



RELY: "Re-orienting Assemblage Theory in Anglophone Literature and Culture"
(PID2022-137881NB-I00)



CALL FOR PAPERS (CFP)

The Poetics and Politics of Literary Assemblages in the Anglosphere An International Conference

University of Málaga (18-20 May 2026)

The Research Project "Re-Orienting Assemblage Theory in Anglophone Literature and Culture (RELY)" (PID2022-137881NB-I00) is pleased to announce its International Conference on the "Poetics and Politics of Literary Assemblages in the Anglosphere", to be held at the University of Málaga from 18th to 20th May 2026.

Ever since the publication of Deleuze and Guattari's seminal *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the concept of assemblage has received wide attention, mainly due to its protean ability to challenge, disrupt and question received societal and cultural mores anchored in tradition and in linear perceptions of reality. However, this conference aims to re-evaluate the impact and potentialities that assembled thinking has to offer to 21st-century literary practices. This reassessment coincides with what we perceive as a renewed critical interest in the indeterminate and versatile philosophical notion of *assemblage*. This resurgence may be understood as a response to the messy, fluid, and multidirectional realities of contemporary social life. Bill Brown has recently observed that "[w]e live in the Assemblage Era" (288), a cultural moment defined by (digital) reassembling as a practice of accumulation. Despite Deleuze and Guattari's foundational articulation of assemblage as *agencement*, there remains, as Rosanne Kennedy et al. note, "a general resistance evident within the literature to providing a concrete understanding of assemblage" (47). Following Ben Anderson and Colin McFarlane, we contend that assemblage is most productively conceptualised as open-ended and generative, and that its theoretical malleability ought to be embraced rather than constrained (126). This orientation invites us to explore the creative methodological possibilities that emerge when we 'think with assemblages'. Originating as a philosophical construct in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), the concept has, as Ian Buchanan argues, evolved into a global theory, though in the process it has "drifted along the way from its origins" (*Assemblage* 155). Such drift has opened space for relational approaches that reconceptualise ecological, material, and spatiotemporal knowledge not as discrete units but as dynamic, collaborative configurations. To think with assemblage, therefore, is to engage with entanglements as shifting constellations of relations, systems, and interdependencies. Relational approaches such as Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (2005), Karen Barad's intra-action (2007), Jane Bennett's vital materialism (2010), or Stacy Alaimo's transcorporeality (2014) all gesture towards this orientation, and together they reframe assemblages as a rightful metaphor to attend to the ever-changing webs of forces, agencies, and flows that transform and sustain life.



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The way in which assemblages foreground catalytic and complex interactions opens new lines of research and interests into central aspects of literary and cultural analysis (McHugh 1). Narratives and assemblages intersect in particularly generative ways. While assemblages emphasise relationality, contingency, distributed agency, and the non-linear organisation of social, material, and temporal realities, narratives provide a specifically grounded and representational framework through which these shifting constellations can be rendered intelligible. In this sense, narrative theory offers tools for further elaborating the processes through which assemblages are composed and decomposed, thereby addressing some of the critical "silences and absences" of assemblage theory (Anderson et al. 212). As Ian McHugh observes, "the narratives that emerge from/within a social assemblage, both fiction and non-fiction, can help to illuminate changes that may be obscured by structural continuity and the tensions that emerge in processes of change" (2). Attending a narrative through the lens of assemblage thus allows us to perceive social, cultural, and ecological transformation as emergent, multi-voiced, and always in process.

This Conference therefore seeks to engage with assemblage in literary and cultural works through multiple perspectives, including temporal assemblages and assemblages of memory; assemblages of matter and sensorial assemblages; (inter)human assemblages and assemblages of health; spatial assemblages; and textual assemblages. A crucial dimension of our approach is the emphasis on care as a connective principle within assemblages. Care, which since Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982) has attracted the attention of feminist criticism, ethics, political theory, disability and health humanities, among others, as seen in Joan Tronto, Eva Feder Kittay and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, highlights the interdependencies that sustain life (human and more-than-human alike) and foregrounds the ethical responsibilities that emerge from these interconnections. To think about assemblages through the lens of care is to resist models that privilege autonomy or discrete entities, and instead to recognise vulnerability, reciprocity, and maintenance as central forces within cultural, social, and ecological systems. If, as Israel Rodríguez-Giralt et al. suggest, "the language of care is an invitation to *think with* the collectives and issues we work with" (5-6), literature (literary assemblages) contributes to reflecting, projecting, and shaping that "substrate" for human and non-human co-existence to be possible through interlocked ecologies/systems of care. In this way, care is the major connective thread across the four main clusters that we present here, transversally connecting literary and cultural renderings of ecologies, embodiment, representation, and temporalities.

Taking all this into consideration, we invite interested scholars to submit theoretical reflections, case studies, comparative analyses, and other contributions. We welcome proposals from researchers at all career stages. Please submit your proposal to the organising committee at literaryassemblage@gmail.com by **19 January 2026**. Each proposal will include the title, an abstract of up to 300 words, plus a short bio note.

We particularly encourage contributions that foreground interdisciplinary approaches, theoretical innovation, and comparative perspectives. Proposals may focus on, but are not limited to, the following topics:



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- Reassembling Temporalities, Spaces, and Borders:
 - Victorian and neo-Victorian studies: Victorian modes of assemblages, and reassembling the 19th century in contemporary literary and cultural production.
 - Border and Migration studies: shifting assemblages of place, temporal dislocation and displacement.
 - Gothic and Horror studies: spectral assemblages, the persistence of the past, temporal hauntings.
 - Crossing borders, crossing genres: textual and material assemblages, layered landscapes, and literary geographies.
- Ecologies and Entanglements in More-than-Human Worlds:
 - Posthumanism, Critical Posthumanities, New Materialisms: entangled agencies in more-than-human assemblages, matter and dynamic assemblages.
 - Environmental Humanities, Ecocriticism, Animal studies, Critical Plant Studies: climate imaginaries, multispecies assemblages and ethics, Anthropocene and temporal entanglements, ecological precarity, environmental systems of care.
- Bodies, Minds, and Medical Humanities:
 - Biopolitics and Medical Humanities: assemblages of health and care, cultural narratives of illness, vulnerability, temporal assemblages of ageing, resilience.
 - Affect studies: affective assemblages of body, mind, and world, cognitive and sensorial assemblages.
 - Disability studies: reconfigured embodied assemblages.
- Identity, Intersectionality, and the Politics of Representation:
 - Gender studies and intersectionality: classed, racialised, gendered assemblages of power, and belonging, with a special emphasis on social exclusion.
 - Queer studies: non-normative assemblages of desire, embodiment, and identity.
 - Postcolonial and decolonial studies: reconfigured identities, diasporic relationality, and kinship in assemblages of empire and resistance.
 - Assembling selves and life writing: collective identity, testimony, and activism.

Works Cited:



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Buchanan, Ian. *Assemblage Theory and Method*. Bloomsbury, 2020.

Kennedy, Rosanne, et al. "All Those Little Machines: Assemblage as Transformative Theory." *Australian Humanities Review*, no. 55, 2013, pp. 45–66.

McHugh, Ian. "The Narrative of Assemblage (and the Assemblage of Narrative)." *TEXT* Special Issue, no. 51, 2018, pp. 1–13.

Rodríguez-Giralt et al., eds. *Reassembling Activism, Activating Assemblages*. Routledge, 2020.

Confirmed plenary speakers:

John McLeod (University of Leeds)

Margarita Estévez Saá (University of Santiago de Compostela)

Xavier Aldana Reyes (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Co-chairs:

Professor Rosario Arias

Dr. María Magdalena Flores Quesada

Project website: <https://literaryassemblage.com/>



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