

PASSIONATE PROFESSING:
THE CONTEXT AND PRACTICE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

Colección: ESTUDIOS LITERARIOS ANGLO-GERMÁNICOS

Director

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Catedrático de Filología Inglesa. Universidad de Jaén

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**PASSIONATE PROFESSING:
THE CONTEXT AND PRACTICE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

Sara Martín Alegre



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editorial@ujaen.es



editorial.ujaen.es

CUBIERTA

José Miguel Blanco. www.blancowhite.net

MAQUETACIÓN

Virginia Alcántara

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PREFACE

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

The volume in the hands of the reader is a hybrid academic text born of the marriage of two very different publications. In 2014 I revised the report (or ‘memoria’) which I wrote for the state examination for tenure (or ‘oposición’) which I passed in October 2002. I called the revised text *Enseñar Literatura Inglesa* and published it online at the digital repository of my university, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), where it is still available (see <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/122988>). The first part of the present volume is a self-translation into English of part of that volume, updated with new bibliography and information. The second consists of a selection of almost 100 posts from my blog *The Joys of Teaching Literature* (<https://webs.uab.cat/saramartinalegre/blog/>). I have been writing this blog since September 2010 and have published so far more than 600 posts, also gathered in thirteen yearly e-books (see <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/116328>). The posts selected cover from the beginning of the blog to September 2020, its tenth anniversary. I decided to finish the selection with a post on the impact of Covid-19, under which we are still operating three years later, because it is obvious that this is a turning point for the whole world that has also deeply affected the university.

Although in the blog I write about matters that connect with my teaching, my research, and anything else that catches my attention as a

consumer of culture, here I have focused on the posts connected with the issues I raise in the first part, dealing with the context and the practice of English Literature in Spain. Neither the first nor the second part should be read as a pedagogical text but as a reflection on the reasons why my colleagues in Spain and I myself teach English Literature as we do. This volume should be understood as an example of the Cultural Studies I practice, as it is my main aim here to consider the ideological and material circumstances under which English Literature is taught, researched, and studied in Spain. The tone may vary from the first to the second part, but as the reader will see I am writing from the same rigorous academic perspective in both cases. Logically, the blog section is less formal, but not less informed or informative.

My deepest thanks to Jesús López-Peláez Casellas for having suggested that I write this book, and how it should be organized. His proposal came a few weeks before the devastating cyberattack against UAB on 11 October 2021, which deprived us of digital resources for a long time and caused my blog to be silenced for almost four months. During those months offline, in which I continued writing for as long as I managed, the idea of the book kept me going. Luckily, nothing was lost and the blog resumed on 21 February 2022. The cyberattack was an important lesson on the fragility of digital media, whereas, as we know, books have been around now for centuries in basically the same format. What matters, in any case, is that we keep on reading in whatever format, in English and in any other language —with passion.

Sara Martín Alegre
Barcelona, June 2023
Sara.Martin@uab.cat

GLOSSARY

AEDEAN Asociación Nacional de Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos (English and American Studies National Association). The main Spanish association in this area of knowledge, with about 1500 members.

ANECA Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (National Agency for the Assesment of Quality and Accreditation). The agency, created in 2001, issues the diverse certificates allowing individuals with doctoral degrees to apply for full-time university teaching positions in Spain, from four-year temporary contracts to full professorships.

Bachillerato (Senior High School). The two-year course Spanish students must take between the ages of 16 and 18, after compulsory secondary education (ESO, see below), to access any university degree. Bachillerato was introduced in 1996-97, replacing BUP and COU (see below).

BOE Boletín Oficial del Estado (State Official Newsletter). The daily publication which officialises newly passed legislation, appointments, and other matters related to the running of the Spanish State.

Bologna, Bologna Agreement, and Bologna Process. This refers to the agreement signed in 1999 in this Italian city by which twenty-nine European countries constituted the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) to unify as far as possible the running of this segment of education in Europe, in order to benefit both students and staff. Twenty more countries have

joined EHEA so far. The adoption of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System, see below) helped to increase student mobility by establishing a workload measurement all universities could adopt.

BUP Bachillerato Unificado Polivalente (Unified Polyvalent Senior High School). The secondary school system (running from 1975-76 to 2000-01), replaced by ESO (see below). Students used to follow BUP studies between the ages of 14 and 17. Those who wished to attend university needed to take COU, Curso de Orientación Universitaria (University Orientation Course). Like BUP, COU was implemented in 1975-76 and extinguished in 2000-01, replaced by the new Bachillerato.

ECTS European Credit Transfer System. The credit system used by most European universities since 1989 (it was originally introduced to facilitate the international student exchange Erasmus programme). One ECTS consists of 150 working hours (for the student), subdivided into classroom interaction, supervised work, and autonomous study. Most European BA degrees run to three years and 180 ECTS, followed by a 120 ECTS Master's Degree programme lasting two years. In Spain, however, most undergraduate courses run to four years (240 ECTS) followed by 60 ECTS one-year Master's degrees.

ESO Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (Secondary Compulsory Education). The secondary-school system implemented since 1996-97 which replaces the last stages of the former EGB (Educación General Básica or Basic General Education, ages 6 to 14) and the former BUP (Bachillerato Unificado Polivalente, ages 14 to 17). Students take ESO between the ages of 12 and 16, after which they may proceed to study the two-year Bachillerato (the equivalent of senior high school), which is mandatory to enter any university degree.

Grado (Degree). The general name for undergraduate university studies, corresponding to the BA or similar. Most Grados consist in Spain of 240 ECTS taken along four years.

Licenciatura (University Undergraduate Degree). Licenciatura may refer to the old-style five year undergraduate degree (subdivided into a three-year first cycle and a two-year advanced cycle), or, after 1990, to the four-year

Licenciatura with no subdivisions. This was replaced in 1998 by the four-year ECTS-based Grado (BA Degree).

LOGSE Ley Orgánica General del Sistema Educativo (General Organic Law of the Educational System). This law, passed in 1990, introduced ESO and Bachillerato replacing the former EGB, BUP, and COU. LOGSE has been followed by LOE (Ley Orgánica de Educación, or Organic Law of Education) in 2006 and LOMLOE (in 2020), which modify LOGSE's contents without altering substantially the structure of secondary education.

LOMCE Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (Organic Law for the improvement of Education). This law, known as the Decreto Wert (or Wert Decree) after the Minister of Education who authored it, was passed in 2013 with the intention of reforming LOGSE (see above) but also university education. Many of its controversial provisions have never been implemented. LOMCE was replaced in 2021 by LOMLOE.

UAB Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. A campus university, established in 1968, about 25 kilometres away from downtown Barcelona. Not to be confused with the Universitat de Barcelona (UB), or, for that matter with the other UAB, the University of Alabama at Birmingham.