

SAAS YOUNG SCHOLARS

Félix Martín Doctoral Seminar



Book of Abstracts



Facultad de Filología
Departamento de Filología Inglesa

VNiVERSiDAD D SALAMANCA

SAAS Félix Martín Doctoral Seminar

Universidad de Salamanca

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Book of Abstracts:

Panel 1: Trauma & Resistance

Elena Miriam Dobre (Universitat Jaume I). “Under the sign of trauma: An analysis of trauma in William Faulkner’s 1929-1931 novels”

My thesis deals with the dimensions of traumatic shock in the work of William Faulkner. Underwriting Faulkner’s narrative is his provocative desire of subjecting his characters to flood and fire – that is, to shock. Shock, material or metaphorical, is arguably the organizational principle of Faulkner’s central body of work encompassing 1929 and 1931 novels—the corpus of this study. Tenuously correlated, but strongly implied, as an aftereffect of this shock, Faulkner’s characters have traditionally been read as “deviant” or “insane”. Classical readings have linked the author’s rhetorical perversion and thematic morbidity to Southern Gothic aesthetics, and pathology has been framed by criticism as a regional metaphor linked to the South its idiosyncrasies. Turn of the century criticism attempted to take a closer look at Faulknerian deviance, showing that Faulkner’s characters undermine the line between sanity and insanity. I attempt to go beyond and problematize this very dichotomy.

My approximation to Faulknerian shock is through the notion of traumatization. I use a composite framework drawing on different strands of trauma studies in order to carry out a threefold analysis. First, against aprioristic, reifying, and oversimplistic readings conflating notions of insanity and deviance, I propose a closer scanning of the characters’ psychic and psychological distress, and the clinical symptomatology they purportedly display. In underscoring the factual detonators of psychological disturbances, I aim to bring to light agents of traumatization, and emphasize the generative factors of pathologic behavior. The second aim of this study is closely related. I look into the social dimension of psychological distress. I use the notion of traumatization to illuminate the way in which social and psychological dilemmas are inextricable in Faulkner, and institutional agents are causing or furthering psychological scarification. Third, I bring together the clinical and social dimensions to see how trauma is narrativized, metabolized as it were, and contained by the text. That is, I look at how trauma is macrostructurally emplotted, as well as wrought into the internal rhythms of the narrative. In devising an aesthetics of trauma in Faulkner, I aim to show how the author’s formal inventiveness not only responds to the need to narrativize traumatic shock, but this very need is what precedes and powers his experimental impulses.

The conclusions of my research project point toward the Southern writer’s aesthetics of shock as indissoluble from social elements. In Faulkner, psychological disturbances are eminently anchored in social and interpersonal deficits. In advancing the materiality of the character’s disturbances, the conclusions of this study also substantiate a seemingly counterintuitive claim: while accruing evidence for mental malaise, my study points toward the need to depathologize Faulknerian subjectivities. Finally, this study shows how, predominantly, the narrative depiction of trauma in Faulkner is granted a performative function through the stylistics of indetermination, gaps and an overdetermined discourse ridden by trauma signifiers. This study also underscores Faulkner’s evolution from a more explosively experimental to a more representational treatment of traumatic shock.

Juan Manuel Lafuente López (Universidad de Murcia). “Hoboes and Resistance beyond the Frontier”

In a community where you are expected to comply with the conventional values and be swallowed up by the mass, there is no place for dissidents and non-conformists that challenge the validity of the established reasonable living standards. Thus, hoboes are labeled as outcasts and diagnosed with madness. This apparently nonsensical categorization is just one of the many examples of the relations of power operating between the hoboes and the capitalistic state which brands them as undesired elements in society that must be exterminated. Consequently, both parts resort to the use of hegemonic forces and warfare politics.

As a result of this confrontation, the frontier, the wasteland and the peripheries become spaces that play a key role as the threshold between two worlds, two realities and two ways of living. They enable fluidity and mobility, which translates into fluid identity (gender, sexuality, race, wealth) and horizontal mobility and resistance, opposite to the stagnancy and rigidity that prevail in the capitalistic state. The hobo escapes into the West of the country and to the peripheries, not always literally as the peripheries may be present at the very chore of society, in hope of being out of reach from capitalistic forces to encounter his primal being, rediscover himself beyond the frontier and truly dwell upon the land. As for the bibliography used for the theoretical framework, I will delve into the idea of the frontier not only as a physical concept of appropriation and mapping of previously unconquered land on the part of pioneers (Slotkin 2015), but also presenting the idea of the ideological frontier linked to counter-state subcultures (Deleuze & Guattari 2010) at the peripheries of society as spaces enabling its individuals to dwell upon a transformative and fluid space (Lennon 2014). Then, I will introduce the theories of hegemony (Gramsci 1999), counterculture and warfare politics (Deleuze & Guattari 2010), which manifest the hidden power relationships operating between the capitalist state and subcultures threatening its homogeneity and uniformity. In addition, I will use the concept of “subculture” (as it was developed by the Chicago School of Sociology at the beginning of the twentieth century and by the Birmingham Center by Contemporary Cultural Studies in the mid-seventies and early eighties) to shed some light on the hobo collective and why it is considered a subculture.

Therefore, I will analyse the figure of the hobo in the light of these theories, as a nomad subculture going against the capitalist state and positioning itself at the frontier of society. I will start off with the analyses that have been carried out so far, dealing with hoboes as a subculture and the techniques used by them in order to oppose the mainstream culture, as seen in Lennon (2014) and Anderson (1923). Furthermore, I will use these analyses and the previously outlined theories of hegemony and warfare politics as a foundation to analyse the techniques and resources each of the two parties resort to in order to attack each other and defend themselves, as seen in some primary literary works.

Panel 2: Medical Humanities

Sergio Illán Nevado (Universidad Complutense de Madrid). “Healing through Writing: Bipolar and Borderline Personality Disorders in Contemporary Pathographies in English”

The project of my doctoral thesis is focused on the study of two mental illnesses typically underexplored in the literary realm: bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder (BPD). The theoretical framework used for the completion of this thesis will be the study of various psychiatric and psychological theories (especially those centered on clinical psychology) currently in use that focus on these two aforementioned mental disorders. This doctoral thesis aims to analyze a broad corpus consisting of different pathographies, both exclusively literary (autobiographies) and literary and graphic (graphic novels), from a social, cultural, and medical perspective. Therefore, in the first place, the definition of "pathography" proposed by Dunglison in 1853 as "a description of a disease" will be taken as a reference, applying it to works narrated by women and men with bipolar disorder or BPD. Naturally, for the analysis of different themes related to women, another methodological tool to be used will be a feminist review of "madness" and how women have typically been considered "mad" in relation to their kind of psychopathologies in recent history.

The main objective of my doctoral thesis is to demonstrate how, through "scriptotherapy," the authors of the chosen works are able to heal or minimize the effects of their psychopathologies and how this therapeutic method, in turn, contributes to the destigmatization of the disorders through the social and institutional denunciation carried out in the books. Thus, by bringing bipolar disorder and BPD closer to the reader and making it, in some way, mundane, there is a change in the conception and stigmatization of these pathologies from a social perspective. Thanks to the works that will be analyzed, it can be perceived how patients with these psychopathologies are no longer considered, in the case of women, as "mad," but as "people with a mental illness" and all the positive connotations that this notion implies, while simultaneously establishing a comparison to the less criticized or punished male experience of these disorders.

The results obtained so far confirm the theory of "scriptotherapy" in those selected autobiographical narratives, both authored by women and men. Some authors seem to have even overcome the illness through writing. Others acknowledge the power of "scriptotherapy" as a therapeutic tool to effectively “combat” the disorder.

Paula Serrano Elena (Universidad de Zaragoza). “Revising Motherhood: the Representation of the Relation between Psychic Suffering and Early Motherhood in Post-Pandemic US Literature”

Although reflection on the issue of motherhood has not stopped since the second feminist wave, it has not received either the theoretical consideration or the political, social, and cultural value that such a significant issue for defining gender roles would require. In this sense, motherhood is considered the pending subject of feminism in the 21st century. One of the intellectuals who most fervently subscribes to this statement is professor and essayist Andrea O'Reilly. She denounces that as women's studies have grown and developed as an academic field incorporating various theoretical models to represent the specific perspectives and concerns of particular groups of women, “they have not similarly recognized and embraced a feminism developed from the specific needs/concerns of mothers” (Matricentric Feminism 8). Moreover, the manifest need for a feminism specific to the issue of motherhood increases when we place the focus on the situation of precariousness and poverty in which the mental health of women mothers finds itself. It is therefore vital to examine, strategically and specifically for their 21st-century context, the causes, and agents most detrimental to the experience of motherhood. In light of this, my doctoral thesis focuses on the representation of mothers' psychic suffering in the post-pandemic US narrative. More specifically, I intend to conduct a comparative study between American post-pandemic works-*Nightbitch* (2021) by Rachel Yoder, *The School for Good Mothers* (2022) by Jessamine Chan, and *The Upstairs House* (2021) by Julia Fine- to demonstrate that these authors are part of a new trend, not only literary but cultural, that aims to show a defiant discourse on the experience of motherhood through which to expose the interrelation between the experience of motherhood, as demanded in the s. XXI, and psychological suffering or even its aggravation leading to mental illness. My methodological approach will be based on a close reading of the selected works that will allow me to delve deeper into their relevance and the new trend that, as I argue, they represent within the North American tradition, but also globally. I will conduct a textual analysis of the selected works that I will later link to the study of the literary genre. Grosso modo, they are a dystopia and two novels of psychological realism that fit perfectly within the gothic, more specifically within the subgenre known as ‘female gothic’ (Moers 1976), one of whose main characteristics is “the employment of certain coded expressions to describe anxieties about female sexuality and domestic entrapment” (22). This will be contrasted and complemented by a thorough review of various secondary sources focusing on the literature on motherhood throughout history and today, as well as the literature on female mental illness, again, from its origins to the present day, with particular attention to the concept of *female depression*. For the review of feminism, what is known as intersectional feminism will be studied, as well as the creation of a new theoretical model proposed by Andrea O'Reilly, but endorsed by numerous scholars, activists, and authors who claim, “a mother-centered point of view and emphasis to designate it as a particular, long overdue and urgently needed mode of feminism” (Crittenden 5).

J. Javier Torres Fernández (Universidad de Almería). “Beyond *Angels in America*: Exploring Stigma and Disallowed Grief in Contemporary HIV/AIDS American Narratives”

This project aims to explore the nuances of AIDS representation in American theatre and society in the few contemporary examples of this genre from the third and fourth generations. The literary critical analysis of the selected plays is approached by combining the reconceptualization of stigma as a corrosive social force (Tyler 2020) and biopolitics (Foucault 1976), which justifies how social oppression is exercised. Richard Canning (2011) argues that while the number of HIV-positive people in most Western countries has increased significantly, the presence of this disease in Western cultural narratives has declined sharply. Monica B. Pearl (2013) identifies this lack of representation as a consequence of medical advances around AIDS, which have also created a threshold for cultural production. David Román (2000) argues that this post-AIDS discourse, which emerged in 1996 with the first drugs, shifted attention away from the disease, but emphasized new challenges around race, class and politics. Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed (2012) critique this overt silence and warn against the suppression of queer memory and history in relation to the epidemic, as this leads to a voluntary amnesia and the assimilation of supposedly healthier dominant norms. As Alyson Campbell and Dirk Gindt (2018) point out, seemingly counter to this cultural amnesia is the wave of theatrical revivals and television or film adaptations of AIDS plays from the 1980s, whose narratives focus on the experiences of white cisgender and gay men. On the one hand, this return to the past can be understood as a symptom of a vital need to reclaim a crucial part of lost queer history by providing an opportunity to acknowledge the people who died as a result of government neglect, social indifference and financial greed. On the other hand, remembrance can be instrumentalized by a neoliberal agenda. These dominant artistic repetitions can be seen as part of this process of gentrification, or a selective amnesia that rationalizes and normalizes the narrative, potentially producing a misleading representation of the AIDS crisis by circumventing the actual conditions of living with HIV.

The main objective of this project is to address the few recent American plays about AIDS and to examine the emergence of the fourth generation of this genre, as well as to investigate the various reasons why American society seems to have fallen into a cultural amnesia about AIDS compared to other Western countries where this representation is much greater, such as Ireland. At the same time, it is inevitable not to consider *Angels in America* (1995) in this analysis since it is the canonical work par excellence of American AIDS theatre. In this particular seminar I intend to present a comparison between *Angels in America* and *The Inheritance* (2018) which sheds light into the possible future of AIDS representation in American theatre and the current political situation around the disease.

Panel 3: Contemporary Readings of US Literature

Carla Abella Rodríguez (Universidad de Salamanca). “The Surveillance of Blackness in African American Literature”

My PhD thesis studies the exercise of surveillance against Black bodies in African American literature through the examination of monitoring power structures in contemporary African American novels. My investigation seeks to scrutinise the representation of violence against Blackness and more specifically the violence exerted against Black women by focusing on the specificities of the racialised and gendered violence they experience. To uncover these, the study examines multiple apparatuses and means by which the monitoring and control over Blackness is exercised as well as the spaces where this violence takes place. In this investigation, it is argued that the Black body is embedded in discourses of control, surveillance and violence within a context of anti-Blackness operating at a national level.

The methodology of the project is based on the analysis of a corpus of contemporary African American narratives. The novels are examined through the theoretical lens of hospitality theory and surveillance studies. My analysis rests on Emmanuel Lévinas and Jacques Derrida’s philosophical tenets, with a focus on the tension between hostility and hospitality and the resulting protocols of securitisation. Surveillance studies provides the theoretical tools to analyse the regulation and violence against racialised subjects. The project takes Michel Foucault and his theorisations on discipline as the point of departure. Utilising this framework, my research has so far investigated the intersections between gender and surveillance and is mapping how fiction allows for an outlet to reveal and counter the anti-Blackness directed towards Black women, thus uncovering the interconnections between gendered and racialised surveillance in contemporary African American novels.

Lucía Bennett Ortega (Universidad de Granada). “Disabled Posthuman Ontologies in Richard Powers’ Twenty-First-Century Fiction”

In the context of the rapid changes brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution since the turn of the new millennium, the fiction of Richard Powers offers a unique perspective where science, technology, and art converge, providing an introspective view of this evolving reality. Notably, Powers consistently weaves characters with disabilities into his exploration of science and technology. In my thesis, I explore the interplay between scientific advancements and the portrayal of disability in Powers’ works. The main aim of this project is to analyze the configuration of the twenty-first-century human that results from this intersectional study.

Among the seven novels Powers has written in the twenty-first century, I have selected the following five, which are his most recent and depict characters with diverse disabilities: *The Echo Maker* (2006), *Orfeo* (2009), *Generosity* (2014), *The Overstory* (2018), and *Benvidermment* (2021). My working hypothesis posits that the identities of Powers’ characters are shaped within a sociocultural framework dominated by a transcendent desire to surpass human limitations. Thus, this project delves into the conditions fostering the desire to transcend our biological boundaries, leading to the formation of identities within a posthuman socialization. The theoretical frameworks underpinning this study are Critical Posthumanism and Disability Studies. In particular, this research aligns with the emerging field of Posthuman Disability Studies, which examines the concept of the human within the intersection of these perspectives.

The new ontological condition that I examine is shaped by a sociocultural framework marked by change, immediacy, and hyperconnectivity, epitomizing the era of “liquid modernity” (Bauman 2000). It is characterized by the aspiration to transcend human biological limits, akin to Kurzweil’s concept of the ‘Singularity’ (2005). However, these transcendental anxieties prompt inquiries into the essence of humanity and how technology perpetuates the humanist ideal of “mens sana in corpore sano.” Consequently, the pursuit of “collective perfectibility,” as described by Braidotti, must be approached cautiously, considering the desire for exhibition and the spectacle in our transparent society (Han 2015). It must also be studied alongside literary models of normalcy and disability (Mitchell and Snyder 2000).

My preliminary findings suggest that in Powers’ novels, transcendental anxieties and the desire to technologically redefine the notion of the human often result in exclusion and oppression within contemporary American society. Thus, my analysis is currently focused on delving into the exclusionary dynamics at play in the pursuit of a posthuman identity, particularly concerning the equation between normativity and the ‘good life’ and its relationship to normalcy.

Irene Rodríguez Pintado (Universidad de Murcia). “The Construction of the Woman Writer in the American Postwar Era: Autonomy, Identity, and Creativity in Anaïs Nin, Sylvia Plath, Carson McCullers, and Judith Malina”

The 1960s and 1970s gave rise to a second wave of feminist thought and prompted the birth of Feminist Literary Criticism as a new tool to retrieve female contribution to literary history. Authors such as Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, and Elaine Showalter have pondered about the existence of a female literary culture and contributed to the creation of a literary criticism concerned with the links between gender and writing. However, the study of identity configuration within the scope of this connection between gender and literary creation in postwar women writers of the US such as Sylvia Plath, Judith Malina, Anaïs Nin, and Carson McCullers, remains scarce and is the main aim of this doctoral dissertation. A methodological approach which combines Feminist Literary Criticism, North American Studies, Life Writing Studies and Cultural Studies aims at achieving: i) an understanding of the psychological and social experience of the female writer during the postwar period in the USA; ii) an analysis of the development of the female literary identity as fragmented by the seemingly opposite configurations of femininity and creativity; and iii) an accurate depiction and comprehension of a female literary counterculture during the late 1940s and the 1950s. Although establishing results at this stage in the research is still a restricted venture, it could be argued that the female literary culture of the USA during the postwar period contains characteristics of a pre-feminist feminist thought in a time characterized by historians such as Barbara Ehrenreich and Elaine Tyler May as a moment of devolution in the rights of women which harshly impacted the social, political, and literary spheres. Thus, the study of female literary creation through memoir, confessional writing, and texts of an autobiographical nature by the writers in question proves vital in analyzing and coming to an understanding of both the configuration of the literary woman’s identity and the construction of her social persona during this period.

Panel 4: Morning Song I

Sara Familiar Rodríguez (Universidad de León). “Ecocritical and Ecofeminist Approximations towards poetry: Sylvia Plath and the Great North American Female Poets from the 19th Century until Today”

The present project aims to fulfill a research on one of the most fruitful and current fields of study and criticism, namely Ecocriticism, and its branches and interconnected disciplines, such as Ecofeminism, Posthumanism or Gender Studies. This field of study and methodology is particularly relevant today due to its attention to many of the challenges and issues faced by the culture and society of the 21st century, such as the climate crisis or the Sustainable Development Goals, with the centrality of the protection of the natural world, an increasing interest in mental health problems or the relevance of the ethics of caring and interspecies justice. Then, those theoretical ideas are being applied to the analysis of literature of the North American context and regarding poetry written by female authors. So, the central question and topic as well as the initial hypothesis to address is the establishment of Ecocritical and Ecofeminist critical approaches towards the poetry of female authors in the North American context in order to prove whether it is convenient and productive or not. North American literature is mainly defined by Transcendentalism and its heritage, with the primacy of Nature and the concept of the Sublime as main pillars. That is why many theoreticians claim that all North American literature is intrinsically ecological, and consequently, ecocritically productive.

The corpus of poetry is conformed by female authors from the 19th and 20th centuries as well as contemporary poets, with Sylvia Plath as a central figure, due to the new interest that its persona and work is currently raising for both the Academia and the general public, as well as the pertinence of proposing new approaches to her literature that transgress traditional approximations. However, other authors' work would be also addressed, such as Mary Oliver or Emily Dickinson, among others, including male authors and non-American ones, in order methodologically fulfill a comparative literary analysis of their works, themes, topics, parallelisms and patterns. To do so, the literary corpus is selected by incorporating those themes and topics present in the literature which are connected with the concerns and central ideas presented in the theoretical framework.

So far, this critical perspective and hypothesis has been applied to the study of several poems by Sylvia Plath, such as ‘Ariel’, or her ‘Bee Sequence’, among others. Concerning ‘Ariel’, the analysis has been particularly productive after proposing a comparative analysis with the poetry of Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, and some of the poetry included in her book *She Had Some Horses*. Finally, the poetry of Emily Dickinson has been studied as well, in this case, by proposing an Ecogothic perspective. All of these exercises have proved the convenience of this kind of approaches, the productivity of the texts being analyzed, the existent interconnections among the different poems of the authors which belong to the same paradigm, and the convenience and pertinence of ecologically aware approximations to poetry as a tool to raise awareness and educate citizens about the concerns of the present world.

Claudia García Pajín (Universidad de Oviedo). “Angry Literature Today: The Popularity of Female Rage in American Contemporary Literature”

From the works by John Osborne and Allan Sillitoe in the 1950s to those by Bret Easton Ellis and Chuck Palahniuk in the 1990s, anger in contemporary Anglo-American literature has conventionally been a male-dominated topic. Whether as a response to social outrage or as a form of asserting the characters’ masculinity, anger has been the engine that puts these stories into motion, the central element of these works. This is a formula so reoccurring that it would be plausible to even speak of an “angry literature” of sorts.

This angry literature is now seeing a resurgence in popularity, only this time, the panorama is shifting. With an overwhelming number of publications since the early 2010s, novels about female anger have been steadily entering best-selling lists. Works like Gillian Flynn’s *Gone Girl* (2012), Ottessa Moshfegh’s *Eileen* (2015), or Chelsea G. Summers’s *A Certain Hunger* (2020) are only some of the most popular titles among this new, extensive wave of angry literature, the first one to be fully female dominated. While this wave expands across different literary genres, all of them have certain commonalities: they put the focus on the protagonist’s mental health, deal with topics of self-perception and isolation, and they all understand and depict the anger and rage of these female protagonists as a response to individual, complex, or inherited trauma.

Thus, through the analysis of a corpus that is representative of this new wave of angry literature, preliminary referred to in the project as “Enraged Young Women”, this project is articulated around three main goals. Firstly, the corpus will be studied from the fields of narratology, gender studies, and trauma studies to discover how rage in these works is presented as the aftermath of trauma and to determine how the effects of trauma shape both the development of the story and the narrative forms. Secondly, the intertextual relationships between the novels by the Enraged Young Women will be studied in order to find patterns, similarities, and influences that allow for a cohesive grouping of the authors into a defined generation. Once the grouping has been done, the Enraged Young Women will also be contextualised within the tradition of angry literature in the contemporary Anglo-American panorama. Thirdly, the material conditions behind the production and spread of these anger-centred works will be examined and questioned from the perspective of cultural materialism to understand what causes angry literature to rise in popularity at given times and places in history and, considering the Enraged Young Women specifically, feminist studies will be used to address whether and how these works fit within fourth-wave feminism.

Martina Permanyer Rodríguez (Universidad Complutense de Madrid). “The Timeless Stigma: Abortion, Morality, and Disrupted Motherhoods in Edith Wharton’s *Summer* and Jennifer Haigh’s *Mercy Street*”

My Master’s thesis will mainly focus on the subject of abortion from a literary approach in order to expose the fact that, in one century, abortion stigma has not experienced such a great development as it would have been expected, and has most definitely not disappeared in the American social narrative. Instead, the inability to define the notion of abortion in the law, public debate and literature has contributed to perpetuate abortion stigma, (Ryniec 7) and continues to do so. To expose this hypothesis, I aim to analyze two primary sources from two different time periods within the contemporary discourse. The first of them being the short novel *Summer* by Edith Wharton, written in 1916 and published in July 1917, and the second one being Jennifer Haigh’s novel *Mercy Street*, published in 2022.

Through a reading and a comprehensive analysis of these two works, I aim to provide a theoretical framework that will compare the two novels in order for us to understand the ways in which the social narrative has changed and the ways in which it has not. In addition, with my comparative analysis I wish to expose the present American obsession with the judicial regulation of the reproductive rights of women (Weingarten 1) that has taken hold of society and figure out how the literary narrative has a say in this debate, since literature serves as a powerful tool for society to interpret the deeply-rooted issues that affect the people.

Panel 5: Morning Song II

Gloria Lizana Iglesias (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), “Literary Spaces in Women Writings and Feminism”

It is a truth universally acknowledged that the space that surrounds us not only influences our physical movements but also shapes our life perceptions and even determines, to some extent, different ideologies. Space has been a matter of study for many centuries, with a clear emphasis on it over time since the so-called “spatial turn” happened, corresponding to modern and postmodern tendencies of different fields, as recognized by Robert Tally Jr. in his major work *Spatiality* (2013). Along with Tally, many scholarly works have been dedicated to demonstrate space’s influence in our psyche and society through an arduous job, such as Henry Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1974). However, during the last century, the focus has been on breaking up the white patriarchal canon that permeates these major theoretical studies, consequently bringing about works concerning the effect that space has in the lives of people with different backgrounds. In this sense, works that called attention to white western women’s situation in their space were created, the most intuitive being Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), but many others are to mention.

The purpose of my thesis is to further this point by studying space with a modern feminist perspective. Although the literary corpus is still preliminary, one of the considered writers will be Kate Chopin, whose work I have already studied in this sense and, therefore, conforms to the results so far obtained. Accordingly, she cleverly works through different imagery to represent the intricacies of women’s experiences at the turn of the 19th century. Specifically, she becomes a pioneer in the spatial analysis of modern feminism by working through the physical and psychological consequences of patriarchal occupation and the possibilities of reappropriation for women. This is, in fact, the focus of this research, concerned with the progression of such possibilities across time according to changes regarding gender identity.

In addition, two novels by Virginia Woolf are under consideration: *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), due to the importance of the house/host and the feminine flâneur, and *Orlando* (1928), which provides an early attempt to review the life of a queer personality through many literary techniques, including the connection between movement in space and spatial descriptions with the protagonist’s changing identity. The intention is to provide a wider scope of this study by including at least one more recent literary work from the 20th or 21st century.

Regarding the theoretical framework, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar and *A Room of One’s Own* become essential pieces. Furthermore, the works of *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler (1990) or, even more recent, Kerstin Shands’ *Embracing Space: Spatial Metaphors in Feminist Discourse* (1999) and *Feminist Literary and Cultural Criticism: An Analytical Approach to Space* by Java Singh (2022), will be included in order to provide a refreshing analysis that takes into account the progress made so far in spatial studies by Feminism and Queer theory. Nevertheless, this research will avoid any anachronistic review that may pervert the originality of the works included.

Donal Nicholas Ryan (Universidad Complutense de Madrid). “Slave Songs and Spirituals: Musical Meaning in the Slave Narratives”

The doctoral thesis proposed is a synthesis of scholarship on African-American Jazz (and the musical practices that led to the creation of jazz), African-American Political Philosophy, and African American Literature. The thesis aims to examine musical meanings inherent in jazz, proposing that the genre reflects the waxing and waning of different political strains of thought while also reflecting the stratagems of the African American community as they sought to build a common identity and the concession of a greater range of freedoms from mainstream North American society. The examination of these strains of thought is carried out through an examination of musical references through the prism of African American literature, which itself formed part of these political stratagems, while using scholarly literature related to the African American community as a basis on which to carry out this examination. To fully understand these phenomena it has been necessary to examine the development of the African-American community from their first arrival in the Colonial Americas, the re-Africanization of that society in the colonies as a result of the plantation revolution through to the Revolutionary period, and the changing landscape of African-American existence during the 19th century and into the twentieth, paying particular attention to the changing musical practices of, and their musical meanings to, this community.

The methodology used is based primarily of the work of the new musicologists of the late 1980s who draw on performance theory to assert that music, while lacking syntax cannot communicate literal meaning, its existence as a cultural practice, can communicate metaphorical meaning. According to Judith Butler, not only does performance have an external aspect relating to what is being communicated to those viewing a performance, performative events or statements may also have a formative aspect on those performing the event in question. Thus, musical practice, while conveying abstract notions of freedom or democracy may also inculcate these notions within those doing the performing. Further to this, Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas regarding the carnivalesque as a site of resistance to authority provides the platform on which musical celebration may be viewed as a site to challenge perceived derogatory notions of African-American inferiority or accepted norms regarding a society’s power relations. The thesis, combines elements of these ideas to argue that pre-jazz African-American musical forms, and the genre of jazz itself, provided a formative arena where oppressed African Americans could taste the values inherent in the Declaration of Independence and assert the humanity, freedom, and dignity denied them by state sponsored social discrimination while also, through their performance of these ideals, challenge negative stereotypes that prevented their treatment as equals by North American society at large.

To date, the corpus under examination has included the slave narratives as primary texts, a number of books on Jazz and the spirituals, and historical works tracing the development of African American society in North America.

Panel 6: American Aesthetics: Poetry & Music

Irene Martínez Misa (Universidade da Coruña). “The Emergence of Literature in Social Media: An Analysis of Instapoetry and the New Generation of Female Poets”

The Internet has reached innumerable spheres since its inception. One of the areas influenced by this development has been the Humanities, resulting in the creation of the Digital Humanities and reaching the literature realm as well. Our ways of communicating have also been altered by these technological changes thanks to the creation of social media. It has been a key element in the interchange of information and literature since the social network Instagram originated a new poetic trend, Instapoetry. In the last few years, a literary genre that was almost forgotten (i.e. the lyric) has reached an audience of millions owing to social media.

Due to the freedom provided by Instagram regarding the content uploaded, Instapoets can share compositions that address any topic. Consequently, they use their poems to denounce personal experiences (e. g. racism or sexual violence), as well as to address political or controversial topics, including the Western beauty canon, female sexuality, and mental health problems.

Hence, to thoroughly analyze Instapoetry, I will examine the background of the trend, from its emergence to its current state, paying special attention to the Digital Humanities and the weight of social media in today’s society. Finally, the objectives of my PhD thesis are the following: to provide a literary-historical context for the creation of Instapoetry; to acknowledge the role of social media on the diffusion of the poems; to formally analyze the trend considering the platform’s conditions; and to provide a critical analysis of the poems.

This doctoral dissertation develops according to several stages of the research process. For the selection of the primary sources, I resort to the poems uploaded on the social media platform Instagram as well as the physical books published by Instapoets. After the selection of primary works, I proceed to provide a historical and theoretical framework for this investigation through bibliographical research. This framework comprises the secondary texts which supports the analysis. These secondary sources derive from the search in libraries, databases, journals, and, given the nature of this investigation, it is also seconded by online articles and interviews of the respective writers.

The research method is based on Reception Theory, Cultural Studies, and Feminism. In addition, given that my project is closely related to the technological advancements and the development of social media, I also resort to New Media Studies.

The primary sources of this PhD dissertation comprise a selection of the poems uploaded to Instagram, together with poetic compositions from the physical books. The authors selected are Rupi Kaur, Nikita Gill, Amanda Lovelace, Shelby Leigh, K. Y. Robinson and Cleo Wade.

Aitana Monzón-Blasco (Universidad de Zaragoza). “Once Was an Indian, Once Was a Forest: Protest, Rituals, and Symbols in the Poetry of Ralph Salisbury”

This paper aims to contextualise and offer a methodological approach to the poetry of Ralph Salisbury (1926-2017), a Native American poet of mixed ancestry (Cherokee, Shawnee, English, Irish). A member of the Native American Renaissance together with M. Scott Momaday, Joy Harjo, Gerald Vizenor or Louise Erdrich, Salisbury’s commitment towards poetry is that of social, political and spiritual approach. To this end, my hypothesis deals with the treatment of Salisbury’s literary figure as a contemporary American author in order not to marginalise him solely as a Native American by incurring in positive discrimination. As I see it, American poetry studies should focus the analysis on a holistic and inclusive vision where all ethnicities share the same weight in the literary canon.

My research comprises a hermeneutic-symbolic study of Salisbury’s poetry, as well as a compilation and transcription of the poet’s correspondence, notes and manuscripts, provided by his widow, Ingrid Wendt, and by the archives of the University of Oregon, where most of his papers have been collected. In addition, the Library of Congress may be helpful in the search for Salisbury’s contributions to journals, newspapers or other publications.

So far, the corpus I have been using comprises the poetry books *Ghost Grapefruit and Other Poems* (Ithaca, 1972), *Pointing at the Rainbow: Poems from a Cherokee Heritage* (Blue Cloud, 1980), *Spirit Beast Chant* (Blue Cloud, 1982), *Going to the Water: Poems of a Cherokee Heritage* (Pacific House, 1983), *A White Rainbow* (Blue Cloud, 1985), *Rainbows of Stone* (Sun Tracks, 2000), *War in the Genes* (Cherry Grove, 2006), *Blind Pumper at the Well: Poems from My 80th Year* (Salt Publishing, 2008) and *Light from a Bullet Hole: New and Selected Poems, 1950-2008* (Silverfish Review, 2009).

Amanda Correa (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid). “My mind turns your life into folklore: An Investigation of the Intertextuality of Taylor Swift's *folklore* and *evermore*”

For my presentation, I will explore the intertextuality of Taylor Swift's studio albums *folklore* and *evermore*, in conversation with one another, as well the allusions to various forms of media, ranging from classic literature to modern film. Released as surprise albums during the pandemic in 2020, Swift constructed a fantastical world with the folk songs of the self-proclaimed sister albums. Each album contains a complex story on its own and when both are paired together, through the lens of Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, it allows for deeper levels of analysis.

The methodology is focused on in-depth lyrical analysis, with heavy theoretical backing from Kristeva's intertextuality. Swift has claimed that a large majority of the albums were based on fictional stories that she created with inspiration from various sources. Swift is greatly lauded for her diaristic songwriting, however, with these songs, it is the first time in her career that she has admitted to shifting the focus from her perspective to that of characters of her own invention. With the change from first to third person perspective, the idea of the author versus the persona will also be analyzed.

The corpus under consideration is based on the lyrics of *folklore* and *evermore* and branches out to explicit and implicit references to other media. For example, the novels *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier, and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brönte are all mentioned directly. The lives of American socialite Rebekah Harkness, and Salvador Dalí are very influential in the understanding of the lyrics. Renowned poets, such as Emily Dickinson, William Wordsworth, and Sappho are all at the core of these bodies of work. Furthermore, there is a plethora of references to classical mythology sprinkled throughout the albums which also play a significant role. In addition, there are ties to Swift's previous work, as well as the latest album, *Midnights*, and the visual aspects of her work that all come together as performance art. All of these elements will be examined in conjunction with one another with the objective of giving a full depiction of the complexity of *folklore* and *evermore* within the context of her life's work.

Due to the vast collection of 34 songs, the results are still quite preliminary. Be that as it may, Swift has expertly crafted a fantasy world where her characters and their plot lines can be applied to a myriad of situations, be it in the real world or a wonderland. With the help of the broad theory of intertextuality, the profundity of even the deceptively simple lyrics is brought to new levels.

Panel 7: Posthumanism & SF

María Abizanda-Cardona (Universidad de Zaragoza). “Reading the Posthuman in Crime Fiction”

At the onset of the 21st century, the double jeopardy of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Anthropocene has evidenced the unprecedented imbrication of the human with technological, animal and natural others, prompting a redefinition of humanity looking toward a potential posthuman state. This paradigm shift is translated onto contemporary literature, which is one of the key stakeholders shaping our sociotechnical imaginary. If in the literary realm technoscience had historically been circumscribed to science fiction, in present times the feelings of estrangement and dislocation that were the keynote of the speculative genre have become so all-pervading that technological motifs infiltrate other literary modes. A notable instance of this hybridization is the emerging body of narrative works that address the scenarios and icons of technoscience through the stock plots and conventions of crime fiction, a trend that has been steadily on the rise for the last five years in American literary markets but remains underexplored by scholarship.

My doctoral dissertation aims to study the representation of posthumanity in this corpus of works, focusing on the effects of the hallmark phenomena of the 4IR – human enhancement technologies, biocapitalism, surveillance – over definitions of personhood, social relations and ethics. Besides, I intend to chart the aesthetic models, motifs and techniques resulting from the generic crossbreeding of SF and crime fiction. To this end, I focus on three recent American novels (Mur Lafferty's *Six Wakes*, Lincoln Michel's *The Body Scout* and Rob Hart's *The Warehouse*) and the hypertextual narrative *Neurocracy*.

My approach to the corpus texts is grounded on the notion, drawn from genre studies, that both speculative and crime fiction are indices of contemporary aspirations and anxieties, and powerful tools for intervention and dialectical exchange with material technoscientific development. My reading will combine formal analysis drawn from the tenets of postclassical narratology with a thematic or ideological perspective indebted to the theories of critical posthumanism, transhumanism, new materialism and biopolitics.

Preliminary analysis of the corpus shows that the works selected harness the formal and ideological conventions of different crime fiction subgenres to denounce the indexation of technoscientific progress to the transhumanist, neoliberal values of biocapitalism, especially in relation with the idiosyncratic concerns of crime fiction: the mismatch between law and justice, changing definitions of personhood, and state-sponsored violence against marginalized communities. Besides denouncing the shortcomings of the current development of technoscience, the novels spell alternative pathways for constructing an ethical posthumanity, leveraging a transcorporeal, response-able, non-hierarchical opening toward human and non-human others.

Beatriz Hermida Ramos (Universidad de Salamanca). “Nomadism and Exclusion: Critical Analysis of Narrative Spaces in Contemporary Ethnic American Science Fiction”

Science fiction has historically been defined as a genre that allows us to question what is usually thought of as normal and possible. Through speculation, it provides an opportunity to interrogate social, economic, and racial inequalities. In this way, scholars from different backgrounds have turned to science fiction to carefully analyze the construction of the nation and of narratives of national belonging, including the context of the United States, where racialized bodies and communities are often casted as other, as abject, and as unhuman, thus being pushed to the—sometimes literal—margins of society (Haslam 2015).

By analyzing six contemporary ethnic American science fiction novels, this doctoral project aims to explore complex dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that affect racialized communities in the United States, and the different ways in which these communities are rendered as other in the collective imagination (Kerslake 2007). To do so, this dissertation attempts to establish connections between physical and speculative spaces, highlighting the radical potential of science fiction to problematize binary understandings of inclusion/exclusion and inside(r)/outside(r) in a North American context (Barba Guerrero 2021).

Thus, this project draws from different scholarly fields such as hospitality studies (Derrida 2000, Manzananas Calvo and Benito Sánchez 2016, Ricoeur 1995), space studies (de Certeau 1984, Lefebvre 1992, Manzananas Calvo and Benito Sánchez 2011) and science fiction studies (Langer 2011) to examine the work of six different racialized American authors—that is, Samuel L. Delany (1977), Nisi Shawl (2016), N. K. Jemisin (2017), Arkady Martine (2019), Ryka Aoki (2021), and R. F. Kuang (2022).

Panel 8: Chicana Literature

Cristina Martín Hernández (Universidad de Salamanca). “Memory Mestiza: Problematizing Autobiographical Narratives and Self-representation from a Feminist Border Perspective, Norma E. Cantú’s Writing as Case Study”

As intrinsic as memory and life writing have been in human history, there has never been a time when the reality or existence of the self (whether being individual or communal) have depended so strongly on its public presence and representation. However, how the individual and the community are represented by others and/or by themselves has become a contested and prolific terrain for contemporary authors. Considering the increasing attention that chronicling the self has had throughout history, this PhD aims at critically delving into the autobiographical tradition and its imbrication with contemporary conceptualizations of the self, thus concentrating on works that differ from the hegemonic expectations of the genre and introduce new ways of reading (our)selves anew. In doing so, this thesis analyses how contemporary autobiographers—and other authors concerned with memorialization, self-representation, and life writing—explore the dimensions of the self and memory and their site of enunciation when placed at the border between two nations. This border life-writing is constructed as collective and creative while it is grounded on a particular subjectivity that relies on affects and personal narratives. Such is the case of the main author analyzed in this thesis, Norma Elía Cantú, whose works are situated at the US-Mexico border and rooted in Chicana identity experiences. Thus, self-representation is bound to location inasmuch as “situated epistemology” (Haraway in Braidotti, 2011) remains a constitutive element of the author’s experience of the world, since “[a]ll this is shaped by where [she] first learned to be in the world, on the border” (Cantú 2007, 235).

To understand the implications of the new conceptualizations of the self, this PhD dissertation gathers the major philosophical, literary, and critical works conducted by autobiography scholars as well as postcolonial and feminist authors. From the traditional expectations of the genre summoned in the works of Philippe Lejeune, Paul De Man, or Roy Pascal, among others, to the works of recent strands of feminism and cultural studies that present a transversal, interdisciplinary view on self-representation and identity politics. The *locus* of this research, however, lays on border epistemology, which has been largely explored by authors such as Walter Dignolo and José Saldívar. More particularly, it focuses on a border consciousness that emphasizes divergence, inclusion, and women’s agency. Notions of *mestizaje* and border writing (Gloria Anzaldúa, Sonia Saldívar-Hull, Chela Sandoval), performative self-representation (Leigh Gilmore), third spaces and cultural convergence (Homi Bhabha), nomadic and feminist subjectivities (Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway), and memory and/or postmemory will hold a central position in the critical approach to both the bibliographic revision and the later literary analysis of Norma E. Cantú’s works.

Thus far, my research has proved the correlation between new philosophical trends—coming from feminism, new materialism, and postcolonial theories—and the emergence of alternative forms of construing identity and cultural memory in a horizontal, affective and inclusive way.

Macarena Martín Martínez (Universidad de Sevilla). “American *Barrios*, Latina Ways, African Roots: Contemporary US Afro-Latinas’ Literature”

My project explores US Afro-Latina literature, particularly those contemporary works written by second-generation Afro-Dominican women born in NYC, with a focus on Elizabeth Acevedo, Naima Coster, and Lorraine Avila’s. I decided to look at this literature because Afro-Latinas are not only invisible in the large context of diaspora, which is still very male and Anglo-centered, but also in the specific context of the US, where society and academia still conceives Blackness and Latinidad as mutually exclusive concepts. However, this has tremendously changed in the last couple of decades, as the readers I use as a foundational framework are a prove of –Jimenez Roman and Flores (2009), Moreno-Vega, Modestin, and Alba (2012), Rivera-Rideu, Jones, and Paschel (2016), Richardson (2016), y Saraciea Fennell (2021). This together with Latinx Studies, Afro-Diasporic literature, decolonial theory and Black feminism frame my theoretical standpoint. I specifically look at Dominican women, since despite their presence –the biggest Latinx population in NYC now–, they have not received much attention. Due to their situation as US citizen and refugees, and their consequent, early presence in US mainland, Puerto Ricans and Cubans have traditionally dominated Caribbean Studies. Arriving later –boom years in the 70-80s–, Dominicans are still very much neglected.

The dissertation is divided in 5 chapters. The first chapter explores two short stories of aquatic migration from the Caribbean to the US by Lorraine Avila and Edwidge Danticat, and two homecoming stories by the same authors. I decided to establish this parallelism between a new Dominican writer and a renowned Haitian author as I aim to, first, make explicit the existing Afro-diasporic union that exists between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, thus breaking with the enmity that colonialism and nationalism have created between them; and second, prove that although not often recognized, there is a US Afro-Latina literature tradition, which is one of the general goals of this dissertation. Likewise, some of the objectives that this section shares with the dissertation as a whole are: 1. de-centering the Mexican border and the Mexican-focus of Latinx studies, which still dominates the discourse and does not neatly describe the experience of all Latinxs; 2. exposing colonialism and the unequal system it created as the cause of current migration and forms of oppression; 3. and engendering and Latinizing African diaspora.

Just as chapter 1 established parallelism between current migration and Middle Passage through both the hope and necro politics that water and air offer, chapter 2 deals with Naima Coster’s *Halsey Street*, and continues to explore air and transnational belonging in the advent of various forms of displacement from migration to gentrification, thus, also comparing both phenomena, this time around hospitality politics. Chapter 3 discusses Black Spanglish and the (un)translatability of racial identities through Coster, Acevedo, and Avila’s, as well as others’, works. Chapter 4 analyses Acevedo’s *The Poet X* and continues to explore spatial (re)appropriation, in this case, of one own’s racialized and gendered body, especially looking at Catholicism, respectability politics, and glocal and embodied spoken poetry as both

conquering and re-conquering forces. As the first chapter did through air and water, chapter 5 uses again a post-human –ecological and relational–, and folkloric/spiritual theoretical framework to explore Afro-Latinx (trance)national and in-transit m(other)ing through the mythological figure of “*la ciguapa*.”

