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What’s on my desk? Many books, because teaching is a passion of mine, and I am closing the books on the seminar I just taught, preparing for my undergraduate class on The End of the World for the Spring (always the optimist!), and thinking about what courses I will teach in the near future. There are so many courses I want to teach! Courses that deal with issues that concern me, not only as a professional or as a professor, or as a scholar, because I am also a scholar —they also concern me as a person fully involved in this life in this world. Teaching is entering in a serious conversation with as many ideas and perspectives as students in the classroom: they are there because they want to learn, to think together, to delve further, to do research, and to generate knowledge from the vantage point they occupy in this world.

The last three years of life under pandemic and sort-of-post-pandemic have taught us that our world can change very quickly, but that our understanding of these changes will take time, care, and more research. Our students in Spanish and Portuguese have taught us the specific moments of those important changes, and are helping us, teachers, to formulate with them the right questions, so that our academic life continues being relevant.

This work of solidarity requires attention and care, and I am proud to be part of a department where all the faculty, all the graduate students, and all the members of the staff are champions of attention and care. This newsletter, with the meaningful name of Acentos, is an expression of the work we do, but also of the care we give, the commitments we have, the generosity you all —my colleagues, my coworkers— show.

Jesús Velasco
What a semester it has been. I joined Yale in July of 2022 as the new Language Program Director (LPD). Since then, I have assumed the challenging yet extremely joyous responsibility of leading the continuous efforts of the Spanish language program to align our instruction with theoretically informed and evidence-based understandings of second language acquisition and second language pedagogy. I am not alone in this pursuit: I am alongside an extraordinary team of lectors whose contributions to the University and to the field of language pedagogy are made evident in the numerous publications and presentations showcased in this newsletter. I am thrilled that my academic trajectory has given me the opportunity to work with these colleagues at Yale, where I already feel at home.

As LPD, my main objective is making sure that our most important stakeholders, our students, have a compelling, engaging, and productive language learning experience. To that end, all lectors and I have been having ongoing conversations about how to make our program even better. We have already envisioned and even acted upon specific steps to gather quantitative and qualitative data in order to better understand our students’ linguistic and literacy needs. What is more, this knowledge that we are beginning to accrue (e.g., surveys) will surely bring about changes and innovation to our program in the next few years, changes and innovation that will position us at the forefront of Spanish language instruction in the country. Such confidence in our Spanish language program is not gratuitous but is instead based on the energy and dedication of the many language faculty members whose expertise encompasses an impressive wealth of knowledge in (critical) applied linguistics, literature, cultural studies, and much more.

It has been an incredibly productive and successful semester, particularly if we consider that I am still learning the Yale way of doing things. This success, however, would not have been possible without the collaborative nature of my colleagues: guiding me from the very beginning were the Chair, Jesús Velasco, and one of the former co-LPDs, Luna Nájera. Without their help and support, the learning curve would have been much steeper. Thanks to them, I have been able to get onboarding in a seamless fashion. Along the way, I have also experienced the unwavering support, in one way or another, of all other instructional faculty members and administrative personnel. Special thanks go to our wonderful course coordinators: María Vázquez (SPAN 110), Pilar Asensio-Manrique (SPAN 120), Carolina Baffi (SPAN 130), and Giseli Tordin (SPAN 140).

Jorge Méndez-Seijas
DEPARTMENT NEWS
On November 8 and November 29, Jesús Velasco and Christine Mullen hosted a communal lunch for the entire Department at HQ. The luncheons, which were well attended, were just a few among many other departmental events that offered opportunities for building our sense of community. Thank you, Jesús and Christine, for fostering a sense of belonging for all program members!

NEW AND VISITING FACULTY
Martina Broner, Visiting Assistant Professor
Alex Gil, Senior Lecturer II and Associate Research Faculty of Digital Humanities
Nicholas R. Jones, Assistant Professor
Jorge Méndez-Seijas, Senior Lector II, Associate Research Scholar, and Spanish Language Program Director
Noelia Sánchez-Walker, Lector in Spanish

PORTUGUESE FULLBRIGHT FLTAS
Thais Abreu Vianna
Laura Araujo

Program News
Starting with the spring 2023 semester, Borders and Globalization in Hispanophone Cultures (SPAN 228), a new fifth-semester Spanish language course designed and taught by Luna Nájera, will be cross listed in the Ethnicity, Race, and Migration program course offerings (ER&M 278).

In the fall, Sarah Glenski initiated the Contemplation and Discussion of Nature in Spanish series, which met on Wednesday mornings from 8-9am on Cross Campus.

Margherita Tortora organized the Latino and Iberian Film Festival. Thank you, Margherita, for your amazing work!

Recognition
Sterling Professor (emerita) Rolena Adorno has just received a Dottorato Honoris Causa at the University of Rome 1, La Sapienza, in an act that took place on November 15th in Rome. The event was introduced by the Magnifica Rettrice, or President of the University, Antonella Polimeni, followed by a discourse from the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, Arianna Punzi, and an elogio of Professor Adorno by Professor Stefan Tedeschi. Professor Adorno herself presented her research on "Un mappamondo del Nuovo Mondo". This is an extraordinary honor for La Sapienza, as they now can count Professor Adorno among their most distinguished Professors.

Way to go, Mercedes Carreras, for earning the 2022 Choice Critics award from Wiley for providing high quality reviews and feedback on papers submitted to ASME Association for the Study of Medical Education.

Great job, Ximena González-Parada for obtaining a grant from The Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies (CLAIS) at The MacMillan Center to bring speaker Arelis Uribe. Felicidades for receiving the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging grant from Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning to bring speaker Arelis Uribe.

Congratulations to our Spanish major Henry Large, for being awarded the Rhodes Scholarship! The Rhodes Scholarship is a fully funded, full time, postgraduate award that enables talented young people from around the world to study at the University of Oxford.

Applying for the Scholarship is a challenge, but it is an experience that has helped generations of young people to succeed. Rhodes Scholars go to the UK for two or more years and can apply to study most full-time postgraduate courses offered by Oxford University. The Rhodes organization encourages applications from talented students everywhere.

Congratulations, Jorge Méndez-Seijas for:
• being recognized by the America Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) in their "spotlights." Every month, the AATSP “spotlights” one of its members in an attempt to recognize the many ways in which they promote the study and teaching of Spanish and/or Portuguese at all levels of education.
• receiving the 2022 American Association of University Supervisors, Coordinators, and Directors of Language Programs (AAUSC) Excellence in Language Program Direction Award.
• earning a certificate of teaching excellence for the 2022 spring semester. (Each semester, the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard awards certificates of excellence based on overall evaluation scores of >4.5/5 (Harvard University).

Congratulations to Noël Valis, for being elected to a three-year term in the MLA Delegate Assembly (2022–2025) and for being elected President of the Asociación Internacional de Galdosistas (2021-2023)!

ACENTOS | FALL 2022
During the Fall of 2022, the Department of Spanish & Portuguese was proud to host a series of guest speakers, workshops and colloquia. These events illustrate the range of topics, methods and disciplines that our department is home to. Below is a partial list of the exciting programming we were able to bring to Yale this semester.

Fall 2022, Wednesdays | Contemplation and discussion of nature in Spanish organized by Sarah Glenski.
September 9 | Annual Inaugural Lecture and Luncheon. Nicholas R. Jones, “Mastering Blackness and Intimacy in María de Zayas y Sotomayor"
September 29 | Emanuele Coccia, "Loving the planet: How to turn ecology into planetary erotics."
October 10 | Lauren Tilton, "Photogrammar: Then and Now"
October 10 | A Reading of “America” and a Conversation with Fernando Valverde and Carolyn Forché
October 13 | Digital Humanities Colloquium “Transkribus Workshop”
October 13, 18 | Carlos Heusch, “Theory and Literary Practices in the Iberian Middle Ages: The Age of Don Juan Manuel”
November 1 | Kinitra D. Brooks, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"
November 1 | A Celebration of Jesús Velasco’s Microliteraturas
November 8–9 | Javier Espada, Film Director of “Buñuel: A Surrealist Filmmaker”
November 8 | Héctor Linares, “Pushing the Limits of Race in Early Modern Iberia”
November 9 | Koichi Hagimoto, “Asians in Latin America: History, Literature and Culture”
**PUBLICATIONS**


—. [With Andrew Curran] "Diderot antecipou Darwin, atacou Deus e escravidão e inspirou Machado." Folha de S. Paulo, Ilustríssima (4 June 2022), C3-4.


**PRESENTATIONS**

Jackson, David


"Cannibal Angels and Cannibal Modernism." Bristol Autumn Art Lecture, Bristol UK, November 3, 2022

"Reflections on Brazil’s Semana de Arte Moderna on its Centennial: A Multidisciplinary Perspective." Brazilian Modernism at 100. UCSB, October 21, 2022.

"As aventuras de uma folha d’Os Lusíadas." Camões: A Global Poetry for All Seasons. UCSB, October 20

"Voyage into Being: Subliminal Poetics in The Lusiads." Keynote lecture. Navigating 450 Years of Os Lusíadas. Harvard University, October 15

"Hora H: Lançamento de Poesia-Crítica-Tradução." Casa das Rosas, São Paulo, August 19, 2022


Valis, Noël


"Don Quijote: Part II," Directed Studies Lecture, Humanities Program, Yale University, New Haven CT, Feb. 9, 2022.
**Pedagogy: Presentations & Training**

**Díaz, Sebastián**: Engaging Online Language Learners Through Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)/ 8 weeks. February-March

**García, Maripaz**: "Using virtual exchange to achieve ACTFL’s standards in the foreign language classroom." Presented at Mountain Interstate Foreign Language Conference. 10/20

**García, Maripaz**: "Including a virtual exchange experience in your foreign language course." Presented at Arizona State University AZCALL, 10/22

**Glenski, Sarah**: Completed the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning’s Faculty Teaching Academy program for new instructors at Yale, 08/22


**Méndez-Seijas, Jorge**: Panelist for the roundtable "Lengua y Educación". I Congreso Anual del Instituto Cervantes de Nueva York. New York, 06/27–07/01

**Méndez-Seijas, Jorge**: La enseñanza de la pronunciación en el aula de ELE. Observatorio Cervantes at Harvard University. Cambridge, Boston.

**Spino, L. & Méndez-Seijas, Jorge**: "Thinking criticality out loud: Advancing critical language awareness in the heritage classroom." AATSP, to be held on 07/9-12, Puerto Rico.

**Nájera, Luna**: "Circling Back, Moving Forward: Student Narratives about Goals and Learning Objectives." Presented at the Yale Center for Language Study Sharing Group, 12/05

**Nájera, Luna**: "Cultivating a Culture of Learning in the Curricular Renovation Process." Invited panelist at: "Program Direction: Challenges and Opportunities." American Association of University Supervisors, Coordinators, and Directors of Language Programs, 11/07

**Nájera, Luna**: In the Fall 2022 semester, Nájera participated in the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning’s Pedagogical Partner’s Program regarding the creation of Reading Environments: Nature, Culture, and Agency in Hispanophone Studies, a fifth-semester Spanish content-based language course that engages with issues related to global warming.

**Nájera, Luna**: Trained in Content-Based Language Instruction and Curriculum Development (1-week synchronous online institute), Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), 06/27–07/01


**Sánchez-Walker, N.**: "Panorama de nuevas latinidades y el panhispanismo en los Estados Unidos". HLXChange Hosted by Sybil Alexandrov (Yale) María Carreria (CSU,Long Beach) and Alejandro Lee (Santa Monica College) September 19, 2022.

**Vázquez, María M.**: "Multimodal Learning: An L1 Intercultural lesson on the topic of the family." Presented at the Yale Center for Language Study Sharing Group, 11/07
Collaborations

Alexandrov, Sybil. Co-organizer of and moderator for the following HLX (Heritage Language Exchange) events:
Lunes de latinidad:
• 09/19 Panorama de nuevas latinidades y el panhispanismo en los Estados Unidos (Our own Noelia Sánchez Walker was an invited panelist!)
• 09/26 National Teach Spanish Week: Pathways to a Career in Teaching
• 10/10 Critical Cultural and Language Awareness through the Arts
• 11/03 Making Space for Plurality and Inclusion in the Portuguese Language Classroom
• 11/10 Developing the Heritage Language: A Pleasant Path

Díaz, Sebastián. Member of the committee that organized the XI Jornadas de Iniciación a la investigación en Lengua y Literatura Hispánicas. Universidad Complutense, Madrid

Sabé, Lourdes. Partnership with the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú. Linguistic and cultural exchange program with SPAN 125 (Fall 2022)

Graduate Student Achievements

Esteban Crespo
Crespo published two essays in 2022: Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica and Granite and Rainbow: Travels in 20th- and 21st-Century Ecuador. He was awarded a Beinecke Research Fellowship (Spring 2022) and a MacMillan IDF (Fall 2022, Spring 2023). In the Fall he was invited to give lectures at Fordham University and the Yale Divinity School to talk about his current research—queer people in the early modern Iberian worlds. He also presented papers at two conferences (Rethinking the Renaissance Archive and Society for Textual Scholarship) and was respondent or chair at some other (Rethinking the Global Renaissance, Intersectionality in the Early Global World, Recovering Black Performance in Early Modern Iberia). As a newly appointed member of the Webinars Committee of the Renaissance Society of America, he collaborated in the organization of six highly attended professional development webinars, one of which he chaired. As a member of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee of the same learned society, he collaborated in putting together the Lightning Talks: Rethinking the Global Renaissance, one of which panels he chaired. With Yelsy Hernández Zamora, he co-convened the Yale informal talk series Renaissance Happy Hour (Spring 2022).

Sofía Masdeu Rocha
Masdeu Rocha presented "Nostalgia for a Beautiful and Hostile World: The Dichotomies in Camila Sosa Villada's (Trans) Literature" at the "Repair, Resistance, and Resilience in Latin America" PILAS (Postgraduates in Latin American Studies) conference at Cambridge University. She also contributed "El rock tibio es el santuario de los tímidos: Will Butler solista" to the literary criticism blog Afuera.

Orit Gugenheim Katz
In October, Orit presented at the Spanish and Portuguese Graduate Conference at Temple University on the topic of "Julio Cortázar's Exilic Literature: An Example of Political Action and Resilience."

Rafael Lemos, Craig Osterbrock and Gustavo Reis da Silva Louro
Lemos, Osterbrock and da Silva Louro published chapters in the volume Poesia-Crítica-Tradução, on the work of Brazilian concrete poet Haroldo de Campos. The book was co-organized by our very own Prof. K. David Jackson, along with Eduardo Jorge from the University of Zurich, and it was published by Peter Lange.
Global Connections at Yale
An Interview with Pilar Asensio-Manrique
by María Vázquez

In its commitment to offer students transformative learning experiences that promote global citizenship, and in response to Yale University’s Global Strategy and aspirations, for the past years, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, in collaboration with the Yale Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies, has successfully organized the Global Governance Debate. This cross-disciplinary and intercultural event brings together students from Yale University and the Universidad Católica de Valencia, Spain, to exchange ideas and discuss global issues and topics related to international relations and cooperation. Pilar Asensio-Manrique, Senior Lector of Spanish, is the debate creator and principal organizer.

María M. Vázquez: Can you tell us about what led to the formation of the debates? Why Global Governance?

Pilar Asensio-Manrique: As you know, 21st-century students are deeply interested in global issues and are very sensitive to cultural diversity. We also live in the digital age that allows us to connect with anyone more efficiently than ever. Yet media overload causes fragmented information that creates miscommunication. In response to this challenge and to promote global competencies in our language program, I created this initiative with two professors from Spain as part of our Yale Summer Study abroad program in Valencia (SPAN S242). Our YSS abroad program in Valencia fosters skills, habits, and attitudes that are multidisciplinary and global in concept while developing linguistic and intercultural communication among our students. The Global Governance Debates provide students with an authentic and real-world opportunity to connect and work alongside others to co-create global understanding through a collaborative engagement with peers. This year we celebrated the 5th GGD in March on campus and the 6th edition in June in Valencia, Spain. To positively impact students’ bonding, this year we mixed the teams to include members from each institution (Yale & UCV).

MV: What are some of the topics debated throughout these years? What other issues are you planning to discuss in future debates?

PA: The debates of 2019 considered the right to healthcare (3/29/2019, Yale) and the protection of migrants and refugees (6/20/2019, UCV). In 2020 I reached out to Yale Law School and the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies since the topic was about the protection and exploitation of the oceans. Ultimately, the covid-19 pandemic forced us to cancel though we did manage to coordinate a virtual event (6/26-27/2020, Yale) on the role of the World Health Organization. We had another GGD virtual interaction on the topic of globalization (2/26-27/2021, UCV). In 2022 we were able to have two in-person events: 1) Does democracy guarantee security and prosperity in times of global crisis? (3/31, Yale); and 2) about human rights protection (6/23, UCV). Debate topics vary but include issues of universal importance, such as human rights, gender and equity, economic and trade policies, migration, environmental policy and justice, climate change, and public health. These debates allow the students to put into practice their interpersonal competencies fostering their intercultural sensitivity.

MV: I understand that you collaborated with faculty from other departments and organizations to develop the debate. Can you speak about the process of collaborating and organizing such an event?

PA: The response to our initiative has always been positive, with an enthusiastic willingness for collaboration. We have collaborated with faculty from the Law School and School of Medicine at Yale and the University of Deusto in Spain, who have participated as judges and moderators during the debates alongside graduate and undergraduate students. In addition, we have received sponsorship from the Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies (CLAIS) from Yale MacMillan Center.
We also receive active undergraduate support from the Yale International Relations Association (YIRA) and the International Community at Yale Law School. Regarding the process of organizing the debates, the host institution is in charge of creating the poster and organizing the event, which, as we did this year, can be divided into two days. The host institution also reviews the rubric shared with the judges and the participants. I usually contact CLAIS in the fall to plan the spring event (end of March). Ideally, I select the topic in autumn, with the approval of the other two members of the GGD Board: Alberto Arrufat (International Law) and Rosa Currás (English). I then consider possible debate judges and moderators to set dates, reserve rooms, catering, etc. Even though our students show a great interest in participating, it is impossible to assemble the debate teams until early March. As you can understand, students have a workload that prevents them from focusing on debate preparation for a long period of time. The debates in Valencia have been part of a Spanish course, facilitating the preparation and collaboration between teams during the program’s five weeks duration.

MV: How has the reception been from students? How many students have participated each year? What is the student’s reaction after experiencing the debate?

PA: Yale students love challenges. They also like to engage and collaborate with others and are always willing to participate. However, in terms of getting our teams of debaters, I have to admit that it is a daunting task. As you can imagine, it is a lot to ask undergraduates to prepare for a debate in a short time on top of their workload for their classes. Notwithstanding, every year, we have been very fortunate to have three teams of 3 students (9 per university), totaling 18 participants in each event. Although exceptional, we have had students repeat their participation. In addition, this year, we combined the teams from both institutions, which was very fruitful from a linguistic and cultural point of view. By having to collaborate, differences in the way of thinking are appreciated, working as a team doing research and sharing documents, selecting which line of argument each one is going to develop, and leading. For students’ reactions regarding their experience, please see comments on CLAIS website.

MV: How has the GGD initiative become a transformative learning experience for students?

PA: The pedagogical benefits of using debate as an educational tool have been widely acknowledged. Besides developing students’ ability to research and analyze problems and think and listen critically, debating provides students with a deeper understanding of our society and the world. The GGD format requires each team to position themselves equally in defense and refutation of an argument, implying a quick and agile mental exercise in elocution. If, in addition to all that, students debate in a foreign language, the challenge is even more significant. Intercultural competence is strengthened through team interaction and participation, greeting and thanking the opponent’s observations with the appropriate look and gestures, disagreeing without hostile reactions, managing time, asking questions, and clarifying positions. The comments made by the judges to the debaters at the end of the debate made this a more practical and valuable experience for students. Some of our students have had debate experiences in High School. Still, for many others, it is the first time they have faced this challenge, which enriches them not only from a linguistic point of view but also from personal and professional growth for other academic pursuits and life more generally.

MV: How can other language programs and departments benefit from these global initiatives? Do you have any recommendations for initiatives and events that support international collaborations?

PA: Every department and language program should promote initiatives that promote international communication and collaboration, not just among students

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1 Global commons understood not only as "resource domains that do not fall within the jurisdiction of any one particular country, and to which all nations have access" (p. 3) but also as the common principles that enable "inclusive social development, inclusive economic development, environmental sustainability and peace and security" (p. 6). (UN System Task Team, 2013)
but among colleagues from other disciplines and universities. The department of Hindi, for instance, has a well-established debate course that culminates in an event. Its founder, Seema Khurana, kindly shared her insights and inspired me to develop a debate course in Spanish. In our language program, more than being part of the Summer Abroad Program course, we should offer our students a course that focuses on developing debate skills. I am in the process of creating a Global Issues Through Debate L5 course that will allow students to hone their Spanish while debating complex ideas and broaden their horizons beyond the college environment. The course I am proposing will culminate in students’ participation in our Global Governance Debate series. During the semester, we will explore practices of global governance with particular attention to how they are internalized by and impact communities in the Hispanic world. Students will enhance their linguistic skills through their interaction with texts and discussion with peers about the protection and exploitation of the global commons, analyzed from individual, local, and transnational perspectives. I hope the department and the administration accept my course proposal to soon offer the students in our language program this active and transformative learning experience.

MV: Thank you, Pilar, for your commitment to excellence and all the amazing work you do in organizing the GGD that helps our students gain confidence in their Spanish-speaking abilities while developing their own voice and understanding as global citizens of the world.
Attending to Ecological Scale
A Conversation with Martina Broner
by Luna Nájera
Martina Broner is an assistant professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Dartmouth College and a Visiting Assistant Professor at Yale in Fall 2022. Spanning film, photography, and digital media, her research sits at the intersection of Latin American cinema and media studies and the environmental humanities. Her book project focuses on the environmental crisis in the transnational Amazon rainforest and examines new media formats that emerge from entanglements between human and non-human entities. Broner was previously a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Film & Media Studies and the Program in Latin American, Latino, and Caribbean Studies at Dartmouth, and she co-founded the Amazonia Section of the Latin American Studies Association. She earned MFAs from Columbia University (Film) and New York University (Creative Writing in Spanish) and completed a PhD in Romance Studies at Cornell University.

Luna Nájera: Thank you for sharing your latest publication with me, which is entitled “Rethinking Format in the Amazon: Ecology and *El abrazo de la serpiente*.” I want to start by saying that I appreciate the approach you take to film, which is to attend to the text’s site of production as well as to its thematic aspects.

Martina Broner: Thank you, Luna. I approach film as a process that is always imbricated with location, and I study works produced in the Amazon to consider the reciprocity between their aesthetics and the forest. In my writing across film, photography, and digital media, I frame that reciprocity as a site to identify alternative ways of relating to the environment in the context of ongoing ecological devastation. To push against anthropocentricity, I address questions of both representation and production because these interconnected areas provide insight into how media simultaneously intervene in and are shaped by the forest.

LN: Before moving forward, I want to make sure that I'm clear on a concept that is central in your article. Format theory. Format theory refers to material specificity and does not necessarily refer only to the form of a text. So, for instance, by looking at the role of the forest in the film—the material specificity of the film, you look at the way in which the forest shapes the decision of how to film. Your contribution to format theory is to say let's broaden the scope of analysis to include the materiality of this other actor, this other non-human actor that is very much shaping the film. Is that correct?

MB: In the *El abrazo de la serpiente* article, as well as in my book project, *Forest Formats: Media and Environment in the Amazon*, I reconfigure format theory to account for ecological relationalities that constitute media. I build on sound studies scholar Jonathan Sterne’s articulation of format theory, which proposes format—through an analysis of the MP3—as a lens for attending to the material demands and affordances of media, as well as the practices, protocols, and infrastructures that shape it. I expand the scope of this kind of focus, which prioritizes careful contextualization and specificity, to include the non-human entities that participate in histories of media formats ranging from analog photography to multisensory virtual reality. For instance, in the case of *El abrazo de la serpiente*, as you mention, I think about the forest’s influence in the film. But with the ecological approach to format theory that I propose, what that means is asking how one particular entity in the forest, the Vaupés river in the department of the same name in the Southeastern Colombian Amazon, interacts with one particular media format, 35mm film.

In my book project, I read a series of media objects as the results of these interactions between human and other living entities in order to refraim media-making as a process that exceeds the human and that resists any separation of nature and culture.

LN: I see. You advance a theory of format that challenges anthropocentric understandings of media-making by tracing the agency of non-human entities in their entanglement with other entities, including other non-human entities, such as 35mm film. I have a question about your use of the notion of scale. In the article, you write that: “The stakes of attending to the ecological scale of format are therefore not restricted to the area of environmental criticism, nor are its consequences limited to the study of cinema.” When you mentioned scale, I thought of Anna Tsing’s *Mushroom at the End of the World*, where she discusses scalability in reference to capitalism, plantations, and the use of scalable research models in the social sciences, however I think that when you use the concept of "scale" you mean something else. Can you tell me more about how you're using it in your argument about format theory?

MB: I think of scale as points of entry into an image, as well as what allows us to acknowledge how and from where we look at such an image. For instance, I write about a Forensic Architecture project by Paulo Tavares that maps the destruction of the Waimiri Atroari people and land during the Brazilian dictatorship. In order to generate legal evidence to complement the testimony of elders about the close to 3,000 Waimiri Atroari who perished between the 1960s and 1980—
and whose bodies cannot serve as this evidence since they belong to the category of desaparecidos—Tavares turns to trees. He works at the scale of the canopy, processing satellite images to define the age of these trees and thus determine sites of former Waimiri Atroari villages. An awareness of scale in this example—and this is where format is most explicit—encompasses the technologies that allow for this forensic way of looking at this particular territory in the Amazon, a place where satellites are associated with histories of surveillance, nation-building, and neo-colonial violence. At the same time, Tavares’ project reminds us of the need to engage multiple scales to contest the erasure of Indigenous histories in the Amazon, as his ability to see also depends on testimonies from the Waimiri Atroari and access to photographic archives. So scale is about precision and understanding limitations, in regard both to access and the scope of one’s situated perspective.

LN: Wow, that’s amazing. You talk about the interviews you carry out as a method, so you’re continuing the process that had already begun with the negotiation and interactions in the film-producing process.

MB: That’s a nice way of thinking about it.

LN: So, it’s a method!

MB: Yes, I research histories of production through interviews for two reasons. First, it is a way to investigate the context of a given format and how a film or other media objects use it. And, second, it is a way to center media-making as a site for examining our relationship with other living entities. If, as I show in my work, entities in the Amazon including trees and rivers participate in creative processes like the making of a film, then the production of media provides a critical opportunity to redefine relationality. This, in turn, entails a responsibility for the makers of media and for scholars. My interviews aim to identify creative practices that acknowledge and even incorporate the participation of Amazonian non-human entities. But this is only one part of my method, which equally relies on closely reading media objects to understand aesthetics as interwoven with ecology.

LN: Listening to your response I’m reminded of Tsing’s discussion of storytelling as a non-scalable methodology and I think I see similarities with what you just discussed as your method.

MB: You could say, in the spirit of Tsing’s conception of storytelling, that attending to histories of media production in a critical region like the Amazon—and in particular to the ways in which creative processes rely on non-human entities in the forest—opens up spaces for imagining alternative ecological futures. I suggest this because, again, media production is a place of human and non-human entanglements and therefore one in which to think about how to relate to other living entities.

LN: Oh, that’s interesting! Your work aims at “opening up spaces for imaging alternative futures” from the ruins of capitalism, as Tsing calls them. That brings up my next question, which is about the concept of media. So, when we think of media we think of MP3s, cell phones, film. In this article you’re also saying that nature is media. Can you say more about that?

MB: My approach is in dialogue with recent scholarship in media studies that understands environment and media as mutually implicated. In fact, one of the key works comes from John Durham Peters, in the Film and Media Studies Department, whose The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media proposes conceptualizing environment as media. In my work, I read the forest media-theoretically by attending to how entities beyond (and in conjunction with) the human contain and transmit stories. For instance, in the case of the Forensic Architecture project I mentioned, trees contain a marginalized narrative of the destruction of Waimiri Atroari villages in the states of Amazonas and Roraima, since their age reveals the disappearance of previously populated areas. Seeing the canopy through remote sensing data ultimately reveals the possibility of reading absence. This interaction between satellite technology and trees leads to media (maps) that serve as evidence of historical violence in the forest—and I approach trees as participants in this media.

LN: I see. It’s truly fascinating how evidence of the desaparecidos becomes materialized through the intra-action between the apparatus (satellite imaging) and the trees. I want to ask you about something else you state in your article. In one instance you say, “Put simply, when nature is categorized as external to, or separate from the human, it becomes extractable” and then you say that “the specificity of format as an analytical tool opposes generalized views of nature by revealing entanglements between humans and non-human entities.” This reads like an intervention you’re making in the field. As a person who is not familiar with the field of film and media studies, I’m curious about what makes this intervention necessary and why does it matter. Can you say more about this?

MB: In that first moment that you mention from the article, I am referring to an idea Jason Moore discusses in Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital (2015), but I am also thinking with Marisol de la Cadena. She writes about the danger of a universalized nature that can be separated from humans and therefore exploited (see “Uncommoning Nature: Stories from the Anthropo-not-Seen” in Anthropos and the Material, 2019). Attending to localized relationalities, as de la Cadena suggests, is a way to contest these visions of nature as a resource for extraction. I engage this notion as part of my argument for an ecological format theory, as I approach media formats as composed by situated, interacting materialities encompassing the human and non-human. In the case of El abrazo de la serpiente, I think about these interactions by taking...
into account not only what it meant for the crew and cast to work with the Vaupés river and with color 35mm film (which was adjusted to black and white in post-production in a very different context in Buenos Aires) but also how the river intervened in the film’s aesthetics and thematic concerns—a process that occurs simultaneously through its filtering of light, for instance, and the ways in which the Indigenous communities in the area relate to the river and that in turn affect the team’s experience in the forest. Specificity is necessary in order to understand these localized ecological relationalities of which film is an expression, which is why I insist on it and why I employ the more granular lens of format to think about media.

LN: For students who are interested in the approach you take to film and media, what are some of the scholars whose work you think with? Can you recommend some key works?

MB: To think about some of these questions about ecology and media in Latin America, I would encourage students to start with three generative books: Natura: Environmental Aesthetics After Landscape, edited by Jens Andermann, Lisa Blackmore, and Dayron Carrillo Morel; The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives by Macarena Gómez-Barris; and The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert.

LN: Martina, thank you for discussing your work with me. It was an absolute delight!

MB: Thank you for your questions, Luna!

Works Cited


Studying in Quito, Ecuador
by Ximena González-Parada

The Study Abroad Program in Quito, Ecuador, is a Yale Summer Session Spanish and Culture Program where students gain important skills they can apply in their profession while gaining a broader perspective of the world. This is an eight-week, four-credit program targeted to students eager to complete Intermediate Spanish (L3-L4). In addition to language study, the program has three main components: culture, excursions, and community outreach projects. After three weeks of language classes in New Haven, students continue class at the Universidad de las Américas in Quito, the largest private university in Ecuador, and live with a host family located within walking distance from the university. During classes, they develop Spanish language proficiency through sustained involvement with cultural topics of the Hispanic world and Ecuador in particular. In the summer of 2022, Terry Seymour and Ximena González Parada were the course instructors.

Excursions are meant for students to make connections with what they have learned in class. For example, students visit the Museum of renowned artist Oswaldo Guayasamín, whose portrayal of local indigenous people transformed the modern national imaginary through the visual arts. Another important visit is the exploration of seventeenth-century colonial buildings in the historic district, which offer a point of departure for understanding Ecuadorian history. Outside of Quito, they have the opportunity to visit Kichwa communities in the Amazon and come into contact with indigenous cosmologies through traditional medicinal practices.

But the highlight of this program are the community outreach projects. By working side by side with professors and students from the Universidad de las Américas, Yale students engage with a range of academic disciplines, such as Environmental Studies, Law, and Agribusiness. Students not only develop linguistic, cross-cultural, and academic skills, but also an appreciation for intellectual and cultural diversity.

Student Perspectives, Quito Program

I am very grateful to have had the incredible opportunity to participate in the Yale Summer Session in Quito: Advanced Spanish Language and Andean Culture. It was my first international trip since immigrating to the United States fourteen years ago, and I had not taken a Spanish class since my sophomore year around a year and a half ago. So, I was a little nervous and had doubts about myself during the beginning of the program in terms of communicating exclusively in Spanish and being abroad for the first time in a long time. Thus, to my surprise, my Spanish speaking improved quickly in a short period of time. I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the teaching team Professor Margherita Tortora and Esteban Crespo-Jaramillo as well as my fellow students and friends from the program for always being so warm and kind and for always being so patient and helping me when there were times I didn’t know how to express my thoughts in Spanish throughout the program. Thank you so much to them for a wonderful experience.

In terms of memorable moments during the program, I don’t know where to begin. This experience was full of memories that I’ll never forget, and I learned so much from our classes learning about Ecuadorian history and culture with visits from Ecuadorian filmmakers and scholars and our trips outside of class. During the program, I did a lot of things that I had never done before, adventurous things that I never would’ve thought I’d be able to experience. One instance was when I hiked up to the base camp of the Cotopaxi volcano during the free weekend that we had in the program. It was a really challenging hike due to the elevation, the wind, and the cold temperature. There were times I didn’t think I would make it, but with the help of a couple of friends from the program and our guides, I was able to make it and the sights and experience were definitely worth it.

We also went on other outdoor hikes in the Cloud Forest in Mindo and in the Amazon, and I appreciated the beautiful nature and fresh air around us. I enjoyed all of our trips: when we danced in the Esmeraldas with the Afro-Ecuadorian folkloric group Marimba Manglar, when we spent time with our Kichwa host families in Peguche and in Otavalo and when we were with Gandhi Grefa, a Kichwa filmmaker and his family in Archidona and with Viviana García Calapucha, a
Kichwa director of art and audiovisual producer in Misahualli. While I enjoyed our trips outside of Quito, I also enjoyed my time with my host mom, Mariana, in Quito. Before the program ended, she told me that if I wanted to come back to visit someday, I’d have a mom and a house ready for me. I’m so grateful to have had this opportunity to meet all the incredible people throughout the program and for this wonderful experience.

Pia Gorme

Student Perspectives, Valencia Program

Cuando mi avión aterrizó en Valencia, todavía no sabía lo que me esperaba en España. Nunca había ido al país y además no había hablado en español durante más de un año — había estado estudiando coreano en la universidad. Salí del aeropuerto, cansado y un poco nervioso, e inmediatamente, mi padre anfitrión me saludó. Él tenía una calidez natural que rápidamente me puso cómodo, y cuando me senté en su coche con sus hijos lindos, me di cuenta que aunque estaría viviendo lejos de mi familia real, tendría una comunidad fuerte en España.

Este sentimiento solamente se consolidaba en los días siguientes. Durante nuestra primera clase en la universidad, nuestras profesoras nos ofrecieron consejo sobre todos los aspectos de la vida en un país extranjero. Y después de nuestros estudios, comimos paella y charlamos con estudiantes valencianos, quienes nos presentaron a la ciudad con su perspectiva local. Generalmente, asistíamos a clase tres veces cada semana, pero con actividades formales e informales, la comunidad de estudiantes se extendía mucho más allá de las paredes de la universidad.

El programa, entonces, nos ofreció apoyo y comunidad en muchas formas. Pero para mí, mi primera comunidad, mi familia anfitriona, moldeaba mi experiencia posiblemente más que todo. Con mi familia, podía experimentar cosas que nunca podría imaginar. Fui a un pueblo en la comunidad valencia con mis “abuelos” y “primos,” y vi la vida fuera de la ciudad grande. Fui a una misa y reunión de su iglesia, y pude comparar las prácticas religiosas mías con las suyas. Fui a la estación de tele donde trabajaba mi padre anfitrión, y vi no solamente cómo funciona un programa de tele entre bastidores sino también qué está viendo la comunidad valenciana todos los días y que la entretiene.

Tuvimos un viaje a Madrid, Toledo y Consuegra a mediados del programa, y fue increíble. Visitamos los sitios más representativos del país, incluyendo museos, palacios y molinos, y tengo memorias destacadas de toda esa excursión. Pero lo que recuerdo ahora es lo que sentí cuando regresé a Valencia, porque en ese momento entendí el efecto y poder de la comunidad que este programa me ha dado. Descendi del autobús e inmediatamente me invadió la sensación de que estaba en mi hogar, en el lugar al que pertenecía. Y ese sentimiento es lo que nunca había esperado. En el programa, por supuesto, aprendí mucho sobre la lengua e historia española. Pero no esperé que sintiera un vínculo fuerte a Valencia, una comunidad allí y una sensación de pertenencia — eso es lo que me dieron mi familia y el programa, y eso es inolvidable.

Eli Buchdahl

Student Perspectives, Quito Program

He tenido una experiencia inolvidable en Ecuador este verano. Al comienzo, no tenía mucha confianza; nunca había salido del norte de América en mi vida. Todo esto cambió totalmente cuando conocí a mi familia anfitriona en Quito; me recibieron como si fuera su hijo propio, y discutimos mucho sobre la vida en Ecuador, mi experiencia con español y mucho más.

En el programa, hicimos muchas excursiones, entrevistas y experiencias culturales, artísticas y académicas. Por ejemplo, en la primera semana fuimos a la Casa Museo Trude Sojka, donde aprendimos sobre la comunidad judía en Ecuador y cómo el arte puede reflejar la importancia de la naturaleza en el país. Había casi demasiadas experiencias como esta para discutir todas, pero también fuimos a muchas provincias del país para interactuar con diferentes comunidades.
y aprender sobre la herencia cultural del país. Por ejemplo, en Esmeraldas aprendimos sobre la música tradicional de la cultura afroecuatoriana. En Otavalo, vimos el proceso de crear algunos instrumentos de viento y nos quedamos con familias en la comunidad. Lo más inolvidable fue mi primera cena en Otavalo; hicimos tacos a mano y todos contribuyeron algo. Por supuesto, nuestro viaje al Oriente fue una experiencia inolvidable. A pesar de que nos levantamos a las cuatro de la mañana, el ritual matutino en la comunidad Killinpamba debe haber sido la parte más especial del viaje para mí. Me interesó mucho cómo la comunidad lidió con la pandemia y las enfermedades. Aunque no pasamos mucho tiempo en Archidona, no voy a olvidar la experiencia.

También nuestro tiempo en Baños fue divertido. Tuvimos tiempo para jugar al baloncesto, recibir masajes, y caminar por el pueblo. La comida, como siempre, era riquísima, y también había una iglesia muy linda en el centro del pueblo. También tuvimos experiencias increíbles con el arte. Fuimos a la capilla del hombre, un lugar magnífico. No sabía que las obras de Guayasamín serían tan grandes, es increíble que pudiera hacer tantas obras en su vida. Su proceso también me interesó mucho, porque tenía tres pasos por muchas de sus obras. En las conversaciones con cineastas, hablamos sobre el proceso de hacer películas y aprender mucha información que me puede ayudar en mi viaje artístico. Entonces, mi experiencia en Ecuador fue algo que nunca olvidaré en mi vida. Ha impactado mi perspectiva sobre la naturaleza y el arte. Quiero mencionar que esto solo fue posible con la increíble guía y liderazgo de Profesora Tortora y Esteban Crespo. Siempre estaré agradecido.

David Saunders

For more information about our program, the Spanish major, or the advanced language certificate in Spanish, check out our new brochure.
Under the leadership of Kate Kelly, President, and Sarah Mafroud, Vice-President, the chapter offered a variety of activities for the Yale community during the academic year 2021-2022.

In February, the chapter initiated 14 new members: Nellie Conover-Crocket, Jacob Cramer, José Davila IV, Martha Engvall, Emily Guzmán, Andrew Harmez, Eliza Kravitz, Sophie Lieberman, Nils Longueira Borrego, Charlie Mayock-Bradley, Elisabeth Moore, Natalia Pinela, Taylor Spadory, Eva Syth.

The ceremony was the first in-person initiation since 2019 and the first in Humanities Quadrangle, home base for the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.

In November, the Alpha Beta Beta leadership facilitated a conversation with Professor Osvaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos, who spoke on his new book, Art and Myth of the Ancient Maya. This event served as the first of a series called “Looking Within, a Yale Speaker Series,” to celebrate the contributions and achievements of the Yale community working within an interdisciplinary Hispanic context. Professor Chinchilla Mazariegos’ fields of research are archaeology and anthropology, with an emphasis on the societies of ancient Mesoamerica.

In May, the chapter presented a film as a small break during reading period, before final exams. The film was the suspense-laden Contratiempo, a Spanish production written and directed by Oriol Paulo.

The new officers for 2022-2023 are Elisabeth Moore, President, and Charlie Mayock-Bradley, Vice-President. In October, the chapter offered its first event of the year, Voces y Versos, a reading of poetry and prose in Spanish.

The next chapter initiation will be held on February 21, 2023.

Kate Kelly, Sarah Mafroud, Noël Valis
The Editorial Board wishes you and your loved ones a fabulous winter break!