Studies on Intermediality and Intercultural Mediation – REUNIDO
Journal of Artistic Creation and Literary Research – 14.1 (June 2026): 1-19
e-ISSN 2340-650X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.17811/jaclr.23795

"We are all commodities at Yaxaktun": Resisting Oppression Through the Latina "Multiplicitous Selfhood" in *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*[1]

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Abstract: This article seeks to analyse Silvia Moreno-García's *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau* (2022) against the backdrop of posthumanism and Latina feminist philosophy, in order to show how the transgression of the human/animal dualism of Moreau's hybrids, now embodied by his daughter Carlota, exceeds that explored in H.G. Wells' original novel. Thus, this study demonstrates that Moreno-García's historical re-contextualisation within the Caste War of Yucatán (1847-1901), far from simply retelling the story against a different, exotic background, provides an intersectional commentary on the sociocultural and political factors that enforce commodification. Carlota Moreau's existence as part-jaguar and part-human—both white and Maya—converges various systems of domination: the reification of her body as a scientific project and the racial and patriarchal oppressions that surround it. Following Mariana Ortega's concept of "multiplicitous selfhood," this article analyses how the imagery of fragmentation and the politics of naming work in the novel to endorse liminality as a valid and legitimate state of being. Hence, diverging from Wells' portrayal of hybridity as imperfect and incomplete, Moreno-García's multiplicitous selves embrace, rather than shun, in-betweenness as a form of resisting from the margins.
Keywords: Hybridity; Latina Feminist Philosophy; Multiplicitous Selfhood; Posthumanism; *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*; Moreno-García

"Todos somos Mercancía en Yaxaktun": Resistiendo Opresiones a través de la "Identidad Múltiple" Latina en *La Hija del Doctor Moreau*

Resumen: Este artículo pretende analizar *La hija del Doctor Moreau* (2022) de Silvia Moreno-García desde las perspectivas del posthumanismo y la filosofía feminista

[1] Recommended Citation: Ruiz-Lejarcegui, Ane B. "'We are all commodities at Yaxaktun': Resisting Oppression through the Latina 'Multiplicitous Selfhood' in *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau.*" *Journal of Artistic Creation and Literary Research* 14, no. 1, 2026, pp. 1-19: https://reunido.uniovi.es/index.php/jaclr/index

latinoamericana, para mostrar cómo la transgresión del dualismo humano/animal de los híbridos de Moreau, personificados ahora por su hija Carlota, supera lo explorado en la obra original de H.G. Wells. Por tanto, este estudio demuestra que la re-contextualización histórica de Moreno-García dentro de la Guerra de Castas de Yucatán (1847-1901), lejos de simplemente reinterpretar la historia en un contexto exótico diferente, ofrece una reflexión interseccional sobre los factores socioculturales y políticos que perpetúan la mercantilización. La existencia de Carlota Moreau como mitad jaguar, mitad humana—blanca y maya—converge diversos sistemas de dominación: la cosificación de su cuerpo como proyecto científico y las opresiones raciales y patriarcales que lo rodean. Siguiendo el concepto de "identidad múltiple" de Mariana Ortega, este artículo analiza cómo la fragmentación y las políticas de nombrarse a una misma reivindican la liminalidad como un estado válido y legítimo. En definitiva, la hibridez, vista como condición imperfecta e incompleta en Wells, es aceptada, en lugar de rechazada, por las identidades múltiples en la novela de Moreno-García como una forma de resistir desde los márgenes.
Palabras clave: hibridez; filosofía feminista latinoamericana; identidad múltiple; posthumanismo; *La hija del Doctor Moreau*; Moreno-García

1. INTRODUCTION[2]

The Daughter of Doctor Moreau is a 2022 novel by Mexican-Canadian writer Silvia Moreno-García set in nineteenth-century Yucatán and is described by the author herself as a "loosely inspired" (305) reimagining of H.G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). The original Victorian work explores the eventual degeneration of grotesque human/animal hybrids called the Beast Folk, who have been created by the eponymous doctor in an unparalleled, self-aggrandising quest for scientific knowledge. Since their publication during the *fin-de-siècle*, many of Wells' scientific romances, such as *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), have been reworked into sequels, prequels, expansions on their universe, reinterpretations or revisions, due to the wide public appeal of their visionary creativity. *The Island of Doctor Moreau* itself is by no means an exception: adapted into several radio, videogame, cinematic and television productions, which include popular culture appearances through interventions like "The Island of Dr. Hibbert" in *The Simpsons*, the novel has been ceaselessly reinterpreted in different lights throughout the years.

In Moreno-García's recent retelling, however, one finds a critical feminist perspective largely absent from previous adaptations—and from Wells' original text. Certainly, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* has long been acclaimed for its social

[2] This article was completed under the auspices of the University of the Basque Country's REWEST research group, funded by the Basque Government [IT-1565-22], and was supported by the Predoctoral Training Program for Non-PhD Research Personnel [PRE_2025_2_0133], granted by the Department of Science, Universities and Innovation of the Basque Government.

commentary on the dangers of unrestricted scientific ambition when divorced from ethical constraints, as well as its denunciation of Victorian ideals of progress and civilisation. According to Hurley, Wells' hybrids epitomise the possibility that humans may be neither "fully evolved" nor "fully human" themselves, and that the idealised progress "towards a telos of intellectual and moral perfection" (56) may be prevented by humanity's own retrogression into a more animalistic state. Altogether, the novel delves into *fin-de-siècle* anxieties regarding the "coming terror" of humanity's inner, more primitive animal counterpart, as pointed to by Wells' own periodical production over the years.[3]

Several scholars, however, have effected critical readings of his work from the theoretical frameworks of race and gender studies (Hurley; Vint; Taneja) showcasing the novel's scarce engagement with identities other than the white, middle-class, cis-heterosexual male viewpoint, which Wells himself shared. Due to the lack of fully-fledged female characterisation in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, which rather extends to Wells' other acclaimed scientific romances, several of its modern adaptations have chosen to reimagine the story from the perspective of a female protagonist. Such is the case of Moreno-García's version, which narrates the coming-of-age story of the doctor's human/animal daughter, Carlota Moreau. Set during the Caste War of Yucatán (1847-1901), this novel provides an enlightening sociocultural and political commentary on the different power structures that enforce commodification, as we unveil the patriarchal, colonial and anthropocentric oppressions that constrain Carlota's agency.

Due to its recent publication, not much research has been carried out yet on the novel, despite its rich variety of thematic concerns. A rather significant scholarly contribution, nonetheless, includes Jessica Elizabeth Young's 2025 MA thesis, "*Materia Non Medica:* Reading Disability and Medical Narratives in *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*," which analyses the novel from the framework of disability studies, offering a reading of the hybrids' disabled bodies in relation to indigenous epistemologies. However, the multi-layered hybridity depicted in the novel presents us with an opportunity to study identities that transgress binaries through post-dualist approaches to

[3] Wells warns: "Even now, for all we can tell, the coming terror may be crouching for its spring and the fall of humanity be at hand" ("The Extinction of Man" 119). On Wells' periodical production, see Philmus and Hughes (1975), who note that Wells "has two essays in 1893-1894 on the special threat to homo sapiens arising from the fact that dominant species invariably fall to some humble creature that nature is quietly preparing in the "abyss" ("The Extinction of Man"; "On Extinction"; see also the conclusion of "Zoological Retrogression")" (9).

selfhood that define it in relational ways, i.e., through the current of posthumanism. Although both novels share some similarities in plot structure and characterisation, Wells' text ultimately depicts hybridity as a temporary or incomplete state, deeming evolution—and devolution—as an inescapable, sublime power of nature. However, Moreno-García's focus on Carlota's journey of self-discovery shifts this narrative by presenting her hybridity as valid, *sine qua non* part of her identity, a reading for which the concept "multiplicitous selfhood," proposed by Latina feminist philosopher Mariana Ortega, proves incredibly useful.

Therefore, this article aims to analyse *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau* from the theoretical frameworks of posthumanism and Latina feminist philosophy, in order to identify how Moreno-García's re-contextualisation of the story helps expand the intricacies of identity construction originally explored by Wells. While the Beast Folk's transgression of the human/animal binary opposition has often been studied through the lens of Gothic conventions, psychoanalysis and evolutionary theory, recent research by Gomel and Vint has shown that the rising fields of posthumanism and (critical) animal studies can provide further enlightening readings of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. Hence, this article contributes to this exploration of human/animal hybrid literary depictions through a posthumanist lens, which seeks to undermine Cartesian binary systems of meaning in favour of relational ones (Ferrando 58).

All in all, this article argues that *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau* portrays hybridity as a legitimate state of being that should be embraced, not shunned, and that horizontal—rather than hierarchical—collaborative relations are a pivotal part of the process. In order to do so, I will first provide an overview of the main theoretical-conceptual framework that will be used throughout the analysis, i.e., Latina feminist philosophy and posthumanism. Then, I will examine the novel's depiction of how commodification operates, divided into three separate sections: the implications of colonial order during the Caste War of Yucatán, the theme of fragmentation in relation to Carlota's identity construction, and naming as a collaborative act of what Haraway calls making-with or *sympoiesis*. Lastly, I will ponder on the critical implications derived from this reading, ultimately arguing that this adaptation allows for a relational definition of liminality that transcends the original work's pessimism, and views hybridity not as threat but as plural, diverse and enriching.

2. Towards a Posthumanist, Relational Framework: Redefining Selfhood

Before delving into the representation of Carlota's mutiplicitous selfhood in the novel, it is necessary to offer some explanations regarding the concepts and theories that inform the following analysis, i.e., those belonging to the fields of Latina feminist philosophy and posthumanism. The intersection between both areas of study may not seem apparent at first, but is in fact rather intuitive: both adopt a phenomenological understanding of selfhood that refutes essentialist acceptations and that is instead inscribed by embodied experience, as this section will help elucidate.

The sociocultural construction of identities and what exactly constitutes one's sense of "self" has been pervasive in philosophical discussions since before the field formally existed. In an interview conducted by Julian Evans, Jessica Ellis and Sangie Zaitsoff, Latina philosopher Mariana Ortega notes that this topic is of particular relevance in the case of racialised, minority communities, since (white) Western philosophy has historically proposed abstracted and generalised conceptions of selfhood that do not encompass the experience of people who live in the margins ("Embodied Experience" 60). Common acceptations that determine selfhood in terms of binary oppositions—man/woman, human/animal, white/black—therefore fail to acknowledge the fluidity and blurring of boundaries that is inherent to embodied experience.

Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa, for instance, famously explained this tension in the following terms: "My identity is always in flux; it changes as I step into and cross over many worlds each day . . . All of these and none of these are my primary identity. I can't say, this is the true me, or that is the true me. They are all the true me's" (209-210). In other words, people such as Latina women often cross the thresholds that mark the boundaries of different social identities, whereby none seem enough to describe its complexity on their own, yet all are equally significant. It is because of this, Ortega argues, that the theorising of selfhood should take intersectionality into account and arise from lived experience, not through abstraction ("Latina Feminism" 251).

Hence, understanding the importance of this conception of selfhood—not only for sociological accounts exclusive to Latina women, but also for the field of philosophy as a whole, as Ortega proposes ("Embodied Experience" 61)—is pivotal to the following analysis of *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*. This view underscores the fluidity and non-

fixedness of identity as well as the multiplicity within, which are key themes that lie at the heart of the novel.

Moreover, this philosophical approach seems highly compatible with the contemporary posthumanist understanding of selfhood, and adopting the latter will further inform the novel's analysis with a post-anthropocentric and post-dualist stance. Inspired by feminist, anticapitalist and, to an extent, antihumanist perspectives, the position taken by the current of posthumanism, as Ferrando explains, involves an approach to self-definition that precisely aims to denounce the binary systems of signification that have historically been used to oppress and discriminate against different collectives (105). These groups include human animals who have been excluded for ideological reasons—the global majority, women and non-binary people, queer and disabled communities, to name but a few—as well as non-human animals and environments.

In short, this current implies an ontological and epistemological paradigm that highlights the relational networks of mutual transformation in which we co-exist. Renowned philosopher Donna Haraway suggests the term *sympoiesis*—or making-with—to denote the collaboration imbued in this entanglement, claiming that "nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing" (58). Thus, this posthumanist defiance of the binary oppositions mentioned above, endorses a change towards a "kind of material semiotics [that] is always situated, someplace and not noplace, entangled and worldly" (Haraway 4).

Therefore, one might identify a parallelism between this view and the postpositive-realist strand within Latina philosophy endorsed by Paula Moya and Linda Martín Alcoff. In her overview of the main theoretical concerns of Latina theorists over the last couple of decades, Ortega explains that this strand understands the fluidity of selfhood emphasising its dependence on embodied and material conditions (Ortega "Latina Feminism" 248-249). In this context, theorists such as Ortega adopt an understanding of selfhood that follows an ontological pluralistic view in line with posthumanist principles, which accounts for "a complex self in the making intertwined with the world(s) and other selves" ("Embodied Experience" 63).

Hence, this article utilises Ortega's concept of "multiplicitous selfhood" as a tool to examine the boundary-crossing identity of Carlota in the novel, as this term seems to adopt a posthumanist understanding of selfhood as multiple and fluid, always in the

process of constructing and reconstructing itself, while maintaining a sense of unity. Approached in such a way, the self is thus situated in specific conditions—i.e., in relation to others and to the world—and at the intersection of various social identities related to race, sexuality, gender and class, among others. The self evolves, in other words, in a state of in-betweenness. Having explained the main theoretical underpinnings that lie at the intersection of posthumanism and Latina feminist philosophy, the following section will move on to analyse how these tensions are made apparent through the intersecting oppressions that underlie commodification in Moreno-García's novel.

3. Denouncing Commodification in *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*

3.1. Contextualising Intersecting Oppressions

Firstly, in order to examine how commodification operates in *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*, it is imperative to contextualise the novel with regard to the original material in H.G. Wells' 1896 text. *The Island of Doctor Moreau* follows the unexpected arrival of Edward Prendick in a remote Pacific island where Doctor Moreau, a vivisectionist exiled from Europe after the discovery of his sadist experiments, has scientifically uplifted animals into grotesque human-looking creatures called the Beast Folk. Subjected to extreme agony in Moreau's laboratory, aptly named the "House of Pain," the hybrids' suffering continues after the procedure itself is finished: the Beast Folk are indoctrinated by Moreau and his assistant, Montgomery, into abiding by human moral codes. Thus, they are forced to suppress their animal instincts by means of fear and religious dogma, until they inevitably degenerate into their original animal forms.

The setting of the story seems to give Moreau's *à la Frankenstein* scientific experimentation an illusion of seclusion, being the connection between remote islands and human/animal metamorphosis, as many scholars have noted, an indubitable allusion to Circe's myth. As Bowen states, "Wells skilfully mines the resources of myth, adapts them for a new age, and above all, rediscovers the perfect topographical emblem for human isolation, the island, to show just how unspeakable life's adventure may well be" (333). Hence, the island itself seems to serve almost as a prime sample for the scientific observation of the survival of the fittest, as Prendick notes: "save for the grossness of the line, the grotesqueness of the forms, I had here before me the whole balance of human life in miniature, the whole interplay of instinct, reason, and fate in its simplest form" (Wells 184).

Moreno-García, however, disposes of the trope of the island[4] and instead sets the story in the nineteenth-century Caste War of Yucatán. Far from simply using this change to retell the story against an exotic and yet literarily unexplored background, the author utilises it to expand on Wells' exploration of the human condition from an intersectional perspective that is particular and relevant to this context. The novel, narrated from Carlota and Montgomery's focalisations in alternating chapters, offers a nuanced view of how commodification operates by following the events happening in the remote ranch of Yaxaktun, located in the middle of the peninsula and far away from the so-called "civilisation" of Yucatán's capital, Mérida. In Yaxaktun, Carlota is joined by her father, as well as an English *mayordomo* by the name of Montgomery Laughton, an indigenous housekeeper called Ramona, and several human/animal hybrids who she considers friends and family.

Like in the original novel, Moreau's experimentations over the years have resulted in the scientific manufacture of over two dozen hybrids to varying degrees of anthropomorphism, the most successful of which being his own daughter. Unbeknownst to her, Carlota is a half-human, half-animal hybrid, herself an assemblage of a jaguar's, Moreau's and Teodora's own genetic materials—the latter being the Maya woman who carried her to term through gestational surrogacy (Moreno-García 204). At the beginning, Moreau is depicted as having conducted animal experimentations for more benevolent, altruistic reasons than his Wellsian counterpart. He does not appear to pursue "the extreme limit of plasticity in a living shape" and does not emotionally alienate himself from his test-subjects, who are "no longer an animal, a fellow-creature, but a problem" (Wells 164). Instead, Moreno-García's Doctor Moreau is portrayed as a loving father who attempts "to eliminate the ills of man" (203),[5] which is, in the eyes of his daughter, a more than admirable cause.

However, Montgomery's chapters reveal that this is in fact not the whole truth: its real origins lie within the socio-political environment of nineteenth century Yucatán. As

[4] Granted, the epigraph at the beginning of the novel points to the link between both settings and is confirmed in the Afterword as the initial spark for the novel: Yucatán was originally charted by Spanish colonisers as an island due to the indigenous Mayan word "peten" meaning both "island" and "peninsula."
[5] The full justification, however, raises some bioethical concerns regarding disabled bodies and their right to exist: "They priests tell us God made us perfect, in his image, but they lie. Look at all the defects. All the mistakes nature wreaks upon our flesh. The deformed and the infirm and the ones who go to their grave early. I sought to rectify that. To perfect God's creation" (203). See Young (2025) for an in-depth analysis on Moreau's eugenic endeavours from the perspective of Disability Studies.

McArdle Stephens notes, most historiographical revisions of the Caste War of Yucatán[6] coincide in that the conflict began as a rebellion against the harsh living conditions imposed on the indigenous Maya people by a political and economic system that favoured white Mexicans. Since the first half of the century, the government had been expropriating lands used by the Maya for communal harvesting to promote the expansion of large states, which were ruled by *yucatecos*, the creoles descended from the Spanish colonisers (Ferrer 101). Deprived of their lands, the Maya labourers were further exploited through barbaric working conditions and heavy tax burdens, from both government and Catholic Church, which Ferrer deems as "slavery in disguise" (102), and were ultimately regarded as property.

In *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*, this context provides the explanation of the hybrids' existence. As revolts arise in the peninsula due to the war, the Mayan *macehuales* who work the haciendas no longer seem trustworthy for the people who employ them. Because of this, the man who owns Yaxaktun, the *yucateco* Hernando Lizalde, tasks Moreau with manufacturing reliable, highly profitable workers to undertake the harvesting of sugar and henequen that the Mayans did before. Pondering over the costs that importing Caribbean, Chinese or Korean workers to cultivate the fields might entail, Montgomery is told that these hybrids are the cheapest, most cost-effective solution, despite their shortened life-span, which is plagued with numerous chronic illnesses (Moreno-García 34). Thus, the creation of the hybrids in the novel, attributed to egotistical ambitions in Wells' original, directly establishes power hierarchies of economic dependence that turn Yaxaktun, overall, as the metaphorical intersection of different systems of oppression, which Montgomery notes when reflecting that "there was always someone with a little more money, a little more power, and he owned you" (41). This premise therefore not only explores the human/animal, creator/creature and master/slave dynamics depicted in Wells' version, but also incorporates the male/female, white/indigenous and Christian/Mayan religion dualisms into the narrative.

Many of these oppositions in fact converge in Carlota's example, as she is commodified in a twofold manner. On the one hand, she is oblivious to her own existence

[6] Scholars such as Campos García point to the ideological, racist coinage of the neologism "Caste War" in reference to this conflict. He notes how the choice of this purposefully neutralised term, as opposed to "indigenous rebellion of Yucatán", implies a language of dominion used by the elite to promote an image of stability and foster the union of warring factions against the Maya people, thereby diverting attention from the conflict's original causes: exploitation and oppression (181).

as a hybrid, having been herself raised as Moreau's biological daughter and being the most human-looking of them all, his greatest achievement. Unknowingness notwithstanding, Carlota is considered "one great project," "a work in progress" (204), and is thus commodified by Moreau, the scientist. Traces of Moreau's pride in his daughter are thereby tainted by his own hubris, focusing on Carlota as his accomplishment rather than her as an individual: "no one would be able to deny I've created a chimera to surpass any ordinary woman" (205). On the other hand, due to financial problems and Moreau's inability to meet the scientific production promised to Hernando, Carlota is expected by her father to marry Eduardo Lizalde, Hernando's son. Hence, she is further commodified through patriarchal oppression by Moreau, the father, since her marriage will be exploited for his financial gain. In addition to that, when her hybrid nature is finally revealed in a fit of rage and she is deemed unsuitable as a bride, she is offered the alternative of being Eduardo's mistress back in the city of Mérida. Once again, her body becomes a commodity to be exploited by the *hacendados*, in this case not through forced labour in the fields, like the other hybrids, but in terms of sexual exploitation (256).

Indeed, patriarchal oppression is one of the common thematic concerns among *The Island of Doctor Moreau* adaptations that incorporate female hybrids, who are often also personified by Moreau's daughter. This hybrid is usually based on the character of the Puma in the original novel,[7] who was the first of Moreau's victims to effectively trigger an empathetic response from Prendick. As Figgins observes in her analysis of female characterisation in adaptations of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, there is a pattern regarding the function fulfilled by this new figure within the narrative. Film adaptations of the twentieth century, for instance, deviate from Wells' focus on the horror of Moreau's experimentation on the Puma and instead showcase her body through the male gaze. That is, patriarchal oppression is represented through the objectification of the female body, which renders the character as completely submissive to the prominent patriarchal figures, i.e., Moreau, Prendick and Montgomery. In Moreno-García's example, this is partly seen through Montgomery's focalised chapters, whose quasi-idolatrous fascination with Carlota's body is just as reifying as Eduardo's own lust for her.

[7] If not, as Figgins shows, it is usually a half-woman, half-feline hybrid, the social connotations of which should not be overlooked.

However, Figgins also notes that, in more recent young adult novels, such as Megan Shepherd's *The Madman's Daughter* (2013) and Theodora Goss' *The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter* (2017), the repression of the hybrid's animal instincts acts as metaphor for the emotional restriction and forced submission of women under patriarchal societies. This becomes rather apparent in Carlota's case, as it is explained that "[s]he was to be docile and sweet. That is how Dr. Moreau wished his daughter to act. She attempted to comply" (Moreno-García 68). Under the pretence of avoiding an illness that has ailed her since childhood—which is, in truth, a lie used to keep her jaguar half at bay—Moreau medicates his daughter through a lithium and morphine formula that has a dulling effect in all hybrids, keeping them soothed (208). Moreau uses this as excuse to force Carlota into submission, repressing her emotional outbursts through self-regulating exercises, such as the following: "Five, six, seven. Count to ten and wait. Strong emotions were no good, her father said. Keep calm" (75). She is thus expected to behave as the perfect image of obedience, docility and meekness—in other words, to embody the traditional features of the so-called 'angel in the house.'

As such, *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau* seems to comply with the feminist interpretations of twenty-first-century retellings summarised by Figgins, where the human/animal and male/female structures of power intertwine. Nonetheless, I would argue that, while this novel mirrors such intersectional approaches to systems of domination, it is innovative in that overcoming this oppression is made possible by adopting a posthumanist understanding of selfhood that is endorsed within Latina feminist philosophy.

3.2. Revising Fragmentation through Carlota Moreau's Multiplicitous Selfhood

As was briefly explained above, Carlota's identity construction throughout the novel arguably falls in line with Ortega's concept of "multiplicitous selfhood." Through her character's development, one may clearly see that it is precisely this liminality or in-betweenness—the multiplicity that lies within the fragmentation—that makes her final acquisition of agency possible. The first way in which this multiplicity seems to be represented in the novel is through the imagery of fragmentation. From Montgomery's first impressions of the hybrids to Moreau's scientific indifference, the human/animal creatures are depicted using expressions that frame fragmentation exclusively in negative terms, denoting a sense of incompleteness and brokenness. They are referred to as

"creatures that were not whole, that were sickly" (80), and is often stated that one, usually Montgomery or Carlota, may "want to fix them, but they are broken" (183).

This focus on negative dialectics or what we might designate as "terms of lacking" seems to parallel Wells' original story. In *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Prendick's narration follows the portrayal of humanness as symbol of unity and perfectibility that a legacy of Humanist beliefs have historically constructed as a "systematized standard of recognisability" (Braidotti 26), used to structurally other the racialised, naturalised subaltern. From his first encounter with the Beast Folk, Prendick contrasts the signs of physical degeneration that the hybrid bodies display with his own human "wholeness," all the while upholding the human/animal hierarchy and rendering hybridity as incomplete and inferior, which is viewed only as Moreau's failure to create a fully human being (Wells 169). In relation to the hybrids in Moreno-García's novel, who suffer from painful chronic illnesses and physical deformities, such language seems to convey the idea that the disabled body is but a mere caricature of its abled counterpart, and thus, less worthy of respect.

This is also the case of Carlota, although in a less apparent manner, due to her being the most anthropomorphic hybrid. It seems rather relevant that, in her case, an imagery of division and fragmentation is directly employed after instances where she defies patriarchal figures to protect her loved ones, i.e., the half-coati Cachito and half-fox Lupe, childhood friends of Carlota's, and, in spite of everything, her father. While naïve at the beginning, it is in a confrontation with Moreau after he has brutally punished Cachito that she finally questions her father's omniscient knowledge, realising both the truth of his cruelty and the extent of everyone's commodification in Yaxaktun. Reflecting on the events—Eduardo and Montgomery fighting over her, Cachito biting Eduardo to defend Montgomery—, Carlota looks in the mirror and feels "as though there were an invisible crack in it, perhaps in her[, which] was slowly growing day after day, threatening to obliterate [her]" (Moreno-García 131).

Similarly, when she sees through the veil of Moreau's godlike, self-aggrandising persona and guiltily realises that "he's a bad father" (136), the sensation of the "crack inside her flesh, steadily growing" (136) comes back. After helping Lupe join the Mayan resistance, in direct defiance to her father's wishes, once again, that "seam" inside of her reappears, making Carlota run "her hands down her neck, looking for a flaw she could not see" (157). This is followed by her noticing the sharpness of her nails, the brightness

and glow of her eyes, and an increased sense of hearing and smell that anticipate her final metamorphoses, when her jaguar self comes to light in a confrontation with the Lizaldes at the climax of the novel.

When Hernando confronts Moreau because he has not provided the hybrid field workers that were promised, upon knowing that his son Eduardo is to marry Carlota, Hernando reveals that she is in fact half-jaguar, half-human. In the fight that follows, Moreau is attacked and, in order to protect her father, Carlota allows her repressed emotions and animal instincts to come out. No longer able to sustain the farce, her hybrid nature thrusts her into a profound state of in-betweenness and indeterminacy that results in an existential crisis: "I don't know who I should be. I'm Dr. Moreau's obedient daughter, and that's not enough anymore" (248). As this inner division solidifies and the multiplicity of her conflicting selves fragment, the symbolic fracture becomes "deep and solid[; a] fault line, filled with dread and anger" (251).

The end of the novel, however, frames this fragmentation in a positive light. When the hybrids have rebelled against the Lizalde *yucatecos* who want them back as property, Carlota fully embraces her hybrid nature, which feels as if it were cracking itself from inside out, in order to protect Lupe from Eduardo's deadly attack. No longer trying to fight her instincts, she lets the animal take over: "Carlota arched her back and felt her vertebrae popping, bones and tendons shifting with a series of loud cracks" (292), thus coming to terms with the fact that this fragmentation "wasn't an ailment and it wasn't a defect, it was raw power that she'd seldom tasted. It was the mystery of her body. At that moment, it was her salvation" (292).

Hence, the crack that symbolises Carlota's multiple, fragmented identity is thereby redefined in terms of resistance. The illusion of the self-making, autopoietic Human denounced by posthumanism, which is already dismantled by her boundary-breaking hybridity itself, is thus refuted because the impulse for change arises in Carlota due to collective care—for her fellow hybrids, for her loved ones. The fragmentation implied by the recurring image of the crack, therefore, no longer signifies brokenness nor alludes to the hybrids' incompleteness, which is repeatedly noted by the male characters both in Moreno-García's novel and in Wells' original. Instead, fragmentation is ultimately portrayed as denoting Carlota's "multiple belongings," thus acknowledging her existence as a "relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity . . . that works across differences and is also internally differentiated" (Braidotti 49).

3.3. The Politics of Naming and Relational Agency

The second way in which Carlota's multiplicitous selfhood emerges through collective making-with is represented by the act of naming oneself, the significance of which is made apparent by the very title of the novel. In a conspicuous syntactic allusion to its literary predecessor, the title *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau* in fact emphasises the protagonist's namelessness in contrast with the ownership and possessiveness denoted by the preposition 'of,' which underscores the relevance of—giving or being given—names as one of the novel's main thematic concerns.

Although, barring Ramona, all human characters in the novel have both name and surname, most of the hybrids' names simply hint at an aspect of their physical appearance through direct translations from the Mayan Yucatec language, in a vague imitation of Wells' naming technique. In the original work, the Beast Folk are given rather descriptive denominations by their human counterparts, such as Ape-Man or Leopard-Man, in a scientifically detached manner that fits the characters' background and personalities. In Moreno-García's novel, their names sometimes point to the animal they most resemble: some examples include Aj Kaab (bee), Peek' (dog), Áayin (crocodile) and Weech (armadillo), among others (Gómez Navarrete). Other hybrids have Spanish names that hint at a physical or behavioural characteristic that defines them, such as la Pinta (dot), Estrella (star), el Mustio (gloomy), Parda (brownish), and el Rojo (red).

When considering the most human-like hybrids, Cachito and Lupe, it is interesting to take into account how the two main ontological paradigms of the novel interact. On the one hand, Moreau acts as representative of Western science, reason and rigidity; on the other, Ramona symbolises indigenous epistemology, fluidity and superstition. She emerges as a character that, according to Young, is the prism through which "Indigenous knowledge is shown as an active force that is resilient, adaptive, and quietly transformative" (37).

It seems significant, therefore, that all hybrids in Yaxaktun have a *de facto* Latinate name assigned by Moreau. Lupe and Cachito are originally called Livia and Cesare, Latin denominations not unlike ones found in medical texts or zoological taxonomies. Nonetheless, Ramona insists that they be given different names by their community, names that are actively used when interacting among themselves:

> Her father had a good Latin name for each of his creations, but Ramona had nicknamed each and every one of them or they called one another another thing. Cachito was small,

> hence his moniker. Lupe simply looked like a Lupe to Ramona. No, Ramona did not use the names the doctor liked. Even the doctor's daughter had a nickname. Carlota was Loti and sometimes she was even Carlota *Hija del Elote Cara de Tejocote*. (31)

Ramona's insistence that they not reduce themselves to one single name appears to be a rather literal representation of the multiple social identities that converge within a self, as suggested by Ortega's philosophical reflections ("Latina Feminism" 246). It symbolises Anzaldúa's claim that naming or labelling oneself has the power to "narrow or sediment the self," in a way impeding its fluidity, but that it also presents "relational and political possibilities" (qtd. in Ortega "Embodied Experience" 63). In fact, Ramona seems to share this posthumanist understanding of (co-)existence as a constant, symbiotic becoming-with, to borrow Haraway's terminology: "Ramona told them stories, taught them words, and they lived by the doctor's rules but also Ramona's habits. That, Ramona said, was as it should be, for the world is a constant compromise, a greeting of the other and of yourself" (Moreno-García 32).

Thus, Ramona seems to understand the situatedness of the self and the importance of embodied experience, not in terms of hierarchies of ownership that commodify those in inferior positions, but in terms of being-with one another, equally, by acknowledging how we are "intertwined with the world and other selves" (Ortega "Embodied Experience" 63). I would argue, therefore, that this insistence in naming can be understood as a *sympoietic* act of collective resistance against ruling oppressions that showcases the need of "unexpected collaborations and combinations" to find alternate pathways (Haraway 4), thus enacting a kind of posthumanist accountability based, as Braidotti notes, "on a strong sense of collectivity, relationality and hence community building" (49).

Regarding her own name, Carlota reflects upon how her father specifically chose it "because it meant 'freedom,' and he thought it would suit her" (Moreno-García 43). Rather ironically, however, Carlota's own seclusion in Yaxaktun is fated in her name, that of the former Mexican empress Carlota of Belgium, who she initially considers a tragic "madwoman locked away in Brussels" (44) in the aftermath of her husband's execution in 1867. Bearing a name imbued with such contradictory connotations, it seems rather relevant that it is precisely renouncing her own name that ultimately gives Carlota financial security and hence the means to be freed from all constraints.

At the end of the novel, she finds out that the only condition imposed by her paternal family in order to obtain her father's inheritance is to never carry the Moreau surname again. In this apparent erasure of her identity as Moreau's daughter, however, instead of self-doubt, Carlota finds liberation. No longer enclosed within the constraints of her own name, this possibility brings about an opportunity to approach identity as fluid and ever-changing: "I've only ever been 'the doctor's daughter,' but I feel as if I may now be someone else and chart my path" (300).

Therefore, Carlota's renunciation of her surname signifies a step forward in her welcoming of a new—unknown, undefined, unconstrained—identity, which is not restrictive and allows her to fully embrace her multiplicitous selfhood as something not endangered by hybridity, but enriched by it. What is more, her newly self-appointed name is also kept hidden from the reader, who is denied the pleasure of knowing who she will become in the future. She is no longer referred to as "the daughter of Doctor Moreau," an overtly descriptive epithet that denotes ownership, as was previously noted. Instead, she is transformed into someone different, someone of her own making: "I feel this way I may choose who I wish to be" (300). In doing so, the novel ultimately succeeds in establishing Carlota's identity as fluid, multiple, and her own.

4. Conclusions

To conclude, this article has shown that, while Moreno-García's novel discusses themes already explored in other female-led retellings of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, setting the story within the Caste War of Yucatán allows us to examine how systems of domination intersect in the exploitation and subsequent commodification of marginalised communities. The combination of posthumanist theories and Latina feminist philosophy that inform this analysis has proved useful to examine how the novel embraces liminality as part of identities, by presenting a collaboration-based model of resisting colonial and patriarchal hierarchies.

By analysing the political and sociocultural implications of its historical re-contextualisation, this study has demonstrated how *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau* endorses embracing of one's multiplicitous selfhood—i.e., acknowledging the multiplicity within the unity—as pivotal in the face of capitalist oppression. The collective construction of Carlota's identity studied in this article further proves the inadequacy of Cartesian binaries to encompass the lived, embodied experience of people

of colour such as Latina women, who reside between worlds and often cross literal, geographical borders as well as the figurative thresholds of social identity markers.

This article has contributed to the study of new reimaginings of *The Island of Doctor* Moreau that include intersectional feminist approaches, arguing that posthumanist interpretations of identity construction can elucidate the tensions already present in the original novel, which have largely been discussed through other perspectives. Thus, I have suggested that the blurring of boundaries embodied by Doctor Moreau's human/animal hybrids no longer represents a fear of evolutionary determinism. Conversely, Moreno-García redraws hybridity as possibility, as a prism through which to engage with identities in a plural, relational way.

Identifying fragmentation and naming as key strategies that speak to these concerns in the novel, this paper has argued that *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*, in its depiction of Carlota's—and the hybrids—multi-layered commodification, can be understood as an example of how making kin, as Haraway states, is the only way to obtain and enact agency. Carlota's achievement of agency, finally liberated from intersecting oppressions, is ultimately understood not in individualistic, neoliberal terms, but in relational and accountable ones that endorse collective care and empathy as forms of resistance.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

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