered for his collection on Marian miracles, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, mixes questions of theology with common scenes in the style of tableaux, blending the concrete and the abstract for didactic purposes. Pinet argues that while seven of the twenty-five miracles that make up the collection, explicitly feature economic concerns, Berceo incorporates terms that imbricate economics and morality throughout all of his works.

Of particular concern is the structure of debt, which Pinet posits should be understood as a social bond organized through time and morality, a set of obligations between individuals regulated by the pressure of a community. However, the monetization of debt, which enables its transferability and de-personalization, displaces the role of the community, resulting in greater violence and its association with sin. The bulk of Pinet's analysis centers on two case studies from Berceo's collection. In the first, Miracle X, sins are deemed as debts fusing economics, morality and justice, while virtue and belief are likened to credit exhibiting a new moral economy of salvation. This transformation renewed ongoing theological debates on the limits of human agency in contrast to the divine gift of grace, understood as the gift of time. Through a close reading of the narrative language of Berceo, the article traces a shift from the language of gift-giving to the language of a profit economy. The miracle, redefined as a narrative counterpart of grace, becomes the conversion of economic debt into moral debt, from the physical to the spiritual salvation, a linguistic process mediated through the currency of words.

The second case study, "The Merchant of Byzantium," revolves around the miracle of conversion entrenched in moral and monetary terms that Pinet argues implicate *both* religion and economic transactions in a sea of semantic ambiguities. In this tale featuring a Christian merchant as debtor, a Jewish leader as moneylender, and statues of Mary and Christ as guarantors, the idea of price enables a process of valuation and circulation of both things and people leading to salvation. Pinet's article is an exploration of Berceo's semantic potential, which imbricates morality and economy. The result is rereading of the economic language at the heart of these foundational miracles, enriching our understanding of the author's transformative poetry.

Making a shift into the early modern period and the birth of modern capitalism, Shifra Armon's article, "Risky Business: Transactional Rhetoric in José Penso de la Vega (ca 1650-1692)," revolves around the enigmatic

figure of a Sephardic writer and international businessman living in Amsterdam, a center of global commerce and finance. Armon traces the topic of rhetorical transactions, both affective and financial, within two seemingly disparate texts: a dialogized guide to the Dutch stock exchange, *Confusión de confusiones* (1688), and the collection of courtly novels, *Rumbos peligrosos* (1683). The reading highlights, the unpredictable linguistic exchanges that underly what Armon describes as early capitalist gamesmanship for profit, be it through the speculative investments of the Dutch East India company or the courtly displays of the Spanish nobility. The first part of the article recounts the complex biography of this bilingual author who wrote in both Spanish and Hebrew. Penso, a shareholder in the Dutch East India Company, understood well the fraught inner workings of Europe's first stock exchange. To explain the confusion that permeates both texts, Armon employs transactional theory, where knowledge is understood as provisional and negotiable. The partial or dysfunctional transfer of knowledge, thus, becomes the underlying cause for a series of incomplete transactions producing a sense of disorder.

Confusión, structured as four dialogues framed with questions, is recast by Armon as an "anatomy," in accord to Northrup Frye's definition, thus reconciling the apparent contradictions that have framed critical analyses of this treatise. In Armon's reading, the satiric character of the economic manual emerges, complementing its meandering structure, which allows for digressions, embedded sub-genres, and multiple voices. A discussion of the literary form takes center stage for Armon, as she teases out parallels with other Menippean-style satires and explains its polyvocal rhetorical composition: merchant, philosopher, and shareholder. Each voice comes together through a unifying baroque style full of rich conceits that encapsulate the volatile nature of the stock market, where the creation of value was out of investor's control.

The final third of the article is dedicated to Penso's collection of courtship novels, *Rumbos peligrosos* (1683). Armon explores what she characterizes as the innovative and experimental narrative structure of this tri-partite book, and centers her analysis on the first storyline, titled "Finezas de la amistad y triunfo de la Inocencia." Seeking to pass the time, the Sevillian and Neapolitan nobility that populates this tale opt to play card games and organize a masked ball, leading to a competition of problem-solving skills. However, the incompleteness of dialogic transactions Armon highlights leads to suspenseful enigmas, far-fetched possibilities, and obtuse lucubration. The specters of risk and copious miscommunication dominate the plot to construct a series of incomplete and unproductive exchanges. By framing the economic in terms of the literary and juxtaposing

these disparate texts, Armon enriches readers' understanding of both, giving due recognition to Penso's artistry.

Integrating early modern economics with Cervantine poetics, Brian Brewer's article, "*Don Quijote: The Econopoetics of Cervantes's Epic Comedy*," proposes a new way to understand the hybridity of the modern novel, where fiction precedes economic material. To structure his argument, Brewer uses Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599) as a literary and narrative counterexample to *Don Quijote*, elaborating on their similarities and differences, in particular, their diverging genre structures. The marriage between epic and comic discourse, which results in the birth of a new narrative form (*novela moderna*), is explained in detail throughout the essay. Brewer describes how both genres share a core didactic function, the former, the instruction of politics, understood as the economy of governing the polity, and the latter, the instruction of socioeconomics, understood as the economy of the household – one public, the other private. Alternatively, both genres share a flexible structure, allowing them to appear in verse or prose, be based history or fiction, and incorporate all levels of society as well as digressions. Brewer highlights the generic indeterminacy of Cervantes's experimental creation and posits that the blurring of generic boundaries relates to the effacement of social distinctions and to infractions against decorum.

Connecting once again his discussion on genre with that of economics, Brewer argues, in opposition to other Cervantine critics, that the author of *Don Quijote* maintains a divide between the comic and serious treatment of economics. While the comic episodes offer obtuse socio-political critiques, the interpolated tales present a more explicit and serious treatment of the subject. Presenting various textual examples, Brewer highlights how comedic episodes featuring money or lack thereof in the hands of Don Quijote are not emblematic of the transformation from late feudalism to early capitalism in real socio-economic structures, but rather a parodic expression of chivalric romances. The focus lies on the literary imperatives that dictate the comedic relationship between Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, even if this relationship is essentially structured along economic matters, the hiring and payment of labour.

Likewise, the relationship between Sancho and his wife is structured around economic issues, albeit domestic ones. Brewer illustrates how across multiple episodes, comedy derives from the contraposition between literary fantasy and the reality of traditional domestic economy, contraposing idleness with productivity. However, he singles out Dorotea as a key figure that combines, in part to her intermediate social class, the double presentation of economics in the novel, as both comedy and politics are centered on the theme of domestic economy. Similarly, the tale of

Marcela provides another contrasting example, namely, that of the economically and biologically unproductive unmarried wealthy woman. The lessons that are to be drawn from Dorotea and Marcela, remain ambiguous, according to Brewer, just as there is no clear political advice to be gathered. Despite those uncertainties, Brewer provides irrefutable proof of a Cervantine econopoetics that integrates the economic as both thematic content and a formal element of mixed generic creation.

Shifting to a later historical context, the Restauración Borbónica (1874-1931) marked, along with the triumph of the political and social ideals of the bourgeoisie, the expansion of financial capitalism in Spain during the last third of the nineteenth century. The great increase in the circulation of fiduciary money, the new accessibility to credit, political corruption, and financial investment produced economic consequences such as the consolidation of a speculative growth model. These developments also brought ethical and social consequences, including a moral relativism that prioritized money, social status, and superficial appearances; the economic shift from the traditional aristocracy to a new financial elite; and the further impoverishment of the lower classes. In line with the awareness of the possibilities of money as a commodity, Pérez Pizarro refers to the second half of the nineteenth century as the “century of usury” due to an increase in the number of lenders following the liberalization of interest rates derived from the progressive financial legislation of 1856 (17).

This is the world depicted in novels by Benito Pérez Galdós, such as *Lo Prohibido* (1884), and serves as the context for Inma Ridao Carlini’s article “Mujeres y finanzas en la España del siglo XIX: prestamistas y especuladoras en las novelas de Benito Pérez Galdós.” In dialogue with gender theory and studies of the Victorian novel that highlight the role of women as economic actors and question the socioeconomic role traditionally assigned to women, Ridao Carlini breaks with traditional Galdosian criticism that has often reduced the economic activities of women in his work to spending and unproductive consumerism. They were often portrayed as a deviation – tinged with prostitution – from the ideal of the “ángel del hogar.” Beyond characters that economically fit this model of the consumerist and consumable economic subject, such as Isidora in *La desheredada*, Eloísa in *Lo prohibido*, or Rosalía in *La de Bringas*, Ridao Carlini analyzes three female characters in Galdós’s novels who actively participate in the often turbulent and murky financial world of Madrid in the last third of the nineteenth century: Doña Lupe (*Fortunata y Jacinta*, 1887) and Segismunda Rodríguez (*Las tormentas del 48*, 1902), both usurious moneylenders; and Baldomera Larra, a historical figure who organized a Ponzi scheme in 1876 (*Cánovas*, 1912). According to Ridao Carlini, these three female characters and others mentioned more briefly in her study, such as Doña Silvia or Isabel Cordero,

show that the public and private spheres were more permeable and ambivalent than traditionally thought. Doña Lupe and Segismunda, despite running their lending businesses from their homes, extend their power beyond the domestic sphere, influencing the public domain. On the other hand, Baldomera Larra was the founder of a successful but fraudulent public bank that mainly harmed middle- and lower-class families, leading to its collapse in 1876. Similarly, the boundaries of gender roles are less fixed, and the three characters combine qualities perceived as feminine and masculine. For instance, as a matriarch of the family, doña Lupe can forgive offenses, but as a moneylender, she is so relentless that she never forgives a debt. The family business prospers more after her husband's death when she takes the reins. She lends money out of pure passion and commercial instinct, equating the affective to the financial, and uses financial power unscrupulously to have authority over others. Likewise, Segismunda manages her husband's business activities *de facto*, demonstrates the ambition and audacity to take financial risks to provide for her family, always separates money from emotions, controls the family's social relationships, engages in side businesses, and has aristocratic aspirations on her own. For her part, Baldomera Larra made financial contracts with clients despite not having the legal capacity to do so as a married woman without her husband's permission. She was initially seen as a master or genius in the art of finance, with oratory skills, and a great attraction to risk and financial gambling.

Through their involvement in usurious and speculative financial activities, these three characters challenged the nineteenth-century bourgeois ideal of domesticity, based on confining women to the private sphere of the home and its activities, the clear polarization of gender roles, and restricted economic behavior. Ridao Carlini shows that women's participation in informal finance and the underground economy – through legal or illegal activities – was a usual part of their survival strategies, as this sector allowed them to circumvent the gender restrictions of the formal economy as well as their overall relevance in the development of Spanish financial capitalism at the end of the nineteenth century.

While women's informal economic roles shaped domestic financial structures in the nineteenth century, earlier geopolitical maneuvers – such as Spain's 1777 Treaty of San Ildefonso with Portugal – reveal how international alliances also influenced the nation's economic and political trajectory, setting the context for the next contribution in this monograph. The treaty avoided hostilities with Portugal at a time when Spain was about to enter into conflict with Great Britain due to the Spanish intervention in favor of the independence of the United States. This treaty resolved the border tension with Portugal in the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata by

exchanging some territories in the region. As an extension of that treaty, in 1778, Portugal ceded the African islands of Annobón and Fernando Poo to Spain, possessions that the Spanish government wished to transform into a convenient free port for trade with other nations. However, after the failed inaugural expedition of Count Argelejos in 1778, the Spanish government abandoned these possessions. Only in 1843, as a reaction to British expansion – several British commercial houses settled on Fernando Poo and began a *de facto* colonization – the Espartero government officially claimed Spanish sovereignty over the islands, in addition to securing the annexation of Corisco. However, Spanish presence was only consolidated in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly in the 1880s. José Muñoz y Gaviria's 1861-1864 sojourn in Fernando Poo coincides with a transitional stage, the period between 1858 and 1880, in which, according to Juan José Díaz Matarranz, efforts were made to lay the foundations to make this region an economic colony (51).

With this backdrop, in “Ficciones económicas en el golfo de Guinea: *Tres años en Fernando Póo* (1871) de José Muñoz y Gaviria, Vizconde de San Javier,” Diana Arbaiza examines this work, a hybrid between travel book and *costumbrista* narrative in order to illustrate the role of literature in representing the insular part of Equatorial Guinea (Fernando Poo, today Bioko) as an economized space. Referring to recent works by Ericka Beckman and Christopher Taylor, (*Capital Fictions*, 2012, and *Empire of Neglect*, 2018, respectively) which relate political economy and literary creation in other contexts, Arbaiza's objective is twofold: to bring to light the little-known history of the economic exploitation of Equatorial Guinea, and to underscore how literature participated in creating a colonial project in this region in the nineteenth century. These settlements resembled the plantation economy model developed by the British in North America and by the Portuguese in Africa. After providing the reader with information about Muñoz y Gaviria (1831-1906), a prolific author, journalist, and Spanish official as well as the initial serialized publication of *Tres años*, Arbaiza presents the Spanish works published previously on Equatorial Guinea, highlighting the more literary nature, the inclusion of engravings, and the wider dissemination of the latter. Then, Arbaiza scrutinizes the author's discourse to show how the representation of the island's nature and its inhabitants is subordinated to the author's goal of proposing a colonial model based on agricultural exploitation rather than commercial trade, due both to the difficulties in competing for the region's trade, monopolized by England, and Muñoz and Gaviria's skepticism about the civilizing potential of this activity. For the space, the work privileges an economic view of the land and its natural resources, presenting an idyllic portrait of the island's agrarian conditions as a space of abundance and fertility. Fernando Poo is

represented as a material paradise, which, although unexploited, contained enormous possibilities for development. Muñoz and Gaviria's portrayal of the island's communities is heavily influenced by the period's context, as economic structures were adapting after the slave trade was banned and replaced by free wage laborers, especially from the Kru ethnic group, forced to work for very low wages. Africans are reduced to labor power, valued on their economic potential: strong and robust for work (the Kru) or indolent, deceitful, and uninterested in consumption (the Bubi).

According to Arbaiza, the 1871 more detailed version of *Tres años* used in her analysis, offered metropolitan readers an economic agrarian fiction of Fernando Poo and its inhabitants that provided an attractive alternative to trade, and ultimately played the role of symbolic and material compensation for the loss of the continental American colonies. Arbaiza's piece is also a call to literary criticism to pay more attention to the economic ideologies that shape texts, to make the colonial roots of capitalism visible. Additionally, it advocates for a review by Spain of its colonial past with Guinea, censored by Franco and silenced during the democracy, in part for the relations that Spain still maintains with Teodoro Obiang's dictatorship.

In 2008 Europe suffered a devastating financial crisis that transformed Spain's social, literary, and cultural context. To make sense of this debt crisis and its aftermath, varied media, including press outlets and literature, came to use economic metaphors as daily currency. Incorporating a mixed-methods scientific perspective, Pablo Valdivia's article, "Metaphor and Cultural Narratives of the Economy: Analyzing Symbolic Value under the Context of the 2008 Financial Crisis and Its Aftermath," analyzes three sets of texts: Spanish press outlets, namely, *ABC*, *El Mundo*, *El País*, *Expansión* newspapers; Antonio Muñoz Molina's novel *Todo lo que era sólido* (2013); and Rafael Chirbes's novel *En la orilla* (2013).

Two aims drive Valdivia's work: first, to study the progress of metaphor and neuroscience, concerning analogical cognition/modeling; and second, to investigate how metaphoricity activates hegemonic cultural narratives. The first line of analysis centers on how metaphor can orient the creation of symbolic value in periods of crises, leading to the rebuilding of a tattered social fabric. The second line explores how metaphors enact symbolic properties, which give form to cultural narratives in economics and policymaking. Using the study of forms as a foundation, Valdivia employs Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Metaphor Field Loop Theory (MELT model) to delve into the dynamic relationship between metaphor and thought within cultural narratives, understood as a matrix that orients the bond between individuals, communities, and their material conditions in a specific historical-spatial setting. The author's interest lies in assessing literature *in* the economy by tracing the use and production of non-literal

language and poetic mechanisms. Valdivia employs data collection tools to perform this analysis on a corpus of 1000 press articles via the research platform Nexis-Uni, based on the specific terminology “crisis financiera.” The methodology is built on three principles: 1) testability and falsifiability; 2) transposability and scalability; 3) evidence-based driven qualitative-quantitative analysis.

The results reveal a series of semantic correlations and key interrelated terms ranked by frequency, including “problemas,” “histórico,” and “dificultad,” among others. These results are also studied by NVivo’s sentiment analysis and Arrese’s hypotheses, namely, that traditional metaphors dominate press coverage of the European debt crisis and different media use similar metaphor patterns, providing overall scores ranging from very positive to very negative. Throughout the essay, the data comes to life through a series of maps, charts, and diagrams, leading to varied conclusions, including that the past is a narrative we construct both as individuals and as a community, albeit a past where the original perception is altered by emotions. A secondary outcome is assessing the usefulness and limits of machine learning-based analytical tools themselves, providing mixed results. Shifting gears, Valdivia turns to a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the literary texts by Muñoz Molina and Chirbes. The results reinforce the prior line of inquiry, where both texts contain conceptual metaphors of disease, natural disorder, war, but also sport and entertainment, among others. However, they diverge from the metaphors privileged by the hegemonic cultural narrative of the economy. The findings of Valdivia’s study illustrate the potential of multidisciplinary approaches to the study of both economic and literary practices.

In “Emotional Mismanagement: Academic Labor’s Neoliberal Values in Lourdes Ortiz’s *Las manos de Velázquez*,” Katie J. Vater focuses on the emotional effects of neoliberalism in the Spanish university as illustrated by Lourdes Ortiz’s 2006 novel, *Las manos de Velázquez*. The article considers the relationship between the literary text and the hegemonic ideology of neoliberalism, in particular, the former’s attitude towards the latter. Centered on the labor conditions of academics and researchers and how neoliberal practices and values adopted by university administrators are interiorized by faculty, the novel is defined by Vater as both an historical and campus novel. The latter genre, Vater notes, emerged in Spain in line with the neoliberal turn, signaling their possible interrelationship. The author argues that the representation of the protagonist’s interior life illustrates the entanglement of an omnipresent neoliberalism in Ortiz’s novel. This ever-present ideology, according to Vater, is visible in two interrelated aspects: first, the use of second-person narration, in which the art history professor Teodoro dialogues with himself as a form of self-

manager; and second, when Teodoro's emotions, feelings of being overworked and undervalued, are equated to effects that can be regulated to maximize productivity. In both instances, the system that exploits the professor's labor is not addressed.

Vater's main interest is to analyze the strategies, mechanisms, and signification that literature uses to reflect (on) dominant neoliberal practices, within the context of the neoliberalized Spanish university system. However, the manner in which the literary arts represent emotion, Vater argues, can sometimes reinforce instead of contest norms. In a metaliterary turn, as Teodoro writes his work on the early modern painter Diego Velázquez, the management or mismanagement of his emotions threatens to have dire professional consequences. To this end, Vater outlines an educational policy shift since 2001 towards more quantitative models of evaluation of academic labor and the systematization of standards within Spanish universities and across Europe. Within this transformed and corporatized academic system, a neoliberal focus on competition, maximization, and increased speed of production is championed, dehumanizing both faculty and students. It is in this context that the campus novel appears, populated by humanities professors as protagonists, often depicted as incompetent and committed to worthless work. However, Vater contends, Ortiz's novel stands apart from other Spanish and English campus novels. Published before the 2008 financial crisis, *Las manos de Velázquez* nonetheless foreshadows some of the conditions of precarity that would come to define the genre after 2010.

Through perceptive close reading, the author illustrates how this precarity manifests in the novel, resulting in the protagonist's constant state of anxiety shaped by the anticipation of recurrent losses and deficiency in productivity. Vater defines Teodoro's use of self-talk as the interiorization of self-disciplining, achieved via the narrative technique of second-person voice. As the novel progresses, the toll of surviving self-optimizing academia morphs from emotional stress to physical illness, a reprieve from work. Nonetheless, Teodoro will sacrifice even love in his pursuit of value, resulting in a dramatic scene where Vater finds the collapse of all control built through years of academic work dependent on disciplined emotions. Despite this emotional outburst, testament to his humanity, Vater sees a scripted narrative that aligns with dominant neoliberal economic practices. Personal and professional shame and isolation prevail in Teodoro's final break with norms: he is a self-made failure. For readers of the novel, and for Vater, the conclusion is clear: there is no room for emotions in the neoliberal logic of academia.

One of the effects of neoliberalism, or the liquid stage of capitalism, is the awareness of permanent crisis, the perception of continuously going

through an especially tough time that Neil Davidson calls “permanent exception” (633). In Spain, some of the post-2008 art and literature has aimed to show not only the links between the economic collapse and the increasing neoliberalization of the country, but also the systemic problems. These, following various political, social, and economic crises, such as the failed attempts to form coalition governments starting in 2016, the Catalan conflict of 2017-19, or the devastating impact of anti-COVID measures, have normalized the feeling of living in a nonstop state crisis and instability. It is clear who profits from this. The global economic crisis marked, in fact, the beginning of a new stage of neoliberalization in Spain. Instead of reflecting on and questioning the economic and social policies that had caused the collapse, the crisis led to the introduction of austerity measures that worsened deregulation, privatization, precariousness, and inequality. Even worse than the tolerance for this constant deterioration of living standards is that most people have normalized a neoliberal mindset, characterized by its ability to present itself as common sense. Individuals see themselves as companies, dedicating all their energy to increasing their market value, experiencing feelings of isolation, constant speed and movement as natural, and placing the ideology of consumer choice at the center.

The issue’s final article, Olga Bezhanova’s “Resistir el neoliberalismo: Daniel Gascón y Ana Iris Simón,” considers the pedagogical and political utility of disaster, engaging with the ways two recent commercially successful novels by young authors, Daniel Gascón in *Un hipster en la España vacía* (2020) and Ana Iris Simón in *Feria* (2020), explore the possibilities of resisting the neoliberalization not only of the economy but also of our affective, moral, and symbolic engagements. Paradoxically, both novels associate neoliberalism with progressive logics created in the English-speaking world (what Nancy Fraser calls “progressive neoliberalism”), characterized by the use of a progressive agenda to impose a neoliberal economic, political, and cultural hegemony. The novels also see the nation as a useful frame to resist the neoliberal mentality and problematize the concept of progress that presents economic and social wounds as the result of an inevitable march of history towards an ever-better future, becoming a vehicle for promoting the interests of global capital and Anglo-Saxon cultural expansionism. Appealing instead to concepts such as collectivity, stability, certainty, and rootedness, these novels set in the countryside raise awareness of the artificiality and ideological nature of neoliberal approaches. They question the positive associations of concepts like individualism, fragmentation, mobility, fluidity, and change and even problematize the late capitalism’s use of discourses such as cultural diversity to justify the exploitation of immigrants.

In his novel, Gascón uses humor to unveil the inconsistencies of progressive neoliberalism through the narration of the cultural clash experienced by the Anglicized, leftist, and urban Enrique when he moves to his family's village in "La España vacía." The inhabitants, being less neoliberalized and having a greater sense of community, stability, a cyclical sense of time, and a connection to the natural environment, contrast with Enrique's attempt to "civilize" them by reproducing the ideological virtue discourse generated in the English-speaking world. Such discourse is exported as support for neoliberal policies. It is easier to justify the economic devastation created by neoliberal deregulation in rural or post-industrial environments if some members of the left convince themselves that their inhabitants are morally inferior "savages" plagued by patriarchal sexism, racism, and xenophobia. On the other hand, in *Feria*, Simón recovers the smells, flavors, and sounds of the culture that was suppressed or concealed to consolidate Spain's entry into the European Union and post-modern global homogenization. Small villages life is presented positively, not to indulge in nostalgia for what is lost, but as an invitation to contemplate the abjection created by the flows of international capital and to argue that the countryside still has much to offer to young people. Simón proposes an alternative worldview that questions ideas such as precarious existence, detachment from local and family ties (with stable family life becoming a class privilege), the abandonment of memories and human reproduction, and the pursuit of ephemeral relationships and experiences. These are seen as useful to the unlimited reproduction of capital and are critically presented as the only means to guarantee human freedom — now reduced to mere availability for poorly paid, unstable jobs wherever they may arise, and without rights.

According to Bezhanova, novels like *Un hipster* and *Feria* propose that the neoliberal economic order cannot be challenged without first subverting its symbolic dimension and they promote this within the artistic and intellectual frame of literature. Literature becomes a contested space that, with the evolution of its protagonists, envisions the possibility of change as well as the need for new alternatives to the neoliberal worldview that can preserve the welfare state and collective, familial, and national community ties, but way different from the anti-neoliberal claims of the far-right or national conservatism.

By bringing together contributions that consider the latest theoretical and methodological developments in the study of literature and economics through detailed case studies embedded in the particularities of Spain and beyond, this special issue will appeal not only to Hispanists and other literary and cultural critics but also to economists, economic historians and economic anthropologists. From the perspective of the history of ideas and

by crossing fixed disciplinary borders, the dialogue of economic studies with literature and literary studies helps discover the underlying cultural currents that run parallel in both. This interdisciplinary dialogue was further fomented through the *Asociación Canadiense de Hispanistas* conference (June 2022) held via hybrid format in Toronto, Canada. Most of the authors featured in this volume participated in the two panels we organized, which served as an opportunity to further critical exchange. We would like to express our deep gratitude to the scholars who took part in this fruitful event: Diana Arbaiza, Olga Bezhanova, Inma Ridao Carlini, Katie J. Vater, and Pablo Valdivia. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the *Canadian Association of Hispanists* and to Odile Cisneros, editor in chief of the *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, for their generous support for the symposium, and to the Faculty of Arts of the University of British Columbia (UBC Scholarly Publication Fund) for their financial grant to aid in this publication.

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NOTES

- 1 Morson and Schapiro are among the later proponents of using literature to re-humanize economics ("humanomics") and restore its moral foundations, arguing that a closer consideration of human complexities can help economists make better policy decisions and predictions.
- 2 "The psychological effects of popular culture (which Keynes still viewed as predominantly textual) were translated rapidly into financial markets by readers who were also consumers and investors, and thereafter into politics and policymaking, which were increasingly sensitive to economic conditions" (Chihara and Seybold 2).
- 3 See *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Finance Studies*.
- 4 See Epstein, Pinto, Turner, Godden.
- 5 Murphy, McAdams.
- 6 Purdy, Vitullo and Wolfthal, Galloway, Robertson, Younkins.
- 7 Howard and Shershow, Peyser.
- 8 See Link, Gray.
- 9 Halpern, Porter.
- 10 Woodbridge.
- 11 Álvarez Vázquez, Galindo Martín y G. Maestro, Ridao Carlini, Martín Martín.
- 12 Duggan, Brewer, Highfill, O'Dwyer.
- 13 Gaylord, Cruz, Álvarez Moreno, Christoph Strosetzki.
- 14 Pinet (*The Task of the Cleric*), Martín Rodríguez, Bezhanova.

- 15 Admittedly, our selection, which combines studies in English and Spanish, tries to be illustrative not comprehensive. Despite challenging previous historical constraints and expanding fairly the critical scope, we are fully aware that a more far-reaching project (e.g., including Latin America, a wider range of genres and works) would have required several volumes and we were constrained by the journal's length and the availability of studies and contributors.

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