



17th SAAS Conference
University of Alicante,
8-10 April 2025

ACCEPTED PANELS



Panel 1: American Dreams, Hospitable Fantasies? Migrant Stories in American Literature, Culture, and Film

Coordinators: Paula Barba Guerrero & Ana M^a Manzananas Calvo

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Panel Abstract:

A dubious fantasy of incorporation, the American Dream has notably defined the cultural discourses and political imaginaries of the US. From its initial promise of a “better life” to the gradual exclusion of migrant communities upon arrival to the country, the Dream has rendered dignified life illegal for ethnic communities considered marginal (Cornejo Villavicencio, 2021). In doing so, the Dream has refracted the morphology and nature of the borderline, becoming yet another figurative site “where political systems [can] fortify notions of nationality and national identity” (Manzananas and Benito, 2017: 42), administering inhospitality and hampering cross-cultural exchange.

In the era of globalization, the mapping of borders has transcended geopolitical and territorial demarcations, leading to a fluid restructuring of national insides. This transformation of the classic borderland has fortified a rhetoric of exploitation and exclusion, as the tangible location of borders has become dislocated, partially deniable, and multiplied (Balibar, 2004; Price, 2004; Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2012;). Nonetheless, even if the physical line is not always visible, a discursive divide remains (Saldívar, 1997). This border regime is the one that the American Dream inadvertently articulates, posing migration as a dynamic and uncertain control problem.

In this line, the American Dream—and the many narratives it inspires—often wavers between promises of separation and encounter, between the possibility of dialogue and the imposition of silence. It is but “a constant interaction between opposites that refuse to fuse into a single one” (Benito and Manzananas, 2003: 70). Confronting fantasies of exploitative incorporation and unreliable political promises, this panel addresses these topics to discern the complex interplay between migration, narrative, and myth, analyzing the subject positions that their interaction may entail. Specifically, the panel aims to explore US migration stories that discuss the participation of migrant communities in American civic life (or the lack thereof) with a focus on the mirage of political inclusion and its possible aftereffects.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- US Migration narratives
- The ethics and politics of mobility
- Representations of inclusion, exclusion, and third spaces
- Fantasies of incorporation and assimilation
- Un/authorized movement, encounter, and flows

Panel 2: The Ecological Awakening in American Literature: Dream or Nightmare?

Coordinator: Margarida Cadima (margarida.sbcadima@gmail.com)

Panel Abstract:

In the opening chapter of *A Backward Glance*, Edith Wharton ties her ecological awakening to a specific moment in her childhood:

“My imagination lay there, coiled and sleeping, a mute hibernating creature, and at the least touch of common things – flowers, animals, words, especially the sound of words, apart from their meaning – it already stirred in its sleep, and then sank back into its own rich dream.”

Wharton indicates how her creative faculty flows from a heightened consciousness of this natural terrain. How do the narratives of other American writers restage and reassess this ecological awakening or moment of being? Do they craft their own acute responsiveness to “dream”, fancies, native auras and subliminal potencies that emanate from local soil, a version of John Keats’ “negative capability”? Is it this ability which allows them to show the strange, unearthly power of “common” things such as “flowers” and “animals”?

This panel welcomes papers that will focus on the imagery of nature in American literature, how the authors tunes in on their own aesthetic gifts to the frequency of “things” that make visible the point where domesticated (human) nature and the wild (psychic) hinterlands contend, negotiate and converge. Does this ambivalent openness portray an ecocritical utopian dream? Or an ecophobic dystopian nightmare?

Panel 3: Mothers of the American Dream: Re-creations of Motherhood and Intersectional Maternities in American Literature

Coordinator: Isabel Castelao Gómez (icastelaogomez@flog.uned.es)

In 1963, Betty Friedan defined motherhood as “a fulfilment held sacred down the ages,” “a total way of life” in her groundbreaking work *The Feminine Mystique*. She also concludes that “the only problem is woman’s failure to appreciate that her true part in the political crisis is as wife and mother.” Thirteen years later, Adrienne Rich pointed at motherhood as a “destructive institution that props up patriarchy and capitalism” (xxv). The institution of motherhood has been historically a fundamental pillar of patriarchy, capitalism and therefore the American Dream. Women, as wives and mothers, have sustained for centuries one of the most important institutions of American society, the family and have indirectly collaborated to create consumerism society. The American housewife, and mother, was the target of the consumerism market becoming the protagonist of endless commercials that incited Americans to compulsively buy and, more concretely, perpetuated a patriarchal and capitalist image of women as housewives and mothers. In this line of thought, the institution of motherhood becomes fundamental to sustain the American Dream and the conservative values of the American family. However, as Dani McClain concludes in her introduction to Rich’s *Of Woman Born* 2021 edition, “for those who understand that mothering and family building have too often been denied to people of color, and that it’s possible to bend the institution to meet our communities’ needs, Rich’s declarations may at times feel limited” (xxv). Motherhood and mother roles have always been fundamental for American literature especially in relation to identity issues. This panel will discuss how motherhood has been re-created in American literature as a way to show new ways of understanding motherhood and mother roles in relation to gender, class, age and race issues. Understanding motherhood as a patriarchal institution that sustained the American Dream, this panel welcomes papers that deal with motherhood and intersectional maternities in American literature.

Panel 4: Transfuturism: Alternative Futures and Black Utopias

Coordinator: Rocío Cobo Piñero (rociocobo@us.es):

In her genre-bending book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Christina Sharpe claims that the American Dream is conventionally tied to ideas of aspiration and opportunity, but also reanimates a “deadly *occlusion*” for people of African descent (109), whose existence has been reductively figured as chattel, machine, fungible commodity and monster devoid of a livable future. However, the diverse ways that Black culture, aesthetics and politics have been preserved, rearticulated and constantly generated anew span the Black Atlantic. One such counterhegemonic artistic project is Afrofuturism, generally defined as a way of looking at the world, an assertion of being, a way of knowing and an aesthetic with Black cultures at its center (Womack 21). Amber Johnson takes it a step further through the term “Transfuturism” and imagines new possible spaces for Black trans subjectivities who transition across, between, within, and beyond binaries. The prefix “trans” not only refers to transgender identities, but also encompasses a politics of transitivity (Halberstam xiii). Besides, trans signifies on “agitation, operation, locomotion, localization, and action,” thus troubling “ontologized states” (Hayward and Weinstein 198). This panel is interested in forms of narrative, visual and musical futurism that combine elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs to imagine alternative futures and utopias. We understand utopia as “a state of being and doing” (Brown 7) that challenges hegemonic modes of existence.

References

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Panel 5: (Un)dreamed Houses: Domestic Utopias, Dystopias, and Heterotopias in US Literature

Coordinator: Arturo Corujo (arturocorujo@ub.edu)

Panel abstract:

The American Dream is a house: the inalienable right and the bourgeois aspiration to project oneself upwards the social ladder to own a domestic space. This panel aims to question the notion that to be an American is to have a dream about homeownership. It aims to do so not by writing against houses in an antagonistic way, not by writing in their favor from a nostalgic stand to return to “the oneiric house” (Bachelard). Rather, it aims to do so by imagining other possibilities beyond its constricting foundations. Inspired by Paula Geyh’s idea of unhousing as “a movement to the margins” and Michel Foucault’s heterotopia as a marginal positioning outside domestic(ated) frameworks, this panel is interested in reading, discussing, and imagining “other spaces” that challenge our dreams of what a house must be, for whom it is built, and whose purposes serve.

I am interested in exploring the potential for the emergence of subjectivities that:

1. move *away* from a nightmarish domestic status quo based on the hegemonic dream of identifying with a house structured around an ideal – though unhealthy – lifestyle.
2. move *towards* alternative forms of association, affiliation, cohabitation, and kinship not based on a solipsistic identity, but on a shared oppression and a common struggle.
3. move *collectively*, rather than individually, to forge new bonds and coalitions committed to remaining indefinitely ungrounded, unsettled, unhoused.

Said subjectivities may be related to – but not necessarily limited to – figures such as the communitarian, the socialist, the dreamer, the utopian, the transient, the rover, and the wanderer, as well as the downtrodden, the dispossessed, the cast-offs, and the forgotten. In this panel, I want to open a conversation on freer subjectivities and new coalitions that gesture towards the cooperation of those who don’t (because they can’t) belong to the American Dream/House.

Panel 6: The Music of American Dreams, American Nightmares and American Fantasies

Coordinator: Ángel Chaparro Sainz (angel.chaparro@ehu.eus)

Panel abstract:

This panel aims at providing an exploration of the interconnection between different representations of the American Dream and popular music. Both the repetition of romantic and idealized conceptualizations of the American Dream and the revelation of its reverse, this is, the exposition of its failures – and the subsequent victims – have been a traditional territory in which many songwriters have found inspiration for their writing. In recent years, however, fresh examples have challenged and expanded the reach and implications of the original interpretations of the American Dream.

This panel seeks to gather a representative selection of works examining recent expositions of the American Dream in popular music, both with instances of celebration and perpetuation and in manifestations of criticism or revision. The focus can be placed on songwriting and lyric analysis but we also welcome other perspectives that may examine other cultural and/or social aspects: the music business, urban cultures, stylistic approaches, regional traditions or the connection between music and literature. We also welcome works that focus on how

contemporary music has revised the representation of the myth of the West as an important dimension of the American Dream. Related issues such as immigration, minorities, border studies, gender studies and/or interculturality can also be approached from the crossroads of music and the American Dream. The panel is also open to different music genres or styles, from jazz to punk-rock, from hip-hop to pop music.

- New readings of American utopias and dystopias in popular music.
- Popular music and The American Dream today.
- Musical representations of migration and borderlands in the American Dream.
- Mythology, spirituality, religion and the American Dream in popular music.
- Environmental threats and ecology in the American Dream through musical examples.
- Race, gender, sexuality and the American Dream in popular music.

Panel 7: Matters of Care: Dreams and Nightmares in Contemporary Illness Narratives

Coordinators: Laura de la Parra Fernández & Carmen Méndez García
(lauraparrafernandez@ucm.es, cmmendez@ucm.es):

Panel abstract:

The myth of the American Dream—homeownership, upward mobility, and self-making as the key to the good life—has always taken health for granted. Despite, or precisely because the American Dream is so closely intertwined with capitalism, healthcare has been posited as a private, individual matter. This is even more acute in a neoliberal context, where individuals are made to consider risk based on privatized, for-profit healthcare services, and wellness self-surveillance. As Jill Fisher explains, in neoliberal healthcare, the patient is positioned as a consumer. Thus, “[u]nlike patients, consumers seeking health care bear the responsibility for the choices they make—or fail to make—regarding their health” (2007: 64). For-profit healthcare not only commodifies access to care, but “it also commodifies the body itself” (Fisher, 2007: 64).

The “memoir boom” (Rak, 2013) saw the advent of the illness memoir. Yet, far from destigmatizing illness, many reinforce commodified narratives about self-advancement and self-making in order to be cured. As Barbara Ehrenreich (2009) points out, positive thinking has spread over all discourses related to illness and treatment. Patients are called “fighters” who “battle” for their lives, becoming “victorious” if they get cured, “losing their battle” if not (2009: 27). These types of metaphors serve to further individualize health as a “technology of the self” (Foucault, 1988) and erase the need for communal care, universal access to healthcare, and poor living conditions. Thus, the state is not made to take responsibility for damage caused by factors such as pollution, poor working conditions, and lack of access to nutrition, and instead “self-care” is posited as the governing rationale (Lemke, 2001: 201).

In the Introduction to the *Routledge Handbook of the Medical Humanities*, Alan Bleakey points out how the medical humanities may invest the medical field with political meaning (2020: 22). Thus, this panel seeks papers that deal with illness narratives from a critical perspective, considering the political and socio-cultural dimension of care and challenging normative discourses around it. Some of the questions that the papers might address are: how does private healthcare stand in the way of realizing the American Dream? How can the American Dream be reimagined from a non-exclusionary point of view? How can we imagine the redistribution of care?

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Caregiver's narratives.
- Healthcare professional's narratives.
- Gender, race, and class in illness narratives.
- Illness narratives and narratology.
- Neoliberalism in illness narratives.
- Self and space in illness narratives.
- Utopias of wellbeing, nightmares of wellness.
- Narratives of mental illness and capitalism.
- Disability narratives and noncapitalist experiences of time.

Panel 8: Posthuman Fantasies Dreaming America Along the Utopian-Dystopian Arch.

Coordinator: Miriam Fernández Santiago (mirfer@ugr.es)

Panel abstract:

At the turn of the 20th century, Sigmund Freud used the Western literary canon to support the argument that human dreams and nightmares were symptomatic of psychological disorders. With the advantage of more than a century of critical developments, this panel shifts his methodological approach, to rather contend that literary fictions both shape and give expression to human imaginaries that question or support the social order of a people within the frame of their own historical time. In the third decade of the 21st century, said frame bears the seal of a *novus ordo seclorum* favored by a posthumanist zeitgeist. As it questions the humanist ideas underlying American Independence such as human supremacy as a species, the separation between natural and political laws, between injury and safety, or freedom and submission, posthumanism also interrogates foundational forms of the American social order as property and self-determinacy. This panel intends to explore the different literary shapes that contemporary American narrative gives to a posthuman *ordo seclorum* either as a dreamy utopian proposal or a nightmarish dystopian warning. Special attention will be paid to narrative proposals affecting the sense of agency such as ecological vulnerability, digital vulnerability, the economy of attention, surveillance capitalism, climate change, body commodification, artificial intelligence, animal rights, and Fourth-Industrial-Revolution technologies.

Panel 9: Reel Reflections: Culture Wars in Film and TV and the Mythos of the American Dream

Coordinator: Noelia Gregorio Fernández / Fabián Orán Llarena (noelia.gregorio@unir.net / forallar@ull.edu.es)

Panel abstract:

Identity politics and social media are more than ever polarizing the United States, now deeply entrenched in their right-wing vs. left-wing political views. The clash between social conservatives and liberals in American society, described as “culture wars” (James D. Hunter, 1991; Chapman, 2010; O’Brian 2024) is experienced as a political-divide conflict on issues such

as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, immigration, or ecology, being actively exported as a model to other cultural spheres, such as contemporary US media. The ‘culture wars’ framing gained traction in the 1990s as an increasingly reinvigorated and radicalized post-Reagan right tried to counter the (arguably mild) social liberalism of the Clinton era. With ups and downs in terms of social currency, culture wars have certainly seen a strong, if not aggressive, revival in the Trump-Biden years as conservatives and liberals become two increasingly irreconcilable social bodies.

Given its revived status in the last decade, culture wars constitute a good starting point to revisit and reflect upon the attainability of the American Dream—its promise of stability, cohabitation, economic wealth—when such profound sociocultural and political fault-lines are in place. Within the framework of this influential narrative, the culture wars become a vivid stage where the enduring conflict surrounding the American Dream myth unfolds and navigate the tensions between the idealized promise of success and the stark realities of societal divides, inviting audiences to reevaluate the relevance of this quintessential American narrative. Through cinematic narratives, filmmakers explore the complexities of this ideal, questioning whether it remains an attainable aspiration or a flawed illusion in a polarized society.

This panel welcome papers that examine films, TV series or audiovisual text—in any kind of genre—where highly contested ideological issues between liberals and conservatives are portrayed within the framework of culture wars.

Panel 10: The American Dream and the American West

Coordinator: Jesús Ángel González/Amaia Ibarra-Bigalondo

(gonzalezja@unican.es/amaia.ibarraran@ehu.eus):

Panel abstract:

The role of the US West in American History, Culture and Literature cannot be underestimated. It is impossible to understand Frederick Jackson Turner’s concept of the frontier—and, to a great extent, America’s ideas about itself—without taking into account the role of the most “glamorized, mythologized—and misunderstood” (Witschi) region of the United States. This is particularly true about the American Dream, because if a region has epitomized the American Dream more than any other in the American psyche, it has certainly been the American West, conceived by Americans and non-Americans as the land of opportunities and new beginnings. In fact, it is not by chance that Scott Fitzgerald also used the image of the West when he had Nick Carraway describe the story of *The Great Gatsby* as “a story of the West”, a story of Western characters unable to adapt to the distorted features of Eastern life.

This panel will look at all the possible connections between the American Dream or its contemporary nightmares and the American West, such as (but not restricted to) the following:

- The West as a symbol of the American Dream
- The American Dream in Western literature
- The American Dream in Western film
- The American Dream in Western culture
- Migration and the American West: past and present
- Latin(o/a) American Dreams and Nightmares
- Native American Dreams and Nightmares
- The American Dream in the Western (and post-Western) film genre

- Transnational Western Dreams: The American Dream and the West in other countries' literature, film, and culture.
- Chicano literature/culture and the American Dream
- Western Utopias and Dystopias
- "California Dreaming": California and the American Dream
- American Fantasies in the American West

Panel 11: Edgar Allan Poe's Dreams, Nightmares, and Fantasies.

Coordinator: María Isabel Jiménez González (mariaisabel.jimenez@uclm.es)

Panel abstract:

This panel delves into Edgar Allan Poe's complex literary universe, focusing on the themes of dreams, nightmares, and fantasies prevalent throughout his works. Poe, renowned for his mastery of the macabre, the mysterious, and science fiction, explores the depths of the human psyche, unveiling the enigmatic realms of dreams and nightmares. Through a multidimensional and interdisciplinary examination of Poe's tales, essays, poems, letters, personal life, etc., this panel aims to elucidate the psychological intricacies, symbolic significances, and thematic motifs embedded within many of his writings. Furthermore, it seeks to explore how Poe's analysis of these themes extends beyond conventional literary devices, offering profound insights into facets of the human experience, such as the human condition, the complexities of human psychology, and the blurred boundaries between reality and fantasy.

By analyzing Poe's haunting narratives, this panel endeavors to unravel the intricate tapestry of his literary genius, shedding some light on the enduring fascination of Poe's portrayal of dreams, nightmares, and fantasies. Furthermore, it aims to establish some connections with the high and popular culture that has emerged after Poe, exploring how his themes and techniques have influenced subsequent works, from literature to film, music, contemporary art, and other forms of creative expression. Dedicated particularly to members of the Edgar Allan Poe Spanish Association (EAPSA) and also to all Poe enthusiasts in general, this panel seeks to deepen our understanding and appreciation of Edgar Allan Poe's never-ending legacy at the 17th SAAS Conference.

Panel 12: Reproducing American Dreams and Nightmares

Coordinator: Heather Latimer (heather.latimer@ubc.ca):

Panel abstract:

In Spring 2020, after the coronavirus pandemic first hit major cities across the world, people started prophesying that we were living in end times. In the U.S., the Trump administration had already spent 3.5 years tearing down protections for people of color, queer people, and immigrants, and at the same time, access to abortion and birth control were being stripped away. It seemed that dystopia had arrived on earth.

Or had it? Broadening the history of the genre, this panel asks how the current popularity of dystopias speaks not only to our present moment, but also to moments past. I am interested in papers that complicate a straightforward reading of the American "dream," "nightmare,"

or “fantasy,” such as readings of Louise Erdrich’s *Future Home of the Living God* (2017), which presents a reproductive dystopia that also offers utopic possibilities for Indigenous communities in America. Or, papers on Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s early twentieth-century utopia *Herland*, seemingly a feminist utopia, yet premised on eugenic practices that resemble the dystopic pregnancies of *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Or, papers on novels about pandemics, like Ling Ma’s *Severance* (2018), which is about a global fungal infection that decimates the world population, but also revolves around one hopeful pregnancy storyline. I ask: why at the heart of so many representations of American dreams, nightmares and fantasies is there a pregnancy? Are all dystopias about reproductive control? Are all utopias about reproductive futurism? What is the relationship between the American dream today and the limits of how we imagine the future?

Panel 13: American Eugenic Fantasies

Coordinator: Ewa Barbara Luczak (e.b.luczak@uw.edu.pl)

Panel abstract:

Early twentieth century sterilization laws changed eugenics from a speculative science to a political agent of change in the United States. This panel considers the dreams and fantasies of American eugenics--dreams which became nightmares for marginalized people in the early 20th century. Focusing particularly on the ways American eugenics conceptualized and intervened in reproduction, the panelists will consider how eugenics intersected with the reproductive politics of abortion, disability, and race in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Weingarten’s paper will place early twentieth-century stories, poems, and novels with an abortion plotline in conversation to argue that a throughline in all these texts is eugenics, even if it’s not overtly referenced. Her paper will include such works as Edith Wharton’s *Summer* (1918), Georgia Douglas’s “Motherhood” (1922), Dorothy Parker’s “Mr. Durant” (1924), and Langston Hughes’ “Cora Unashamed” (1934) to show how early twentieth-century anti-abortion politics were influenced by eugenic ideologies in ways we have yet to untangle in the twenty-first century US.

Linett’s paper explores how Charlotte Perkins Gilman responded to a widespread eugenic fantasy of transforming reproduction so that it would cease being “mere repetition” and produce a new, superior kind of person. In *Moving the Mountain* and her more famous feminist utopia *Herland*, Gilman creates a feminist eugenics that conceives women as the engines of evolutionary change. To grant the “right” women this reconceived reproductive power, her utopias consign disabled and “degenerate” women to sterilization and even euthanasia.

Luczak’s paper focuses on a unique script for an anti-eugenic film, *Tomorrow’s Children* (1934) as well as on the film itself. In the wake of the 1927 Supreme Court decision that upheld the constitutionality of eugenic sterilization law in Virginia, as well as sterilization statutes in various American states, Wallace Thurman decided to express his outrage at the new eugenic legislation and sterilization practices. And yet, the argument developed in the film seems to be caught up in eugenic reasoning.

Panel 14: Indigenous Dreams for the Colonial Nightmare: 21st-Century Native American Literature and Art

Coordinator: Silvia Martínez-Falquina (smfalqui@unizar.es)

Panel abstract :

Native Americans have traditionally found themselves excluded from the American Dream and its promise of possibility. While ideals of liberty, equality and the pursuit of happiness are celebrated as fundamental American values, they have not been accessible to all inhabitants of the USA. Yet, they are deeply embedded in the traditional cultures of many Native tribes, including the Haudenosaunee, with their sophisticated democratic system which influenced the US Constitution. Since initial contact, the relationship between Euro-Americans and Native Americans can be seen as a clash of dreams, Euro-Americans seeking land and prosperity, while Native Americans fought to preserve sovereignty and their traditional ways of life. This clash has resulted in a nightmare of invasion, genocide, racism, sexism, and extractivism for Native Americans. Despite these challenges, Indigenous peoples have demonstrated remarkable resilience, persisting in their struggles for sovereignty and recognition in the face of ongoing historical trauma and exploitation. If the most telling historical example may be the Ghost Dance of the late 19th century, at the beginning of the 21st we bear witness to new vindications like NoDAPL, Land Back, MMIW or the struggle to preserve ICWA, to name but a few of their most recent dreams. In the realm of art and culture, Indigenous peoples keep struggling for recognition against the exoticization and appropriation of their values, bodies, and lands. This panel seeks to explore Indigenous perspectives on American dreams, nightmares and fantasies in the twenty-first century through Native American literature and art. Some topics include (but are not limited to):

- Native American narratives of success
- 21st-century Native American women's leadership
- The representation of Indigenous historical trauma
- The representation of vulnerability, affect and mental health
- Decolonization in Native American literatures and cultures
- New genres: Indigenous futurism, fantasy, crime fiction, YA fiction, dystopias...
- Creative manifestations of relationality and sovereignty
- Indigenous dreams in 21st-century activism.

Panel 15: Stories from the Underside of the American Dream: The American Gothic Imagination

Coordinator: Inés Ordiz (ines.ordiz@flog.uned.es)

Panel abstract:

The study of Gothic fiction within the context of American literature has been an essential focus of academic interest since the 1960s. Far from being a disregarded mode of expression, the Gothic is nowadays considered essential to understanding American literary and cultural tradition, as well as the country's convoluted national project. The Gothic, defined by its engagement with "negative aesthetics" (Botting) and its ability to address and disguise personal, societal, and cultural fears and anxieties (Hogle), becomes an essential mode of representation of the gloomy underside of the American discourse of self-representation. As such, the Gothic

becomes a counterpart to the narrative of triumph and progress that defines the dominant history of the United States. If the national narrative is rooted in the promise of leading a life of hope and personal freedom (the American Dream), the Gothic offers the possibility of exploring the country's fears and failures (the American Nightmare). The Gothic becomes, therefore, an excellent mode of exploration of the nation's crimes (the enslavement of Africans and the displacement of indigenous peoples); (hi)stories of oppression and bigotry (of/against women, the LGBTQI+ population, and minority communities); the outcomes of decades of neoliberal policies (debt, impoverishment, homelessness); and the consequences of the mistreatment of the environment (wildfires, droughts, and flooding).

This panel calls for papers that analyze cultural texts (literary and audiovisual) exploring the presence and permanence of the American Dream and the American Nightmare in the Gothic imagination. Some topics of study are:

- Gothic monsters (vampires, ghosts, serial killers, etc.) and the American Dream/Nightmare;
- Gothic alternatives to the American national discourse;
- Global Gothic connections: Pan-American and transnational perspectives;
- Gothic stories created in the margins of the American canon;
- The Gothic as a subversive mode of representation in American fiction;
- Southern Gothic and the American Dream/Nightmare;
- Science Fiction, Fantasy and the American Gothic;
- Ecogothic and the American Dream/Nightmare;
- Gender, race, sexuality, and the American Gothic.

Panel 16: The Poetics of Dreams

Coordinator: Viorica Patea (vioricap@usal.es)

Panel abstract:

In the past dreams were messages from the gods or harbingers of destiny. Today they are intertwined with our aspirations, desires, and hopes, while, paradoxically, they also serve as emissaries of the unconscious that express the unknown truths of our minds. To be sure, dreams have been deeply embedded in the DNA of American identity from its founding. The American dream starts at least as far back as 1630 with John Winthrop's dream of a "city on a hill". Almost two centuries later, Thomas Jefferson writes in a letter to John Adams, "I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past. so good night! I will dream on" (1 August 1816 <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-6618>). Edgar Allan Poe's posits a fundamental question about dreams and reality when he inquires: "Is *all* that we see or seem / But a dream within a dream?" Yet Emerson later conceives of the whole world as "a divine dream, from which we may presently awake to the glories and certainties of day" ("Nature"), while Whitman envisions the construction of a new world of freedom and democracy: "I dream'd in a dream I saw a city invincible to the / attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth; / I dream'd that was the new City of Friends". On the other hand, for Emily Dickinson dreams can be an escape from reality: "We dream—it is good we are dreaming— / It would hurt us— were we awake—" (#531). But such dreams are also the substance of human imagination and creativity, one reason why Langston Hughes urges us to "Hold fast to dreams / For if dreams die / Life is a broken-winged bird / That cannot fly," rendering life as "a barren field/ Frozen with snow." Similarly, Wallace Stevens envisions a bleak existential "Disillusion at ten o'clock" once "People are not going / To dream of baboons and periwinkles." Dreams reside at the

antipodes of reality and often founder when they encounter the real, although sometimes the two concepts are no longer antithetical and “Facts are the sweetest dream,” as in Robert Frost’s “Mowing”. T.S. Eliot solves this equation by pointing to how “The dream crossed twilight between birth and dying,” thereby highlighting the metaphysical reality of dreams: “Redeem the unread vision of a higher dream,” he commands in “Ash-Wednesday.” During war or times of strife, as in Gwendolyn Brooks’s sequence, “Gay Chaps at the Bar”, a speaker may concede how “my dreams, my hopes, must wait till after hell.” But Postwar poets also discover sometimes the Freudian valences of dreams, as John Berryman does in *Dream Songs*. Finally, for Adrienne Rich, dreams and poetry itself are often interchangeable, when she writes, “Poems are like dreams: in them you put what you don’t know you know” (“When We Dead Awaken”). This panel invites papers on any of the multiple dimensions of dreams in American poetry.

Panel 17: To Shape America’s Breath: Magical Creatures and the Decolonisation of the U.S. Imaginary

Coordinator: Elisa Pesce (elisa.pesce87@gmail.com)

Panel abstract:

Moniquill Blackgoose’s *To Shape A Dragon’s Breath* (2023) is set in the Victorian era in an alternate North America ruled by Vikings. After many generations in which dragons have not lived among the indigenous people of the eastern territories, one of these magical creatures entrusts its egg – and offspring – to fifteen-year-old Anequs, on the remote island of Masquapaug. To prevent the English from punishing her people for what they consider an attempt to subvert the colonizer’s exclusive control of the magical properties of a dragon’s breath, Anequs enrolls in a dragoners academy. Her coming-of-age story exposes all the violence and contradictions of U.S. domestic imperialism and harnesses the speculative power of a natural bond between people and dragons to decolonize the country’s imagination, by reclaiming indigenous knowledge, practices, notions of sovereignty and border, and exposing the disenfranchising and assimilationist function of educational institutions.

Blackgoose’s Young Adult decolonial fantasy cannot but evoke Ursula K. LeGuin’s use of dragons as a symbol of Americans’ fear of the power of the imagination in her 1974 essay “Why Are Americans Afraid of Dragons?”. This panel seeks contributions that explore the role of magical creatures in contemporary U.S. literary and cultural production in fostering engagement with topics such as (but not limited to):

- Indigenous history and sovereignty in the Americas
- The exploitation of animals/the nonhuman/nature in an age of environmental crises
- The discrimination and marginalization of non-dominant groups – based on sex, gender, race, class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, etc. – in science, technology, and the arts and crafts
- The appropriation, assimilation and/or erasure of non-hegemonic worldviews and emancipatory practices
- The role of education (and censorship in school curricula/libraries) in perpetuating the coloniality of power
- The (dis)empowerment of the youth through the control/discouragement of the imaginary.

Panel 18: Forever Faithful to/The American Dream? Post-postmodernist Narratives of an Impossible Myth

Coordinators: Virginia Pignagnoli (virginia.pignagnoli@unito.it)/Laura Roldán-Sevillano (lroldan@unizar.es)

Panel abstract:

A product of American exceptionalism, the myth of the American Dream was built around the idea that the US is the nation of upward mobility *par excellence*. Since the 2007-2009 economic crisis, however, many scholars (e.g., Piketti and Saez 2014) have acknowledged that the current moment has been characterized by rising economic disparity and insecurity, to the extent that the potential for upward mobility has “all collapsed” (Chomsky 2017, xi). This situation has led many to believe that “the promise of the American dream appears punctured” (Dhingra 2022, 29). Moreover, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, phenomena like “The Great Resignation,” or “#quietquitting” have been undermining the assumptions behind cultural scripts encouraging beliefs of “You can make it if you try.”

This panel seeks articles investigating how twenty-first-century narratives attend to the legacy of the American Dream across genres and modes. In particular, this panel invites essays that analyze, in a synchronic and/or diachronic perspective, the kind of intensifications, ruptures, and reshuffles that characterize formally and thematically post-postmodernist narratives of American unfulfilled dreams. Possible topics include the representation of post-Great Recession precarity, the disillusionment of migrant individuals and families, or the fallacy of meritocracy leading to a good life in the era of overwork.

Panel 19: American Nightmares and the Future of the Nation in “Jacksonian” America 1824-1848 : Race, Politics and the Environment

Coordinator: Marie-Jeanne Rossignol (marie-jeanne.rossignol@u-paris.fr)

Panel abstract:

To French traveler Alexis de Tocqueville, the United States during the presidency of Andrew Jackson was not simply a model of modern democracy. In his writings he criticized western settlers’ “destruction” of the environment. Race relations in the new nation struck him as cruel and heartless as he witnessed the brutal removal of native Americans and the discriminatory treatment which free African-Americans had to experience in the North. He concluded his 1835 book (*On Democracy* part 1) on somber predictions about the future of the new nation, which would probably break apart and form rival neighboring nations. Tocqueville was not the only observer of the United States at the time who expressed his views of the future of the nation in a dystopian mode. The goal of this panel is to bring together scholars who want to explore this nightmarish and dystopian view of the United States in the years before the Mexican-American war through an examination of dystopian fiction and other texts (travelers’ accounts, political treatises and newspaper articles). This way we hope to offer an alternative narrative of what the new nation meant, away from the positive and even enthusiastic reports which are usually considered as typical. This panel shares the views of historians currently exploring the dark sides of the “Jacksonian” era: Indian removal, nullification crisis, internal slave trade, the rise of slavery etc.

Panel 20: American Dreams and Transcultural Visions

Coordinator: Theodora Tsimpouki & Aristi Trendel (tsimpouki@enl.uoa.gr / Aristie.Trendel@univ-lemans.fr)

Panel abstract :

If the American dream constitutes a cultural narrative upon which North American identity has been formed, while at the same time the term itself has borne several different definitions since 1931 when it was coined, at the beginning of the 21st century and in an increasingly globalized world, its meaning **has been** challenged once more.

Taking into consideration that the American dream means a lot more than social mobility, as James Truslow Adams advocated, relying on principles such as individual freedom and self-realization, equality and democracy, this panel investigates questions of textual and cultural representations of 21th century transcultural imagination, conceived as exploring the contestations, and the renegotiations arising from transcultural permeations.

In other words, the panel explores the dynamics of the American dream and its relation to conceptualizations of American identity in view of the multidimensionality of global cultural interactions. We are interested in investigating the impact of the idea of the American dream on the literary imaginaries of American authors with transcultural characteristics, through the study of the literature's language, form, and narrative (as in novels by André Aciman, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Teju Cole, Eva Hoffman, Ha Jin, Jhumpa Lahiri, to mention only a few). Considering that "[t]ranscultural literature records the re-shaping of national collective imaginaries" (Dagnino) under the influence of the ever increasing globalizing forces, we seek to examine the transformations of the American dream and how they affect the cultural identity of the United States.

Dagnino, Arianna. "Transcultural Literature and Contemporary World Literature(s)." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.5 (20013).

Panel 21: MISCELLANEOUS

Papers within conference theme that do not find accommodation in panels 1-20 above.

Coordinators: Martín Urdiales (urdiales@uvigo.es) and Laura Arce (laura.arce@uam.es)