

**On Cultural Diversity:
Britain and North America**

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

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Although the Spanish university is currently in a state of transition, moving as it is towards the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the English studies area at the University of the Balearic Islands has been in recent years a particularly active one, contributing to this institution's dynamism with numerous projects and activities. This volume is the result of one of such projects, initiated after the creation in 2005 of the research group "The expression of diversity in the English-speaking world". With twelve members who make a representative sample of the different fields within English studies –synchronic and historical linguistics, contemporary literature, women's and cultural studies–, the group originated from a common desire to join forces and promote research on issues of diversity in English-speaking contexts, a topic in which we had all been interested individually in our previous research. The understanding of the concept of diversity in a broad sense not only allowed us to articulate our individual findings as part of a greater, multifaceted whole, with the subsequent enrichment this meant. It also gave us a wonderful opportunity to provide further evidence of the limitations of disciplinary knowledge in today's world and, as a consequence, defy the traditional division into linguistic and literary areas within English studies.

1. J. I. Prieto Arranz gratefully acknowledges funding from the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (COLE Project [HUM2007-66053-C02-02/FILO]), which has contributed to the successful completion of his editorial work.

Our research group, although still in the process of maximising its potential due to its recent creation, has so far been responsible for the organisation at the University of the Balearic Islands of lectures and seminars by specialised visiting scholars, as well as the coordination of a summer course for the last five years whose more than favourable reception among students surpassed our initial expectations and contributed to its continuity. In fact, participating in this yearly summer course is a task most of our research group members delight in, since it is one of those rare occasions for both faculty and students to leave the standard classroom atmosphere behind and to enter a new, rather informal space in which students can become acquainted with their lecturers' research interests.

This volume is based on the contributions made to that first summer course, in which the now editors teamed up as coordinators, a task performed by fellow group members in subsequent editions. Held at the university's historical building *Sa Riera* in July 2005, and with the same title as that of our research group—since one of its aims was to make the group known to Majorcan intellectual life—the course was designed to bring students and society in general closer to the fascinating complexity of the English-speaking world (henceforth ESW), of special relevance in the Balearics given its important presence in recent decades as a result of the tourist industry.

However, we soon understood that trying to cover as much as possible of the ESW in five days could only have resulted in a scarcely coherent, largely superficial course, so we decided to limit the scope of this first edition to two geographical areas: Great Britain, as the source and origin of the ESW, and North America, a term which includes both Canada and the United States, today perhaps the most visible and influential English-speaking area in the world. This served a twofold purpose: on the one hand, it gave us the opportunity to focus in sufficient depth on specific issues concerning the areas chosen, while at the same time it allowed us to leave topics relating to other territories for later editions. In the different sessions the participants—some of them visitors from other universities who kindly accepted our invitation—approached a wealth of cultural, linguistic and literary issues whose interesting connections gave room to reflection and insightful debates.

It was the high academic quality of this first summer course, added to the enthusiastic response of students to the topics proposed, that led not only to its perpetuation in time through subsequent editions but also, as we have already stated, to the idea of compiling a volume that could somehow capture its spirit. The papers contained here, therefore, originate in the sessions held by their authors in the 2005 course, although these are not just mere transcriptions of such sessions but constitute fully reworked articles in which the authors have tried to bring the complex and highly specific realm of English studies to the broadest possible readership without renouncing the rigour expected of academic publications. Additionally, it must be noted that not all speakers in the course are represented in this volume, a fact which is not due to selection or editorial criteria but to purely practical reasons related to the busy schedule of the participants. Still, the volume manages to encapsulate the essence of the course through a wide enough range of thought-provoking, highly engaging essays on various social, linguistic, literary and, on the whole, cultural aspects of the English-speaking areas covered.

Indeed, language and culture can only be artificially separated, and their common existence as a continuum (what translation scholars fittingly refer to as “language-culture” –see e.g. Galisson 1990; Rialland-Addach 1995) is the very *raison d’être* of our research group and, ultimately, our summer courses. The volume illustrates this language-culture continuum so that the reader can imagine the huge possibilities of combined research initiatives with a wider scope. This can be observed, firstly, in the structure of the volume, and secondly, in the good number of cross-references inviting the reader to complement one paper with the perspective provided by an apparently different one. After careful consideration, the nine articles of the volume have been ordered to emphasise the smooth transition from the mainly linguistic to the mostly cultural and literary. Thus, articles by López Rúa, Prieto Arranz, Amengual Pizarro and Suárez Gómez offer a fascinating insight into key features that characterise English as spoken in the areas noted. The order in which the articles are presented is perhaps the product of the least arbitrary decision the editors had to take. Each article deals with a different linguistic field, although they are all intimately