

# RESEARCHING THE AMERICAN WEST IN SPAIN: BEYOND PREJUDICES AND MISCONCEPTIONS\*

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## ABSTRACT

This essay analyzes the history of western American studies in Spain, offering a panoramic view of their genesis, development, and current situation. It is argued that the popularity of the American West in Spanish culture and society in the mid-twentieth century contrasts sharply with its neglect by academia due to a series of prejudices and misconceptions, often related to its almost exclusive association with the so-called *formula western*. I explore the increasing visibility of western American studies in the last decades of the twentieth century and its consolidation during the present century. In fact, nowadays the literature and culture of the American West receive wide attention in Spain, as illustrated by several activities, groups, individual scholars, and publications that demonstrate the vitality and diversity of this area of research.

KEYWORDS: Western American Studies, Spain, Literature, Films, Culture

## INVESTIGANDO EL OESTE AMERICANO EN ESPAÑA: MAS ALLÁ DE PREJUICIOS Y CONCEPTOS ERRÓNEOS

## RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la historia de los estudios sobre el Oeste norteamericano en España, ofreciendo una visión panorámica de su génesis, desarrollo y situación actual. Se destaca que la popularidad del Oeste en la sociedad y en la cultura española a mediados del siglo xx contrasta con su posición marginal en el ámbito académico debido a una serie de prejuicios y conceptos erróneos, a menudo relacionados con la asociación casi exclusiva del Oeste con el subgénero del *formula western* (novela popular del Oeste). Se explora la creciente visibilidad de los estudios en las últimas décadas del siglo xx y su actual consolidación. La literatura y la cultura del Oeste son objeto de amplia atención en España, tal y como puede verse a través de diferentes actividades, grupos, autores y publicaciones que demuestran la vitalidad y diversidad de la investigación en esta área.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Estudios Oeste Norteamericano, España, Literatura, Cine, Cultura

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## INTRODUCTION

The American West was neglected in Spain as a valuable field of studies for too many decades because of its almost exclusive association with popular literature and, in particular, with the so-called *formula western*. In fact, we had to wait until the last decades of the twentieth-century for the rise to academic visibility of studies focused on this region and its imaginary, a field of research that has achieved increasing recognition in the present century. The process of consolidation of western American studies in Spain reproduces somehow the growing prestige of this research field in most European countries and in America, though in the United States the vindication of western American studies took place a few years earlier, particularly after the creation of the Western Literature Association in 1965. However, even in the United States the American West remained for many years as a minor research area due to a series of prejudices and misconceptions. The West was not only linked to the popular but low-quality *formula western*, a subgenre full of stereotypes and recurrent plots reproducing traditional frontier mythology, but also was regarded as a field of regional interest only. For example, its literature was usually labelled as local color writing, and the terms “local” and “regional” were used to minimize the impact of those stories focused on the American West. This neglect towards western writing was related to the minor role conferred to “region” and “place” for many decades in literary studies. In Michael Kowalewski’s words, “the critical assumption seems to be that region or ‘a sense of place’ is not an imaginative factor that can be internalized and struggled in the same literarily rewarding ways that writers struggle with issues of race, class, and gender” (1996, 7). Even at the end of the 1980s, a period in which western American literature had already started to achieve significant recognition, as testified by the publication of the impressive *A Literary History of the American West* (1987), a volume containing 1,353 pages, some scholars still insisted on reducing the importance of this literature, regarding it as mere regional writing. In fact, in 1988 *The Columbia Literary History of the United States* devoted only a few pages to examine western American literature, a theme that was discussed in an essay by James M. Cox significantly entitled “Regionalism: A Diminished Thing.” However, by the mid-1990s the recognition of western American literature as a valuable field for teaching and research was beyond any doubt in the United States. As Michael L. Johnson stated in 1996: “more of it is being read in the schools, at all levels, than ever before. Grade-school students are reading works by and about Native Americans. High-school students who never liked literature are coming to it in courses like Frontier Literature. College courses in Western literature of all kinds, New and Old, are now offered across the whole country” (196).

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In Spain, the huge popular success of the American West in literature, films, TV, and comics during many decades of the twentieth century, particularly since the 1940s to the end of the 1960s, sharply contrasts with its scarce presence in the academic and research realm until the last decades of the past century. The new millennium, however, has brought increasing scholarly recognition to the American West, and the future of western American studies in Spain certainly seems promising due to the consolidation of this area as a valuable research field. The aim of this article is to offer a panoramic view of the history of western American studies in Spain, its present situation, and its potential areas of development.

## THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY PIONEERS: THE FRONTIER FASCINATION AND THE RISE OF ETHNIC STUDIES

The American West played a prominent role in Spanish culture and society for many years in the mid-twentieth century. It is even possible to use the term “golden era” to describe the immense popularity of the frontier imagery in novels, films, TV series, comics, and even toys in Spain during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. As Alfredo Lara stated, “Hubo un tiempo en que las novelas de vaqueros llenaban las estanterías y anaqueles de librerías y quioscos; años en los que se estrenaban en España decena y media de películas *western* y se veían tres series de vaqueros por semana en televisión. Los tebeos apaisados de pistoleros, los revólveres y estrellas de sheriff en plástico, llenaban las estanterías de todos los quioscos y jugueterías” (2013, 6).

This omnipresence of the *western* in Spanish culture and society, however, had no correspondence in the academic field because in most cases the strong links between the American West and popular culture became a major obstacle for the recognition of western American literature and films as a valuable research field. Due to the limited prestige of the West and its culture, it is no wonder, for example, that prominent experts in education criticized popular western literature, warning, in particular, about its bad influence on young readers. For example, in 1961 the scholar José Antonio Pérez Rioja in the journal *Revista de Educación* showed his despair about the main reading patterns among children and youngsters in Spain: “...apenas tenemos hoy en España lecturas adecuadas para niños y adolescentes. Por el contrario, abundan hasta la saciedad las noveluchas del Oeste Americano— falsas, absurdas, escritas incluso por españoles que ni siquiera conocen aquellas praderas” (60).

The birth of English studies in Spain under the name “Filologías Modernas” in the early 1950s meant a significant first step for the visibility of western American studies in the country, a research field that was almost non-existent due to both the extended prejudice against the *western* genre, particularly in the literary realm, and the limited presence of American studies in Spanish universities. As Sylvia L. Hilton claimed, “the United States has not been traditionally an object of study *per se* in Spanish universities but rather a secondary presence on the fringes of either English Language and Literature or Latin American History curricula” (1994, 41-42). In fact, the first monograph on American literature published in Spain, *Apuntes sobre la*





*literatura americana (de los Estados Unidos de América)*, was a translation published in 1924.<sup>1</sup> Other translations of volumes dealing with American literature were published in Spain in the mid-twentieth century (e.g., Gertrude Callaghan's *Historia de la literatura norteamericana*, John Brown's *Panorama de la literatura norteamericana contemporánea*), but we had to wait until 1956 for the publication in Spain of a history of American literature originally written in Spanish, Concha Zardoya's *Historia de la literatura norteamericana*. Its author was a Chilean-Spanish professor who taught at different American universities from 1947 to 1977. In Spanish academia, the first volumes on American literature were published in the 1960s by scholars such as Cándido Pérez Gallego (*El héroe solitario en la novela norteamericana*, 1967), Juan José Coy (*J.D. Salinger*, 1968), and Javier Coy (*Teatro norteamericano actual*, written in collaboration with Juan José Coy, 1967). The consolidation of American studies in Spain in the last decades of the twentieth century also started to give visibility to research on western American literature, particularly related to the frontier and its mythology. Thus, in the 1970s and 1980s we may already see the publication of several books, articles, and book chapters dealing with the literary dimension of the frontier experience, with James Fenimore Cooper's novels as the main aim of these studies. Among these publications, we can mention, for example, José María Bardavío's *La novela de aventuras* (1977), Félix Martín's essay "James Fenimore Cooper en el umbral del Romanticismo" (1983), and, in particular, Urbano Viñuela's articles "La polémica de James Fenimore Cooper con la prensa norteamericana a principios del siglo XIX" and "Dos figuras antagónicas en la obra de Fenimore Cooper" (1983). It is even possible to find some early examples of scholarly attention to the Spanish popular fiction set in the American West, such as Juan Francisco Álvarez Macías's *La novela popular en España: José Mallorquí* (1972).

In the 1990s Spanish scholars on the West continued with their fascination with the frontier imagery, and for the first time a Spanish university, the University of León, held a conference centered on the American frontier at large, "La frontera: mito y realidad del Nuevo Mundo" (1993). The proceedings of this conference were published a year later and contained several papers covering particular aspects related to the role of the frontier experience in western American literature and culture. Some examples are "Las praderas fronterizas de Canadá y Estados Unidos" (María José Álvarez Maurín), "La novela del Oeste y 'Tamsen', de David Galloway" (Javier Coy), "De cautivos y cautiverios" (Manuel Broncano), and "El Oeste mítico de la literatura norteamericana clásica: 'Israel Potter', de Herman Melville" (Juan J. Lanero).

In the last decade of the twentieth century, it is also worth mentioning the increasing visibility of studies focused on literature by ethnic minorities in the United States closely connected to the West, such as Native Americans, Chicanos, and Asian Americans. As Michael Kowalewski has claimed, studies on works of western literature tended to be thought of in nonregional terms because of the

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<sup>1</sup> This monograph was the result of translating the notes of a course on American literature at the University of Madrid by John Driscoll Fitz-gerald, an American Hispanic scholar.

extended prejudice against this literature, and scholarly attention to them was often legitimized under the aegis of minority studies or even environmental studies (1996, 8). The truth is that this new attention to minority literatures in the United States by Spanish scholars became a major source of visibility to neglected stories of the American West and played a prominent role in the expansion of western American studies in Spain. Thus, in the late twentieth century several remarkable book chapters on Native American literature and culture were published by scholars such as María Nieves Pascual, Esther Álvarez, Teresa Gómez, María Felisa López Liquete, María Belén Martín, Rosa Morillas, and Aitor Ibarrola. These scholars focused on authors such as Sherman Alexie, Louise Erdrich, and Leslie Marmon Silko, and also on Native American oral history. Similarly, Asian-American literature started to emerge as a rewarding field of studies with scholars such as Rocío G. Davis, Eulalia Piñero, and Begoña Simal, leading the Spanish research in this area. Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, or Asian-American poetry became the main topic of some of their chapters and articles, and at the end of the century a monograph on Chinese-American fiction was published by Begoña Simal (*Identidad étnica y género en la narrativa chinoamericana*). The impact of Native American and Asian-American studies in Spanish academia cannot be compared with the overwhelming extension of Latinx studies during the last decade of the twentieth century. The main emphasis was on Chicano/a literature, with general approaches to this writing or to particular genres, for example, fiction, and also with specific studies about authors such as Rolando Hinojosa, Miguel Méndez, Rudolfo Anaya, Richard Rodríguez, Joy Harjo, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Cherrie Moraga, and Helena María Viramontes. In this period, among those scholars focused on Chicano/a literature, it is worth mentioning Carmen Flys, José Antonio Gurpegui, Julio Cañero, Juan Antonio Perles, María Antonia Oliver, Manuel Villar, Rosa Morillas, Imelda Martín, José Miguel Santamaría, Federico Eguíluz, and Amaia Ibarraran. In fact, at the end of the century, two universities, the University of Granada (1998) and the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) (2000), became the sites of the first conferences on Chicano literature, and two volumes based on these conferences were published in 2000 (*Literatura chicana: reflexiones y ensayos críticos*) and 2001 (*Aztlán: ensayos sobre literatura chicana*).

The combination of different ethnic studies about minority writers with western backgrounds was the germ for the first research projects on ethnic literatures based mostly in the American West. Thus, in the late 1990s the University of the Basque Country funded the research projects “Literaturas minoritarias en los Estados Unidos de América: la representación de la identidad” (directed by María Felisa López Liquete, 1996–1997), “En la frontera: chicanos, nativos y vascos en la literatura contemporánea de los Estados Unidos de América” (directed by David Río, 1998–1999), and “La interacción de las minorías chicana, nativa y vasca en la literatura de los Estados Unidos: un proceso fronterizo y multicultural” (directed by Federico Eguíluz, 1999–2000). Similarly, the same university held a summer course in 1999 under the title “Vascos, chicanos y nativos en la literatura de los EE.UU.” In 2000 the first graduate course specifically focused on the American West was taught at the University of the Basque Country by Frank Bergon, one of the



most interesting voices of new western American writing and a professor at Vassar College. All these activities illustrate the increasing attention in academia towards the multicultural broadening of the American West at the end of the twentieth century and also anticipate the key role that a group of scholars affiliated with the University of the Basque Country would play in the promotion of western American studies in the coming decades.

## WESTERN AMERICAN STUDIES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: THE RISE TO RECOGNITION

The beginning of the new century confirmed the end of the obscurity of western American studies in Spain. For the first time, there was a research group focused on consolidating and encouraging the new critical interest towards the American West as a growing source of quality literature, always heterogeneous and with a multicultural flair. It was the REWEST (Research on Literature and Culture of the American West) group, based at the University of the Basque Country. From 2001 to 2003, this group conducted its first research project focused specifically on the American West: “La representación del Oeste en la narrativa contemporánea de los EE.UU. (1980–2000),” directed by David Río and funded by the University of the Basque Country. This research project was followed by another project also funded by the University of the Basque Country and four other projects, funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation or the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. Most of these projects paid particular attention to those authors who have stood out due to their capacity to renew and revise the traditional imaginary of western American literature and cinema. They have also examined the cultural transfers among other disciplines, such as contemporary music, television, comics, and other art forms in various formats (digital, pictorial, audiovisual). These projects have explored the West as a plural space that is in a constant process of reinvention, using different approaches from diverse and varied disciplines, such as ecocriticism, gender studies, history, ethnic studies, and cultural studies. The scope of these projects is global and transnational, and the REWEST group studies literary and artistic works about the American West that arise from other geographical areas beyond the United States. The group was officially recognized by the Basque Government as a consolidated research group in 2010, and since then this institution regularly funds its activities.

Among the most important activities organized by the REWEST group, it is worth mentioning five international conferences (2005, 2010, 2014, 2018, and 2022) focused on the literature and culture of the American West. These conferences have brought to the University of the Basque Country (Vitoria-Gasteiz) some of the best-known American experts in the field (e.g., Frank Bergon, Melody Graulich, David Fenimore, Susan Kollin, Audrey Goodman, Nicolas Witschi, William Handley, Tom Lynch, Krista Comer, José Aranda, María Herrera-Sobek, Susan Bernardin, Maria O’Connell, Nancy Cook, Linda Karell, Alan Weltzien, Megan Riley McGilchrist, Kalenda Eaton, Sergei Zhuk), plus several leading European scholars in western American studies (e.g., Neil Campbell, Marek Paryz, Cathryn Halverson, Stefan



Rabitsch, Stefano Rosso, Marc Chénétier, Stephen Matterson, Terry Gifford, Wendy Harding, Fiorenzo Iuliano, Isabel Oliveira) and also some artists and authors whose work is connected to the American West (e.g., Phyllis Barber, Gregory Martin, Sid Griffith, Bernardo Atxaga, Kirmen Uribe, Willy Vlautin, Gala Knörr, Alice Bag). The REWEST group has also organized smaller events, usually seminars and symposia, focused on specific topics such as cultural transfers in the West, western music, the myth of the West, ecocriticism, and Basque-American literature. These events have often become the source of insightful discussion on current trends in western American studies. The group is highly interested in promoting its research results beyond academia, and because of this it has organized other types of events, such as summer courses in Donostia-San Sebastián (2001, 2021, 2022) and a Western Film Week in Vitoria-Gasteiz (2023).

The REWEST group nowadays includes the following scholars: Maite Aperribay, Ángel Chaparro, Andoni Cossio, Maja Daniel, Amaya Fernández Menicucci, Amaia Ibarraran, Monika Madinabeitia, Raúl Montero, Martin Simonson, Amaia Soroa, Ane Belén Ruiz, Alfonso Berroya and its current coordinator, David Río. Although most of its members belong to the University of the Basque Country, the group has several prominent national and international collaborators who offer their expertise in different fields of western American studies and participate in the group projects and activities on a regular basis. The following are the collaborators: Jesús Ángel González (U. Cantabria: he leads current studies in postwestern films), Juan Ignacio Guijarro (U. Sevilla: a major expert on minorities in the American West), Mercedes Pérez Agustín (U. Complutense: her research focuses on Native American cultures), Neil Campbell (emeritus professor, U. Derby: the dean of western American studies in Europe), Stefano Rosso (U. Bergamo: one of the most prestigious European scholars on western American literature and culture), Cheryll Glotfelty (emeritus professor, U. Nevada, Reno: one of the founders of ecocriticism), and Marek Paryz (U. Warsaw: a major reference for the study of the *western* across narrative arts and beyond the United States). Besides, there are several other prestigious scholars who often work with the group in the organization of conferences, courses, and research projects, such as Aitor Ibarrola (U. Deusto: a leading scholar in Native American studies), Silvia Martínez Falquina (U. Zaragoza: one of the main experts on contemporary Native American fiction), Francisco Sáez de Adana (U. Alcalá: the author of excellent articles and book chapters on the comic western), Cristina Garrigós (UNED: the author of different publications on writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Helena María Viramontes and on gender and music), and Christopher Conway (U. Texas at Arlington: a major expert in comparative literature, western films, and comics), to name just a few professors. REWEST scholars have also supervised an increasing number of PhD dissertations dealing with the American West. For example, in the last two decades, about a dozen dissertations related to the field of western American studies have been presented at the University of the Basque Country. These dissertations have explored a variety of topics, such as Chicana literature, environmental western fiction, Basque-American female characters in western fiction, Cormac McCarthy's western novels, Frank Bergon's work, contemporary Mormon literature, and Annie Proulx's fiction.



The REWEST group has been very active in promoting western American studies both in Spain, including the organization of different sessions and round tables in the annual conferences of AEDEAN (Asociación Española de Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos) and the biannual conferences of SAAS (Spanish Association for American Studies), and abroad. The international dimension of the group is exemplified by its regular presence in the best-known European conferences in the field of American studies (e.g., in the biannual conferences of EAAS [European Association for American Studies]) and in the annual WLA (Western Literature Association) conferences. The work of the REWEST scholars in the field of western American studies has also been recognized by the Western Literature Association, the main scholarly association devoted to the promotion of the study of the diverse literature and cultures of the American West. For example, Amaia Ibarraran was elected in 2023 as a member of the executive council of this association, and David Río serves on the board of the WLA journal, the prestigious *Western American Literature*, since 2014.

During the present century, REWEST scholars have published a long list of books, articles, and book chapters dealing with the literature and cultures of the American West, with an emphasis on the New West, paying particular attention to its realistic bent, intercultural features, female awareness, recognition of the environment's crucial importance, and transnational dimension. Because of space limitations, it is not possible to offer a detailed list of these publications, but at least we should mention some collective books, such as *Exploring the American Literary West* (ed. David Río et al.), *Beyond the Myth* (ed. David Río, Amaia Ibarraran, and Martin Simonson), *The Neglected West* (ed. Amaia Ibarraran, Martin Simonson, and David Río), *A Contested West* (ed. Martin Simonson, David Río, and Amaia Ibarraran), *Transcontinental Reflections on the American West* (ed. Ángel Chaparro and Amaia Ibarraran), *No Single Trajectory* (ed. Ángel Chaparro and Jesús Ángel González), *The New American West in Literature and the Arts* (ed. Amaia Ibarraran), *The Western in the Global Literary Imagination* (ed. Christopher Conway, Marek Paryz, and David Río), and *La expansión y revisión de un mito: el Oeste norteamericano en la literatura española* (ed. David Río). REWEST scholars have also published an important number of individual (or co-authored) books, such as *Ecoxicanismo* (Maite Aperribay), *Parting the Mormon Veil* (Ángel Chaparro), *Novelistas chicanas* (Amaia Ibarraran), *Mexican American Women, Dress and Gender* (Amaia Ibarraran), *Petra, My Basque Grandmother* (Monika Madinabeitia), *Robert Laxalt* (David Río), *New Literary Portraits of the American West* (David Río), *El Western fantástico de Stephen King* (Martin Simonson and Raúl Montero), *El Oeste recuperado* (Martin Simonson), and *From East to West* (Martin Simonson and Jon Alkorta).

The growing prominence of western American studies in Spain is not only the result of the activities of the REWEST group, as other scholars and research groups have contributed significantly to the reinvigoration of the American West in Spanish academia. For example, the research group LÈNA (Literaturas étnicas norteamericanas en un contexto global / North American Ethnic Minority Literatures in a Global Context), based at the University of València and led by Anna M. Brígido, has helped to significantly increase the presence of Native American





studies in Spanish universities with its impressive work on western indigenous cultures and literatures through a decolonial approach. Among its most recent publications, we may mention, for example, *Indigenizing the Classroom* (2021) and *Indigenous Journeys, Transatlantic Perspectives* (2023), both edited by Anna M. Brígido. Another university where the American West receives wide attention is the University of Alcalá, where the Instituto de Estudios Americanos (directed by José Antonio Gurpegui) and the research group AMICUSS (Estudios Culturales Interdisciplinares sobre Estados Unidos / American Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies), led by Julio Cañero, offer insightful approaches to several themes related to borderland issues and the Hispanic legacy in the American West, such as Hispanic popular culture in the region. Their research has extended beyond the traditional realms of western literature and film, as exemplified by Francisco Sáez de Adana's excellent articles and book chapters on the comic western. Similarly, the University of A Coruña is the site of a research group, CLEU (Culturas y Literaturas de los EE.UU. / Cultures and Literatures from the United States of America), led by Begoña Simal, that in the last decades has achieved remarkable success in several fields closely related to the American West, such as ecocriticism and environmental studies (with an emphasis on the current role of the communities of waste) and Asian-American literatures. For example, Begoña Simal has published *Ecocriticism and Asian American Literature* (2020). In other Spanish universities, we do not find research groups specifically focused on the American West, but in an important number of them there are scholars who regularly or sporadically publish remarkable books, articles, or book chapters on different aspects of western American literature and culture. It is impossible to offer a comprehensive list of these universities and scholars, but at least it is worth mentioning universities such as Cantabria (María del Carmen Camus, Alfredo Moro, Eva Pelayo Sañudo, Macarena García Avello), La Laguna (Juan Ignacio Oliva), Zaragoza (Celestino Deleyto, María del Mar Azcona, Luis Miguel García Mainar, Hilaria Loyo, Elisa Mateos), Salamanca (Paula Barba, Manuel González de la Aleja), Sevilla (María Ángeles Toda), U. Pública de Navarra (Carmen Indurain), U. Politécnica de Madrid (María Jesús de Teresa), Cádiz (Alfonso Ceballos), Pompeu Fabra (María Antonia Oliver), and Complutense (Sofía Martinicorena, Laura de la Parra, Miguel Sanz).<sup>2</sup>

The scholarly concern with the West is not limited to university professors working in the field of American studies. In fact, in the last few decades more and more works on different aspects of western American culture have been published by authors who are not directly related to this field. These authors have been successful in bringing public attention beyond academia towards the representation of the American West and its mythology in different artistic forms. Thus, several authors have examined the role of popular western novels in Spanish literature, overcoming traditional prejudice against popular western fiction. One of the major experts

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<sup>2</sup> This list does not include the scholars previously mentioned in the article who are affiliated with any of these universities.



in this field is Fernando Eguidazu, who has published extensively about Spanish popular fiction in the twentieth century, including western novels. Some of his best-known books are *Una historia de la novela popular española* (1850-2000), *Del folletín al bolsilibro. 50 años de novela popular española. 1900-1950*, and *Biblioteca Oro. Editorial Molino y la literatura popular. 1933-1956* (co-authored with Antonio González Lejárraga). In these books and in other publications dealing with popular fiction in Spain, Eguidazu has explored, in particular, José Mallorquí's novels on "El Coyote," a theme that has also become one of the main aims of Ramón Charlo's studies on Spanish popular novels. In fact, Charlo has published several books specifically focused on "El Coyote" and its author, for example, *José Mallorquí, creador de El Coyote*.

Western films have also received wide attention from several Spanish authors not related to the university field of American studies. Some of these writers have offered in their books a general perspective on the western genre or on its major themes and films, for example, *Grandes temas del Western* (Xavi J. Prunera et al.), *La gran caravana del Western* (Javier Coma), *Me gusta el cine: el Western* (José María Morera), *Películas clave del Western* (Quim Casas), and *Los mejores 250 westerns* (Santiago Cellier). Other studies, however, offer a more specific approach to particular elements or subgenres of the western, for example, *Weird Western* (ed. Jesús Palacios), *El cartel de cine en el Western europeo* (Bienvenido Llopis), *Las rutas del Western en Cataluña y Aragón* (Javier Ramos), *El héroe del Western crepuscular* (José Félix González), *Cine del Oeste en la Comunidad de Madrid* (Javier Ramos and Ángel Caldito), *Italo-Western y más...* (Felix Hahlbrock), *La pluma y el Oeste* (Fernando Garín), *El héroe trágico en el Western* (Fran Benavente), and *33 Spaghetti Westerns que no te puedes perder* (José Miguel Gala).

Although films and novels have become the main aim of most studies on the West published in Spain beyond academia, other western cultural phenomena have started to gain attention in the last few decades. Thus, it is possible to find a few books by Spanish authors dealing with western music, usually viewed as a subgenre closely related to wider music genres, such as rock or country. Two of these books are *Country Rock* (Eduardo Izquierdo) and *Historia de la música country* (2 vol.: Alfonso Trulls). Another interesting book exploring the connection between music and the West is Didac Piquer and Fran González's *Summer Fun: Historia de la música surf*. However, the best-known book on western music in Spanish is still a translation published in 1987, Charles T. Brown's *Country & Western: la música U.S.A.* Other books deal with music in western films, for example, Lucía Pérez García's *Dimitri Tiomkin: canciones para el lejano Oeste*. Similarly, a few articles and book chapters on the comic western have been published by Spanish authors, though this area is still an emerging field. Possibly one of the most interesting titles is *Recordando el Oeste en la revista Coyote*, an insightful compilation by Leonor Fernández and Luis Vigil of some of the main western stories published in the magazine *Coyote* in the mid-twentieth century.

Overall, western American studies in Spain show an increasing amount of both vitality and diversity. Although the academic study of the American West is still a recent event and several areas are still underrepresented, the number of



its practitioners is growing steadily, and there are emerging subfields that may significantly enrich research on the West, for example, videogames, fashion, blogs, social networks, and podcasts. Similarly, approaches dealing with the representation of the West across cultural and disciplinary boundaries, or across national borders, may provide western American studies with new insightful views for better understanding the transnational and cross-cultural condition of the western imaginary. Besides, a new generation of scholars is already showing its ability to revive interest in western topics, creating productive analytical models to engage with a complexly diverse West. For instance, Sofía Martincorena's recent article in *Western American Literature*, "Topographies of Western Violence in Claire Vaye Watkins's *Battleborn*" (2023), to name just one example of recent Spanish scholarship on the West, fully demonstrates the gift of younger authors to explore successfully the literature and the culture of the American West with fresh critical eyes.

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