ESTHER WHITFIELD

Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Hispanic Studies Brown University

(July 2025)

Professional appointments

Brown University

Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Professor of Comparative Literature (2025-)

Professor of Hispanic Studies (2025-)

Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Hispanic Studies (2012-2025)

Associate Professor of Comparative Literature (2010-2025)

Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature (2002-2010)

Harvard University

Lecturer on History and Literature (2001-2002)

Education

- Ph.D. Harvard University, June 2001. Romance Languages and Literatures.
- A.M. Harvard University, June 1998. Romance Languages and Literatures.
- B.A. Oxford University, June 1994. Modern Languages (First Class).

Publications

Books

A New No-Man's-Land: Writing and Art at Guantánamo, Cuba. Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, "Illuminations: Cultural Formations of the Americas" Series, 2024. Reviewed in: ReVista: The Harvard Review of Latin America (July 2024) and The Times Literary Supplement (September 2024); Chasqui (November 2024); NACLA Report on the Americas (March 2025);

The Black Arrow. Poetry collection by José Ramón Sánchez. Translated by Esther Whitfield and Katerina Gonzalez Seligmann. Barcelona: Linkgua Press, 2023.

Havana Beyond the Ruins: Cultural Mappings of the City after 1989. Essay collection co-edited with Anke Birkenmaier. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Reviewed in *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 45:2 (2012); *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* XLVII:2 (2013); *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 66:1 (2013); *Social Anthropology* 21:1 (2013).

Cuban Currency: The Dollar and "Special Period" Fiction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, "Cultural Studies of the Americas" Series, 2008.

Reviewed in Encuentro de la cultura cubana (otoño 2008); Journal of Latin American Studies 41 (2009); American Literature 81:3 (September 2009); Hispanic Review 78:3 (2010); NWIG: New West Indian Guide 84:1/2 (2010); The Americas 67:1 (July 2010); Revista Iberoamericana 10:39 (2010); Latin American Research Review 45:3 (2010); Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies 15:1 (2011).

New Short Fiction from Cuba. Anthology co-edited with Jacqueline Loss. Evanston, II.: Northwestern University Press, 2007.

Un arte de hacer ruinas. Critical edition of Antonio José Ponte's short stories. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005.

Peer-reviewed journal articles

- "From Guantánamo to the Global South: Mohammed el-Gharani in Literature and Art." *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 13, no.3 (Winter 2022): 367-380.
- "Guantánamo, Cuba: Poetry and Prison on Divided Ground." *Comparative Literature* 72, no. 3 (October 2020): 299-315.
- "Art, Ecology and Repair: Imagining the Future of the Guantánamo Naval Base." *Sargasso: A Journal of Caribbean Literature, Language and Culture* (2017-18) I&II: 49-65.
- "Cuban Borderlands: Local Stories of the Guantánamo Naval Base." MLN 130 (2): March 2015, 276-297.
- "Empire, Nation and the Fate of a Language: Patagonia in Argentine and Welsh Literature." *Postcolonial Studies* 14:1 (February 2011): 75-93.
- "A Literature of Exhaustion: Cuban Writing and the Post-'Special Period." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* XLV:1 (March 2011): 27-44.
- "Welsh-Patagonian Fiction: Language and the Novel of Transnational Ethnicity." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 14:2 (2009): 333-348.
- "Dirty Autobiography: The Body Impolitic of *Trilogía sucia de la Habana*." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 36.2 (May 2002): 329-351.

Book chapters

- "Cuban Fiction of the Special Period." Eds. Vicky Unruh and Jaqueline Loss. *The Cambridge History of Cuban Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2024. 516-531.
- "Natural Borders and Animal Life: Inhabiting Guantánamo." Eds. Guillermina De Ferrari and Mariano Siskind. *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Latin American Literary and Cultural Forms.* New York: Routledge, 2022. 225-233.
- "Guantánamo and Community: Visual Approaches to the Naval Base." Eds. Don E. Walicek and Jessica Adams. *Guantánamo and American Empire: The Humanities Respond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 149-172.
- "Truths and Fictions: The Economics of Writing in Cuba, 1994-1999." Ed. Ariana Hernández-Reguant. *Cuba in the Special Period: Culture and Ideology in the 1990s*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 21-36.
- "El presente en ruinas." Ed. Teresa Basile. *La vigilia cubana. Sobre Antonio José Ponte.* Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz Viterbo Editora 2008. 73-82. Previously published in *Miradas* (on-line journal of the Havana International Film School) in November 2005.
- "La narrativa cubana y el ejemplo del exilio: el caso Zoé Valdés." Ed. Juana Martínez. *Exilios y residencias. Escrituras de España y América*. Madrid/ Frankfurt: Iberoamericana/ Vervuert: 2007. 245-254.

"Economías literarias de los noventa." Eds. Anke Birkenmaier and Roberto González Echevarría. *Cuba: un siglo de literatura*. Madrid: Ediciones Colibrí, 2004. 391-402.

"The Novel as Cuban Lexicon: Bargaining Bilingualism in Daína Chaviano's *El hombre, la hembra y el hambre*." Ed. Doris Sommer. *Bilingual Games. Some Literary Investigations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 193-201.

"Mordecai a Haman: The Drama of Belonging in Welsh America." Ed. Marc Shell. American Babel: Literatures of the United States from Abnaki to Zuni. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002. 93-116.

"Comprando y vendiendo: Lenguaje e intercambio en *Te di la vida entera* y *The Aguero Sisters*." Ed. Rafael Hernández. *Culturas Encontradas: Cuba – Estados Unidos*. Cambridge, Mass. & Havana, Cuba: David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies and Centro Juan Marinello, 2001. 99-112.

Book reviews

Lillian Guerra, Patriots and Traitors in Revolutionary Cuba, 1961-1981. ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America (February 2024).

Shalini Puri and Lara Putnam, eds., Caribbean Military Encounters. Social and Economic Studies: The Social Sciences Journal of the University of the West Indies 69 1 and 2 (2020): 189-191.

Daniel G. Williams, *Black Skin, Blue Books: African-Americans and Wales 1845-1945. Planet: The Welsh Internationalist* 211 (Autumn 2013): 142-44.

Paul Bowman, ed., The Rey Chow Reader. Culture Machine (June 2011).

James Buckwalter-Arias, Cuba and the New Origenismo. Hispanic Review 79.3 (2011): 518-521.

Ana Menéndez, *In Cuba I was a German Shepherd. The Women's Review of Books* XVIII.10-11 (July 2001): 31-32.

Grants, Fellowships and Honors

Presidential Award for Faculty Governance, Brown University, April 2023.

Wilbur Marvin Visiting Scholar of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS) at Harvard University, Spring 2021.

Faculty Fellowship, Cogut Institute for the Humanities, 2020-21.

Principal Investigator on National Endowment for the Humanities "Dialogues on the Experience of War" grant awarded to Brown University, 2017-2019.

Center for Public Humanities Faculty Fellowship, Brown University, 2017-19.

Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women grant for faculty and graduate student workshop on "Approaching War," 2015-16.

Watson Institute for International Studies collaboration grant for symposium "New Perspectives on Guantánamo: Art, Activism and Advocacy," 2013-14.

Faculty Fellowship, Cogut Center for the Humanities, 2009-10.

PEN Club New York Council of the Arts Translation Grant Award for *New Short Fiction from Cuba*, 2006.

Henry Merritt Wriston Fellowship (Brown University teaching award for untenured faculty), 2006.

Lectures and conference papers

Invited lectures/ presentations

"A New No-Man's Land: Writing and Art at Guantánamo, Cuba." Department of Spanish and Portuguese and Leslie Center for the Humanities, Dartmouth College, May 2025.

"Guantánamo and the Border." Department of Spanish, College of the Holy Cross, April 2025.

"Guantánamo and the (Cuban) Border." El Instituto: Institute of Latino/a, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies, University of Connecticut, March 2025.

"Guantánamo and Cuba." Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies, Edinburgh University, June 2022.

"Guantánamo and the Idea of Home." "Camps, (In)justice and Solidarity in the Americas" conference. University of Graz, Austria, May 2022.

"Guantánamo, Cuba and the Arts." Cuba Studies Seminar. Harvard University, September 2021.

"Cuban Cultural Studies and Caribbean Borderlands." Keynote lecture for conference on "New Directions in Cuban Studies." The Cuban Heritage Collection of the University of Miami, October 2019.

"Guantánamo: Writing, Art and War." Public Humanities Summer Institute, University of New Hampshire, June 2019.

"Guarding Guantánamo." "Caribbean Cosmopolis" symposium. The Humanities Institute, Stony Brook University, October 2017.

"Cuba and the Future of Guantánamo." "Cuba at a Crossroads" symposium. SUNY Geneseo, April 2017.

"Guantánamo: Writing, Art and War." "Guantánamo: Promises of Closure and Justice" symposium. Institute of Caribbean Studies, University of Puerto Rico, August 2016.

"Guantánamo and the Border." Faculty colloquium at Brown University's Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, March 2015.

"Art and Guantánamo." Round table on "Angola and Guantánamo: Art and Incarceration." Stone Center for Latin American Studies, Tulane University, October 2014.

- "Guantánamo's Cuban Border: Art, Literature and the Naval Base." Symposium on "Cubans in Movement." King Juan Carlos Center of New York University, November 2013.
- "La narrativa cubana y el cambio social." Casa del Caribe, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, February 2013.
- "Cuban Writing and the post-"Special Period." Keynote lecture at Graduate Student Conference. Department of Modern and Foreign Languages, University of Connecticut, March 2011.
- "La narrativa cubana después del 'periodo especial." Institute of Caribbean Studies, University of Puerto Rico, April 2010.
- "Literature and the Market in Post-Soviet Cuba." Workshop on "Economies of Art in an Entrepreneurial Society." Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, June 2009.
- "Havana and the Aesthetics of Ruin." Symposium on "ReViewing the Revolution: Fresh Perspectives on Cuba, 1959-2009." Tulane University, April 2009.
- "Havana in Recent Fiction." Hispanic Heritage Week Speaker Series. Bristol Community College, Fall River MA, October 2007.
- "Writing for and against the market in Cuba's Special Period." New York University, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, May 2007.
- "Images of Havana in Recent Fiction." College of the Holy Cross, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, April 2007.
- "Truths and Fictions: The Economics of Writing in Cuba, 1994-1999." Conference on "The Special Period: Cuban Culture in the 1990s." University of California San Diego, December 2005.
- "Caribbean Havana." Symposium in honor of Antonio Benítez Rojo. Amherst College/ University of Massachusetts, November 2005.
- "The Present in Ruins." Symposium in honor of Josefina Ludmer. Brown University, Department of Hispanic Studies, November 2004.
- "Centro Habana: Ruins and the Fiction Industry." 2003-04 Cuba Speaker Series. University of Connecticut Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies/ Department of Modern and Classical Languages, April 2004.
- "La narrativa cubana y el ejemplo del exilio: El caso Zoé Valdés." Conference on "Exilios y residencias." Universidad Complutense, Madrid, May 2003.
- "Cuban Literary Economies." Conference on "Cuba: One Hundred Years of Independence, A Century of Literature." Yale University, October 2002.
- "Dirty Autobiography: The Body (Im)politic of *Trilogía sucia de la Habana*." Symposium on "Culture, Politics and Change in Contemporary Cuba." University of Iowa, October 2001.
- "Polémicas de los noventa." Roundtable discussion on "Cuban Culture: Conflicts and Debates." Harvard University, November 2000.

"Intercambios culturales en dos novelas cubanas de los 90." Conference on "Culturas encontradas: Cuba-Estados Unidos." Instituto Juan Marinello, Havana, January 1999.

Conference panels organized/ papers read

"Crisis and Care in Cuba: Julio García Espinosa's *Reina y Rey*." Paper read at the conference of the Society for Caribbean Studies, Bristol, England, July 2025.

"Havana's Stray Dogs in Contemporary Cuban Art." Paper read at the conference of the College Art Association, New York, February 2025.

"Pets, Strays and Urban Ruins: Rodrigo Blanco Calderón's *Simpatía* and the Caribbean." Paper read at conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Bogotá, Colombia, June 2024.

"Activism in Cuban Refugee Journals: Guantánamo, 1994-1996." Paper read at "Camps, Carceral Imaginaries and Critical Interventions" Conference. University of Graz, Austria, May 2024.

"Sovereignty and Walkability in Puerto Rico and Cuba." Paper read at conference of the Society for Caribbean Studies. Leicester, U.K., July 2023.

"Hospitality in Guantánamo's Borderlands." Paper read at annual meeting of the International MLA. Glasgow, Scotland, June 2022.

"Borderland Friendships." Paper read at annual meeting of the Modern Language Association. Online, January 2021.

Panel organizer, "Translation and Justice in the Americas." Latin American Studies Association Congress. Boston, May 2019. Paper read: "Translation, Compassion, Guantánamo."

Panel organizer, "Making Amends: Apology, Repair and the Arts in Latin America." Latin American Studies Association Congress. Barcelona, May 2018. Paper read: "Post-Guantánamo Reparation."

"Militarism and Intimacy at Guantánamo." Paper read at annual meeting of the Modern Language Association. New York, January 2018.

Panel organizer, "Guantánamo and the Arts," Latin American Studies Association Congress. Lima, Peru, May 2017. Paper read: "Guards and Detainees at Guantánamo."

"Untranslatables and the Translation of Welsh-American Writing." Paper read at North American Association for the Study of Welsh Culture and History International Conference. Harvard University, July 2016.

"Guantánamo's Futures." Paper read at Latin American Studies Association Congress. New York, May 2016.

"Guantánamo's Space: Visual Approaches to the Naval Base." Paper read at American Comparative Literature Association Conference. New York University, March 2014.

"Encierro y traducción: Poetas presos en la base naval de Guantánamo." Paper read at Congreso Transatlántico. University of Havana, Cuba, June 2013.

"Digital Newspapers and the Re-shaping of Cuba's Diaspora." Paper read at conference on "Re-Imagined Communities: Benedict Anderson in the Twenty-First Century." School of European Languages, Translation and Politics, University of Wales, Cardiff, July 2012.

Panel organizer, "Patagonia: Migration, Identity and Community." Latin American Studies Association Congress. San Francisco, May 2012. Paper read: "Patagonian Road Movies and Migration from Wales."

Panel organizer, "Democracy, Justice and the Arts," Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association. Providence, April 2012. Paper read: "War and the Arts in Latin America."

"From *Boarding Home* to *Boring Home*: Photo-blogs and the Re-Mapping of Cuban Exile." Paper read at the Transatlantic Conference. Providence, April 2010.

"The Aesthetics of Ruin." Paper read at conference on "Fractured Identities: Hispanic Visual Cultures." School of European Studies and School of Welsh, University of Wales, Cardiff, July 2009.

"Patagonia and Nationalism in the Novels of R. Bryn Williams and Carlos Dante Ferrari." Paper read at conference on "Spaces of Comparison: Welsh Writing in Comparative Contexts." University of Wales, Swansea, March 2009.

"The Mimosa and its Afterlife: Remembering Welsh Emigrations to Patagonia." Paper read at the conference of the New England Council on Latin American Studies. Mount Holyoke College, November 2007.

"Post-war Havana." Paper read at Latin American Studies Association Congress. Montreal, September 2007.

"Havana as Beirut." Paper read at Latin American Studies Association Congress. San Juan, Puerto Rico, March 2006.

"El arte del desvío: cultura y periodo especial en Cuba." Roundtable presentation at Latin American Studies Association Congress. Las Vegas, October 2004.

"Centro Habana: Ruins and the Fiction Industry." Paper read at conference on "Continuity and Change since the "período especial." Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies, City University of New York, October 2004.

"The Margins and the Center: Centro Habana in Recent Fiction." Paper read at the Fifth Conference on Cuban and Cuban-American Studies. Cuban Research Institute, Florida International University, October 2003.

"Otro *boom*: El mercado, el dólar y la narrativa cubana." Paper read at Latin American Studies Association Congress. Dallas, March 2003.

"The Dollar, Incorporated." Paper read at Fourth Conference on Cuban and Cuban-American Studies. Cuban Research Institute, Florida International University, March 2002.

"Dirty Autobiography: The Body (Im)politic of *Trilogía sucia de la Habana*." Paper read at Latin American Studies Association Congress. Washington D.C., September 2001.

"Cultural Negotiations in the Novels of Zoé Valdés and Cristina García." Paper read at Second Conference on Cuban and Cuban-American Studies. Cuban Research Institute, Florida International University, March 1999.

"Coverage: The Cultural Pages of *Granma*, Inside Cuba and Out." Paper read at American Comparative Literature Association Conference. Austin, March 1998.

"Mordecai a Haman: The Drama of Belonging in Welsh America." Paper read at American Comparative Literature Association Conference. Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, April 1997.

Teaching and Advising

Undergraduate courses taught at Brown University

Comparative Literature 51: War and the Arts: Guantánamo, Twenty Years On

Comparative Literature 51: Caribbean Re-writes

Comparative Literature 51: Fidel Castro and Che Guevara: the Men and the Myths

Comparative Literature 81: The Colonial and Postcolonial Marvelous (with Stephanie Merrim)

Comparative Literature 81: Confession, Autobiography, Testimony

Comparative Literature 142: Tales of Two Cities: Havana-Miami, San-Juan-New York

Comparative Literature 171: Literary Translation

Comparative Literature 181: Reading Revolution: Representations of Cuba

Comparative Literature 181: Latin American Literature in Dialogue with France

Comparative Literature 181: War, Anti-War, Postwar: Culture and Contestation in the Americas

Comparative Literature 181: Censorship

Humanities 1970: Literature and the Arts in Today's Cuba

Humanities 1975: Censorship and the Arts

Hispanic Studies 1370: Literature and Film of the Cuban Revolution

Hispanic Studies 1317: Detention and Freedom in the Americas

Graduate Courses taught at Brown University

Comparative Literature 282: Latin America and Theory

Comparative Literature 282: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Cuba (with Adrián López)

Comparative Literature 282: Metaphor

Comparative Literature 282: Translation: Theory and Practice

Comparative Literature 282: War (with Kenneth Haynes)

Comparative Literature 282: New Directions for Comparative Literature (with Kenneth Haynes)

Hispanic Studies 2520: Critical Readings in Cuban, Puerto Rican and Dominican Literature

Advising at Brown University:

Director/ Co-Director for the following students and dissertations:

Jamila Medina Ríos, Department of Hispanic Studies, "(Re)encarnaciones mambisas en la Cuba de hoy" (director; ongoing)

Alexandra Algaze González, Department of Comparative Literature, "Vulgar Poetics: Latinidad, Aesthetic Trash, and More-Is-More" (director; ongoing)

Claire Climer, Department of Comparative Literature, "Digital Pastoral: Form, Representation, and Scale in the Twenty-First-Century Novel" (co-director with Deak Nabers, Department of English; ongoing)

Mariajosé Rodríguez-Pliego, Department of Comparative Literature, "Foundational Futures: Nationhood, Migration, and Environment in the Literatures of Abiayala" (co-directed with Ralph Rodríguez, Departments of American Studies and English; Ph.D. 2023)

Elsa Charléty, Department of Comparative Literature, "In the Wake of Sycorax's Daughters: Gender and Knowledge Production in the Plantation Zone (1705-1939)" (co-director with Françoise Hamlin, Departments of Africana Studies and History; Ph.D. 2023)

Dennis Hogan, Department of Comparative Literature, "The Queen of Two Worlds: Crisis and Creation in the Central American Transit Zones, 1848-1914" (co-director with Kenneth Haynes, Department of Comparative Literature; Ph.D. 2022)

Katerina Gonzalez Seligmann, Department of Comparative Literature, "Constructing the Caribbean: Regional Discourse and Literary Practice on the Edge of World War II" (director; Ph.D. 2015)

Geoffrey Shullenberger, "Uncanny Influences: Freud, Argentina, and the Literary Uses of Paranoia" (director; Ph.D. 2012).

Dissertation Committee Member for twenty-two students in the following departments and institutions (2002-2024):

Brown University: Departments of Comparative Literature, Hispanic Studies, Africana Studies, Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, History, English

Harvard University, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures

Emory University, Department of Spanish and Portuguese

University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, Department of Hispanic Studies

Undergraduate Advising

Since 2002, I have been primary advisor to twenty-six senior thesis writers in Comparative Literature and second reader to twenty-one in Comparative Literature, Hispanic Studies, Latin American Studies, Women's Studies, International and Public Affairs and Modern Culture and Media.

Since 2002, I have been freshman advisor to twenty-seven students and sophomore advisor to twenty.

Service

Service to the Profession

Advisory Board, "Graz/ Puerto Rico International Conference on Human Rights from an Inter-American Perspective." Conference held biannually at the University of Graz, Austria, in collaboration with the University of Puerto Rico.

Grant Reviewer, National Endowment for the Humanities, 2019.

Advisory Board, International Journal of Welsh Writing in English, 2012-the present.

Editorial Board, Cuban Studies, 2013-2018.

Member of Prize Committee, American Comparative Literature Association Undergraduate Award, 2014.

Tenure/ promotion reviewer for junior faculty members at ten universities, 2010-2024 (Amherst College, UC Berkeley, UCLA, UC Riverside, CUNY, Illinois State University, MIT, UMass Dartmouth, University of Southern California, Swarthmore College, The University of Virginia).

Manuscript Reviewer for the University of Alabama Press, SUNY Press, Verso and University of California Press.

Article reviewer for Differences, PMLA, Bulletin of Latin American Research, Habana Elegante, Revista de Estudios Hispánicos, Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas, Comparative Literature, Hispanic Review, Cuban Studies, Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies, Sargasso and Caribbean Studies.

Service to Brown University

Member of University Task Force on Faculty Compensation, 2023-24.

Member of University Committee on Faculty Equity and Diversity, 2021–2024.

Faculty Director, Brown-in-Cuba program. 2007-2016. Member of CASA-Cuba Faculty Committee, 2016-2021.

Advisory Committee Member, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Brown University, 2019-20

Convenor/ co-convenor of three public-facing symposia at Brown University: "New Perspectives on Guantánamo: Art, Activism, Advocacy," September 2014 (with the Center for Public Humanities and the Watson Institute); "Guantánamo, Going Forward: What's Next for Current and Former Detainees?" September 2017 (with the Center for Public Humanities); "Camps in the Twenty-First Century Americas," December 2022 (with the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies)

Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Comparative Literature, 2011-12, 2013-2016 and 2018-2020.

Member of Graduate Committee, Department of Comparative Literature, 2021-2024.

Member of DIAP Committee, Department of Comparative Literature, 2016 and 2021-2024.

Faculty and Postdoctoral Search Committees, Departments of Comparative Literature and Hispanic Studies, 2016-2024.