

**NEW ALLEYWAYS TO SIGNIFICANCE:  
INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES  
TO ENGLISH STUDIES**

**Edited by**

Alejandra Moreno Álvarez  
and Irene Pérez Fernández

**COL·LECCIÓ ESTUDIS ANGLESES**  
Universitat de les Illes Balears

**Directores de la col·lecció**

Maria Juan Garau  
Patricia Bastida Rodríguez

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## PROLOGUE

The title of this book, *New Alleyways to Significance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to English Studies*, provides an appropriate introduction to its contents, to its multidisciplinary approaches and to the different views given both by senior and junior scholars from several universities, disciplines and schools of thought. *New Alleyways to Significance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to English Studies* constitutes a dialogue between English Literature and Literatures in English, between literature at large and its corresponding cultural and, necessarily, linguistic entourage, and, furthermore, between the present and the past. Its transnational perspective is enriched by contemporary critical discourses such as gender studies, historiographic metafiction, the archeology of knowledge, intertextuality, spatial history and new historicism, among many other significant approaches.

Its focus on the “insignificant” magnifies the final result. Post-structural critical thought has amply demonstrated that life—and, therefore, literature—is made up of incidents and attitudes considered of little importance for the “big” actual performance of politics and high-cultural events. But academic research and linguistic and literary experience reveal, stubbornly, that contemporary culture is the outcome of twentieth century poliphony; namely, the constant negotiation of gender roles, the new subjectivities and the implementation of absences and silences hitherto ignored by western thought.

The past is, thus, revised and enhanced through new cultural lenses, demanded by post-structural and post-modern Cultural Studies. And

the link provided by these new analytical paths makes it possible for contemporary readers to understand the world in which we dwell and profit from past human experience. *New Alleyways to Significance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to English Studies* will, no doubt, provide young scholars with the necessary tools to access contemporary thought, while addressing senior scholars as well with, as the editors suggest, its “challenging and innovative examples”.

**M.S. Suárez Lafuente**

Professor of English Philology  
Universidad de Oviedo, Spain

## INTRODUCTION

Alejandra Moreno Álvarez  
and Irene Pérez Fernández

*New Alleyways to Significance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to English Studies* brings together essays that examine themes and aspects within the field of English Studies that have been traditionally located at the fringes of academic knowledge and scholarship yet are absolutely necessary in order to open up new paths for academic research. The chapters in this volume are the consequence of the insightful discussions maintained during the Third International Conference of the Association of Young Researchers on Anglophone Studies (ASYRAS) held at the University of Oviedo, from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2013, following the two previous conferences organised at the University of Salamanca in 2009 and 2011. The Third International ASYRAS Conference proved a fruitful and thought-provoking encounter of both novice and leading scholars of English Studies where more than sixty papers were presented.

During this scientific encounter, it became clear that a considerable number of scholars in the field were offering wider answers to the question, whether everything in narrative is significant and, if not, "what is ultimately, so to speak, the significance of this insignificance?" (Barthes 1986: 143). Barthes' question is, thus, the central topic which links the seventeen peer-reviewed chapters included in this volume. All the essays approach English Studies from an interdisciplinary perspective and present challenging and innovative examples of current research in the philological field. Exploring the "insignificant" in the