



QUIET, PIGGY!
THE SILENCING OF WOMEN IN
LITERATURE, FILM, ART, AND
THE MEDIA



Organized by the English Department | Faculty of Letters | “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania



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THE SILENCING OF WOMEN IN LITERATURE, FILM, ART, AND THE MEDIA

2nd Edition of the *Weird* Conference Series

Online (Microsoft Teams) | May 2, 2026

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PROGRAM

10:45-11:00 EEST: Welcome & Opening Remarks: Gabriela Debita, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania

11:00-11:45 EEST: Keynote Address: “Silence on Display: Women and the Spectacle of Gilead” – Dr. Oana Gheorghiu, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania

12:00-13:30 EEST: Session 1 (panels 1A and 1B)

Session 1	
Panel 1A	Panel 1B
Chair: Dr. Ana-Maria Moga, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania	Chair: Gabriela Debita, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania
1. From Silence to Voice: Greta Gerwig’s Geographies of Women’s Speech Yiming Gao , Yunnan Arts University, China	1. Smart Power: Breaking the Silence through Male Allyship in Hulu’s <i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i> (2017–2025) Thuc Anh Nguyen Ho , University of Management and Technology, Vietnam
2. Lesbian Silencing and Speaking: A Cyberfeminist Analysis of <i>Fresh Kill</i> Siyu Chen , Shanghai Innovation Center for Intelligent Media Communication, China	2. Surveillance, Biopower, and Visual Affect in <i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i> Anupama C S , Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit (Kalady, Kerala), India
3. Silent Frames: The Cinematic Silencing of Women in Dystopian Film Amna Yousaf , Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan	3. The Politics of Silence in Margaret Atwood’s <i>Cat’s Eye</i> : An Ecocritical Reading Namrata Nistandra , Doaba College (Jalandhar, Punjab), India



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13:30-15:00 EEST: Session 2 (panels 2A and 2B)

Session 2	
Panel 2A	Panel 2B
Chair: Dr. Andreea Mosila, American Public University System Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, USA	Chair: Dr. Oana Gheorghiu, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania
<p>1. Quiet, Roe! Judicial Silencing and Scripted Violence in Reproductive Discourse: Reading <i>Roe v. Wade</i> (1973) and <i>Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization</i> (2022) Indrasabarna Hari, Asutosh College, University of Calcutta, India</p>	<p>1. Silencing of Women in The Testaments (2019) by Margaret Atwood Sachin Kumar & Aditya Prakash, Dr BR Ambedkar NIT (Jalandhar, Punjab), India</p>
<p>1. The Right (Not To) Read? Analyzing Mahmoud V. Taylor’s Cultural Implications Lior Weinstein, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel</p>	<p>2. Counting Words, Controlling Worlds: Linguistic Regulation and the Institutional Silencing of Women in <i>Vox</i> by Christina Dalcher M. Carmen Gomez-Galisteo, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Spain</p>
<p>3. Echoes of the Weird: Strategic Gaslighting and the Autobiographical Resistance of Black and Dalit Bahujan Women Chettupally Anvesh & Pallavi Negi, University of Delhi, India</p>	<p>3. Feminist dystopias in 20th century Literature: Characterisation, Categorisation and Criticism Claudia Lupu, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania</p>
	<p>4. Re-reading <i>Lolita</i> in DC: Azar Nafisi’s Hermeneutics and the Republic in Crisis Gabriela Debita, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania</p>

15:00-15:30 EEST: Coffee break

15:30-16:15 EEST: Keynote Address: Dr. Andreea Mosila, American Public University System | Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, USA



16:30-18:00 EEST: Session 3 (panels 3A and 3B)

Session 3	
Panel 3A	Panel 3B
Chair: Dr. Linda Levitt, Stephen F. Austin State University, USA	Chair: Dr. M. Carmen Gomez-Galisteo, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Spain
1. Shame and Gendered Silencing in Fanny A. Garcia’s Short Fiction John Andrew M. del Prado , Ateneo de Manila University UST Graduate School, Philippines	1. Theatrical Commentary from Belle Rêve’s Red Velvet Curtains to Crunchem Hall’s Paper Roses: The Femme Madonna of Blanche DuBois and Miss Honey in Case Study and Spectacle Z.I. Mahmud , independent scholar, Bangladesh
2. Unfit to Speak: Reproductive Epistemology and the Silencing of Deviant Motherhood Tithi Banerjee , University of Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), India	2. Digital Silencing: Gendered Harassment and the Policing of Women’s Voices in Online Media Ecosystems Yash Singh Sisodiya , Devi Ahilya University, India
3. Reproductive Silencing for/of/by Women: Eugenics in Sherri S. Tepper’s <i>The Gate to Women’s Country</i> Lynn Deboeck , University of Utah, USA	3. Two Marys Scott Ennis , independent scholar, USA

18:00-19:30 EEST: Session 4

Session 4	
Chair: Dr. Cristina Albu, University of Missouri-Kansas City, USA	
1. Mirrors of Malice: Domestic Abuse in “The Perfect Slap” and “My Artist” Tina Jose , Mahatma Gandhi University/ St. Stephen’s College (Kottayam, Kerala), India	
2. Look Don’t Look: Censoring Sally Mann (Again) Linda Levitt , Stephen F. Austin State University, USA	
3. Visualizing Silence: Real-Time Drawing as Practice-Based Critique of Gendered Voicelessness Erin Finley , OCAD University (Toronto), Canada	

19:30-19:45 EEST: Closing remarks

KEYNOTES

Silence on Display: Women and the Spectacle of Gilead

Dr. Oana GHEORGHIU

“Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania



Dr. Oana-Celia Gheorghiu is an Associate Professor at the Cross-border Faculty of “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galati, Romania. She teaches courses on British and American culture and civilization, Anglophone literatures, culture and new media, and translation studies. She earned a PhD in Philology and holds a habilitation in the same field. She currently supervises doctoral research in the Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Her research focuses on contemporary Anglophone fiction and media discourse, with emphasis on the interrelations among narrative, authority, and politics. Her scholarly work investigates how literary, political, and media texts influence visibility, construct subjectivity, and govern meaning.

She is the author of *British and American Representations of 9/11: Literature, Politics and the Media* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and the editor of the volumes *Shifting Borders, Discourses and Identities* (Cambridge Scholars, 2020) and *The Odyssey of Communism* (Cambridge Scholars, 2021, with M. Praisler). She has contributed to numerous international journals and edited volumes and regularly participates in international conferences, serving as a reviewer and editor for academic journals in cultural, literary, and media studies.

Credibility Warfare: How Democracies Silence without Censorship

Dr. Andreea MOSILA

American Public University System | Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, USA



Andreea Mosila is a scholar of global security specializing in the intersection of political communication, human security, and environmental change. She holds a Doctorate in Global Security from the American Military University and is a Fulbright Scholar. Dr. Mosila teaches courses in global security and space law and policy at the American Public University System and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Her work focuses on how credibility, knowledge, and power shape decision-making in complex security environments, particularly in the context of digital information systems and contemporary political discourse.



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SESSION 1

PANEL 1A

Chair: Dr. Ana-Maria Moga, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania

1. From Silence to Voice: Greta Gerwig’s Geographies of Women’s Speech

Yiming GAO

Yunnan Arts University, China

Abstract

Greta Gerwig’s films—*Frances Ha*, *Lady Bird*, *Little Women*, and *Barbie*—are often read as coming-of-age narratives about female self-actualization. This paper reinterprets them as a sustained inquiry into the spatial conditions that enable or foreclose women’s voice, reading Gerwig’s work within the framework of gendered silencing as a political and mediatic practice with identifiable historical continuities. Focusing on the American context, the paper argues that Gerwig’s films map a distinct geography of voice. In the public sphere, women encounter structures that reduce speech to performance and render it interruptible, mockable, or delegitimized. In the private sphere, especially the mother-daughter relation, voice is constrained by inherited anxiety and the fear of repeating maternal sacrifice. The recurring movement of leaving home, struggle, and return becomes a search for a space from which to speak. The paper also introduces a transnational comparative perspective through preliminary audience responses in China. Rather than opposing American and Chinese contexts, it examines how similar structural pressures are refracted through different cultural vocabularies. Where public feminist discourse is more constrained, viewers may translate these conflicts into the language of intergenerational tension and parental expectation. The comparison shows how the same cinematic text becomes a site where differently situated audiences negotiate the gap between structural constraint and available language.

Bio

Gao Yiming is an M.A. student in Film and Television Studies at Yunnan Arts University. Her research focuses on feminist cinema, transnational film reception, and gendered spatial politics in contemporary film. She has completed a journal article on female coming-of-age and spatial narrative in Greta Gerwig’s films, and her M.A. thesis continues this line of research. She is also active in screenwriting and is a member of the Shijiazhuang City Literary Critics Association.



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2. Lesbian Silencing and Speaking: A Cyberfeminist Analysis of Fresh Kill

Siyu CHEN

Shanghai Innovation Center for Intelligent Media Communication, China

Abstract

This paper explores the gendered and sexualized silencing of lesbian women in the American film *Fresh Kill* (Shu Lea Cheang, 1994). The film follows an interracial lesbian couple in Staten Island whose daughter becomes radioactive after eating tainted fish and then disappears. In response, the two mothers join the hacker underground in a dystopian New York as media activists. They use media both as a weapon and as a medium of subversion, enacting cyberfeminist resistance to silencing. While cyberfeminism often celebrates digital space as emancipatory for marginalized voices, *Fresh Kill* reveals its dystopian underside. In the film, digital and environmental violence converge to silence queer women, disable their testimony, and erase their claims to motherhood and community. Hacking, surveillance, and technological resistance function simultaneously as tools of liberation and mechanisms of control. Drawing on Donna Haraway’s concept of the cyborg and later work on the queer cyborg, the paper argues that the film exposes both the possibilities and dangers of technological mediation for marginalized communities. It ultimately frames lesbian silence as a systemic political technology under late capitalism.

Bio

Siyu Chen is a research assistant at the Shanghai Innovation Center for Intelligent Media Communication. She studied Radio and Television Studies at Shanghai University, where she ranked first in her cohort. Her research interests include queer cinema, gender equity, and visual art. She is also active as a director, cinematographer, and photographer, with work published in media and cultural venues. She has held internships at chi K11 Art Museum, START Museum, and Phoenix Satellite Television Shanghai Press Center.



3. Silent Frames: The Cinematic Silencing of Women in Dystopian Film

Amna YOUSAF

Government College University Lahore, Faisalabad Campus, Pakistan

Abstract

This paper examines how contemporary dystopian and speculative fiction films silence women, focusing on the ways narrative, visual, and auditory techniques produce systemic marginalization and constrain testimony. Drawing on Margaret Atwood’s distinction between science fiction and speculative fiction, it emphasizes films that portray gendered oppression as historically and politically grounded rather than purely fictional. Key texts include adaptations of *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Hulu series, 2017–present), as well as films such as *Children of Men* (2006) and *The Hunger Games* (2012), in which women’s muted voices exist within oppressive legal, social, and institutional frameworks. Through close analysis, the study explores how cinematic tools—camera framing, selective focus, the absence of voiceover, and editing—render women’s speech constrained, discredited, or monitored, creating a visual and auditory architecture of silencing. These techniques reflect both historical and contemporary forms of political, legal, and digital harassment, highlighting the ongoing epistemic injustice women face in public spaces. The paper also adopts a comparative lens, briefly considering select international dystopian films to show that narrative muteness operates transnationally while remaining culturally specific. By situating cinema within feminist speculative fiction and media studies, this study demonstrates how films can document and critique the systematic silencing of women, emphasizing the intersections of art, politics, and gendered voice.

Bio

Amna Yousaf is an M.Phil. scholar in English Literature at Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan. Her research focuses on gender, narrative theory, and transnational literature, examining how marginalized voices navigate power structures and historical trauma. She has taught literature and creative writing at secondary and tertiary levels and presented work on gendered narratives in both South Asian and global contexts. This paper marks her first foray into film studies, extending her interest in speculative fiction into cinematic media to explore visual and auditory mechanisms of gendered silencing.



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PANEL 1B

Chair: Gabriela Debita, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania

1. Smart Power: Breaking the Silence through Male Allyship in Hulu’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (2017–2025)

Thuc Anh NGUYEN HO

University of Management and Technology, Vietnam

Abstract

This paper examines the representation of male allyship in Hulu’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (2017–2025) as a narrative response to the silencing of women under authoritarian patriarchy. Set in the theocratic regime of Gilead, the series foregrounds systems that regulate women’s bodies, language, and public presence. Against this structure of domination, selected male characters intervene in ways that complicate conventional gender binaries and redistribute political agency. The paper analyzes how acts of solidarity, resistance, and ethical witness function within the series, asking whether male support meaningfully challenges patriarchal power or remains constrained by the same structures it seeks to oppose. By focusing on allyship as both narrative device and political question, the study considers how feminist dystopian media imagines coalition, responsibility, and the limits of reform from within oppressive systems.

Bio

Thuc Anh Nguyen Ho is a lecturer in Liberal Education at the University of Management and Technology (UMT) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She holds an MSc in Gender, Media, and Culture from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a BA (Hons) in Media Studies from the University of East Anglia. Her research explores the intersections of gender, identity, and media representation, with particular attention to how contemporary media forms negotiate with and reconfigure traditional narratives in the Vietnamese context. Her recent work investigates feminist and decolonial archival practices, examining the role of affect in shaping collective memory and domestic spaces, especially the kitchen.



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2. Surveillance, Biopower, and Visual Affect in *The Handmaid's Tale*

Anupama C S

Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit (Kalady, Kerala), India

Abstract

The paper explores the relationship between Foucauldian biopower and visual affect through the MGM-Hulu adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. The narrative imagines the dystopian Republic of Gilead, where women are segregated according to their capacity to produce healthy children. Through analysis of cinematic form, including color palettes, camera angles, framing, sound, production design, and cinematography, the study examines how visual techniques shape the affective response of the audience. Handmaids' bodies are disciplined through training at the Red Centre, constant surveillance by the Eyes, and manipulation by Commanders and Wives. Gendered silence and internalized discipline are extended through visual metaphors of bodily violence, generating fear and discomfort in the spectator. By defining the female body as property of the state, the regime legitimizes state-sponsored rape and bodily mutilation as punishments for resistance. The paper argues that the visuality of surveillance and biopower transforms spectacle into an experience of trauma and violence that resonates with broader structures of womanhood. Drawing on Michel Foucault and visual affect theory, it contends that *The Handmaid's Tale* successfully renders visible the politics of surveillance and power that dehumanize marginalized subjects through the regulation of bodily functions.

Bio

Anupama C S is a research scholar in Literary and Cultural Studies at Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Kerala, India. She holds degrees in English and Education and has qualified UGC NET, GATE, and other state-level teaching eligibility examinations. Her interests include Medical Humanities, Posthumanism, Film Studies, and Performance Studies. She has approximately six years of teaching experience in schools and colleges in Kerala.



3. The Politics of Silence in Margaret Atwood’s *Cat’s Eye*: An Ecocritical Reading

Namrata NISTANDRA

Doaba College (Jalandhar, Punjab), India

Abstract

Margaret Atwood’s *Cat’s Eye* (1988) is a layered text concerned with bullying, silence, and survival. Structured as a stream-of-consciousness narrative and *Künstlerroman*, the novel is primarily set in Toronto. Elaine Risley’s return to her hometown for a retrospective of her paintings coincides with a reckoning with repressed childhood trauma. Forms of nature play an integral role in the ways characters, especially women, construct identity and selfhood. This dynamic emerges most clearly through the contrast between woods and suburbia. In the Canadian woods, nature remains relatively free from human control. In parallel, mothers are less constrained by social pressure and normative expectations. In suburbia, by contrast, nature is domesticated and managed. Girls and their mothers live according to social norms and punish those who fail to conform. Atwood’s novel depicts mothers whose own disempowerment is transmitted to their daughters. Their bitterness, criticism, or illness shapes daughters who become bullies and later failures. Against this pattern stands Elaine’s mother, who offers detachment and space that enable artistic growth. Silence becomes a response to sustained childhood bullying, but the novel also underscores its transformative potential. Elaine ultimately sublimates silence into art, making suburbia a site of repression as well as healing.

Bio

Namrata Nistandra is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Doaba College, Jalandhar, Punjab, India. She completed her PhD on the fiction of J. M. Coetzee and has conducted research on Coetzee’s literary affiliations with Gandhi and Tolstoy. She teaches Phonetics, Postcolonial Literature, Modern Drama, and Irish Literature. Her research interests include gender studies, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies.



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SESSION 2

PANEL 2A

Chair: Dr. Andreea Mosila, American Public University System | Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, USA

1. Quiet, Roe! Judicial Silencing and Scripted Violence in Reproductive Discourse: Reading *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022)

Indrasabarna HARI

Asutosh College, University of Calcutta, India

Abstract

The reproductive politics of the United States has long stood at the center of global debates on women's rights and healthcare. The ruling in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) appeared to establish a progressive framework for reproductive autonomy, yet the political discourse surrounding the issue remained polarized between pro-life and pro-choice positions. Following the overturning of *Roe* in 2022, a new and explicitly gendered crisis emerged, adversely affecting countless women while lending implicit support to far-right conservative ideologies. Court rulings and judicial opinions emerge from interactions among social forces within legal institutions, making them readable as cultural texts. Through a comparative reading of *Roe v. Wade* and *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, this paper examines how the denial of bodily autonomy participates in judicial silencing and how gendered violence is embedded in the language through which legal authority becomes materially effective. It introduces the concept of “scripted violence” to describe the ways language and writing produce the otherization of women and sustain hegemonic discourse while invalidating progressive alternatives.

Bio

Indrasabarna Hari is an undergraduate student of English Literature at Asutosh College, affiliated with the University of Calcutta, India. He published the poetry collection *Autumn Thoughts* with Bookleaf Publishing in 2024. He currently volunteers for projects including Citizen Reader's



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The Senses of Stories and Rubin Observatory’s *Rubin Comet Catchers*. His first conference paper on Shakespeare was presented at “Shakespeare in Bengal: Empire, Encounter and Afterlives,” organized by the Department of English, Jadavpur University. His research interests include Shakespeare Studies, Literature of Displacement, Displacement Aesthetics, Gender Studies, and Postcolonial Interculturalism.



2. The Right (Not To) Read? Analyzing *Mahmoud v. Taylor*'s Cultural Implications

Lior WEINSTEIN

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Abstract

This paper examines the phenomenon of book banning in school libraries and curricula through a cultural lens, with particular focus on the recent decision in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*. It argues that the Court's approach to LGBTQ+ literary texts reflects significant misreadings, often produced through selective attention to isolated passages and disregard for broader narrative and cultural contexts, in ways that restrict access to LGBTQ+ literature. By analyzing these interpretive methods, the paper proposes cultural and analytical tools for close reading that integrate textual nuance with social and historical understanding. It further highlights the concrete consequences of the ruling for LGBTQ+ students, whose access to affirming literature and intellectual spaces is narrowed, limiting opportunities for representation, self-recognition, and engagement with diverse perspectives. The paper contends that the decision reflects a broader judicial shift in the treatment of literature, framing works that address contested social issues as threats and legitimizing new forms of censorship. It underscores the risks such jurisprudence poses to educational pluralism and argues for the preservation of diverse literary experiences in schools.

Bio

Lior Weinstein is a researcher in the fields of law and culture, law and technology, and international law. He is a PhD student (direct track) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and holds an LLB and a BA in Hebrew Literature (magna cum laude) from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has received several distinctions, including the Arie Feldmann Prize for Excellence in Law, Arts, and Social Activity, and the Leah Goldberg Prize.



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3. Echoes of the Weird: Strategic Gaslighting and the Autobiographical Resistance of Black and Dalit Bahujan Women

Chettupally ANVESH & Pallavi NEGI

University of Delhi, India

Abstract

In the context of stranger-than-fiction politics, the systematic silencing of marginalized women is a structural feature of modern patriarchal and ethnonationalist regimes of power. A comparative analysis of the American and Indian political contexts reveals transnational similarities in the ways women of color, especially Black women in the United States and Dalit Bahujan women in India, are strategically erased and politically managed. Autobiographical writing and testimonios are more than literary forms in such contexts; they function as crucial modes of survival and resistance. This paper examines selected life narratives from two different yet comparable democracies in order to trace how Black and Dalit Bahujan women live, write, and confront intersecting racial, caste, and gender oppression. The study argues that personal archives disrupt hegemonic narratives that seek to silence vulnerable communities. Through a comparative transnational framework, it shows how autobiographical testimony exposes infrastructures of marginalization while generating a radical anti-aesthetic against contemporary political gaslighting in both Global South and American contexts.

Bio

Chettupally Anvesh is a research scholar at the University of Delhi specializing in Dalit Bahujan literature, digital humanities, and cultural studies. His work focuses on subalternity, algorithmic resistance, and digital counter-publics. A novelist and editor of three anthologies, his forthcoming first novel focuses on marginalized families. He has recently chaired several panels at NeMLA 2026.

Pallavi Negi is a scholar of Indian Literature and Cultural Studies, Assistant Professor at IILM University, and research scholar at the University of Delhi. Her work examines oral narratives as forms of memory, resistance, and feminist identity in the folk literature of Uttarakhand.



PANEL 2B

Chair: Dr. Oana Gheorghiu, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania

1. Silencing of Women in *The Testaments* (2019) by Margaret Atwood

Sachin KUMAR & Aditya PRAKASH

Dr BR Ambedkar NIT (Jalandhar, Punjab), India

Abstract

This paper examines the politics of silencing and testimonial control in *The Testaments*, situating the novel within broader discourses of gendered oppression and epistemic injustice. Set in the theocratic regime of Gilead, the novel exposes how women’s voices are systematically regulated through institutional, spatial, and ideological mechanisms. From the rigid hierarchies of Ardua Hall to the controlled domestic spaces assigned to women, speech is not merely restricted but strategically orchestrated to sustain authoritarian power. Drawing on feminist theory and Foucauldian notions of discourse and surveillance, the paper argues that silencing operates not only through enforced muteness but also through the manipulation of narrative authority. Women are permitted to speak only within prescribed frameworks, where their voices are co-opted to reinforce the very structures that oppress them. The testimonies of Aunt Lydia, Agnes, and Daisy reveal how voice becomes a contested site, simultaneously a tool of complicity and resistance. The study further reads covert communication, fragmented storytelling, and hidden archives as counter-discursive practices that challenge hegemonic narratives. It argues that Atwood’s speculative fiction not only depicts silencing but interrogates its mechanisms, showing how suppressed voices can destabilize systems of power and reclaim narrative agency.

Bio

Sachin Kumar is a Research Scholar in the Department of Humanities and Management at Dr BR Ambedkar NIT Jalandhar, Punjab, India. His research interests include Utopian and Dystopian Literature, Feminist Studies, Spatial and Memory Studies, and Science Fiction Studies.



2. Counting Words, Controlling Worlds: Linguistic Regulation and the Institutional Silencing of Women in *Vox* by Christina Dalcher

M. Carmen GOMEZ-GALISTEO

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Spain

Abstract

The title of Christina Dalcher’s novel *Vox* (2018) derives from the Latin word for “voice,” yet the title is deeply ironic. Dalcher depicts a society in which women’s voices are constrained and ultimately silenced. Set in a present-day or near-future United States, the novel portrays a regime that stealthily imposes escalating restrictions on women, the most striking being a counter that tracks and limits their daily speech to one hundred words, punishing transgression with electric shocks. The narrative follows Jean McClellan, a cognitive linguist, as she attempts to reverse the system. This paper reads *Vox* as both dystopian fiction and a critical reflection on the limits of women’s speech. As feminist scholarship has shown, women have historically been expected to speak little, speak softly, restrict themselves to “appropriate” topics, or remain silent altogether. In Dalcher’s novel, these pressures become state-enforced epistemic control. The later revelation that measures first imposed on women are intended for the whole population intensifies the novel’s political warning. The paper argues that *Vox* interrogates who is allowed to have a voice, under what conditions, and with what consequences when state rules governing speech are challenged.

Bio

M. Carmen Gomez-Galisteo is Assistant Professor in American Literature at UNED (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia), Spain. She holds a BA in English and a PhD in American Studies from the Universidad de Alcalá. She is the author of three books: *The Wind is Never Gone: Sequels, Parodies and Rewritings of Gone with the Wind* (2011), *Early Visions and Representations of America* (2013), and *A Successful Novel Must be in Want of a Sequel* (2018). She has taught undergraduate and graduate courses at several universities, supervised numerous master’s theses, and published in journals including *Clepsydra*, *Ad Americam*, *Sederi*, *RAEI*, *The Grove*, and *Atlantis*.



3. Feminist Dystopias in 20th Century Literature: Characterisation, Categorisation and Criticism

Claudia LUPU

“Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania

Abstract

Twentieth-century feminist dystopias frequently examine the possible consequences of societies shaped by extremist theological and political ideologies under patriarchal leadership. Oppression is often manifested through systemic and externalized mechanisms, dramatizing fears about radical governance and backlash against feminist movements. Critics historically sought to discredit such works through dismissals of the genre’s supposed absurdity. Texts such as *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood, *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy, *Swastika Night* by Katharine Burdekin, and *This Perfect Day* by Ira Levin demonstrate that dystopian narratives function as critical engagements with grounded social anxieties. Earlier criticism emphasized institutional control, reproductive regulation, and exaggerated gender norms. More recent approaches turn to memory, testimony, selfhood, and narrative form. The paper argues that the persistent gap between literary form and political meaning has often obscured the importance of feminist dystopian writing. These works bridge dystopian imagination and lived realities while exposing the continuing impulse to minimize feminist literature.

Bio

Claudia Lupu is a certified English-Romanian translator, interpreter, and first-year PhD candidate in Literature and Linguistics at the “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, where she also works as a teaching assistant. She teaches seminars in translation studies, business communication, English for Specific Purposes, and Anglo-American culture. Her research focuses on twentieth- and twenty-first-century feminist literature, especially dystopian fiction, speculative narratives, and life-writing forms.



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4. Re-reading *Lolita* in DC: Azar Nafisi’s Hermeneutics and the Republic in Crisis

Gabriela DEBITA

“Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania

Abstract

Despite being mired in controversy, Azar Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003) remains a sustained demonstration of literary interpretation as a form of political life. The clandestine seminar Nafisi convenes in her Tehran apartment establishes reading and scholarship as the instruments through which women silenced under theocratic rule recover speech, reconstitute interpretive authority, and refuse the state’s absolute control over their lives. These conditions describe the current American political environment with disquieting precision: armed conflict with Iran, attacks on factual reporting, the legal contraction of women’s autonomy, and the demand that citizens distrust their own perception of material reality. Two of the canonical texts Nafisi foregrounds, *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Lolita* (1955;1958), illuminate the contemporary American political landscape with particular force. Fitzgerald’s novel furnishes a vocabulary for spectacle, accumulated wealth, architectural excess, and the persistence of national fantasy across visible civic fracture. The Trumps’ Gatsby-themed New Year celebration at Mar-a-Lago, the redecoration of the Oval Office, and the fixation on the White House ballroom project render Gatsby’s world of glittering surfaces and moral vacancy a living script. Nabokov’s *Lolita* operates as a profoundly political novel in which domination proceeds through narrative form itself. Humbert renames, aestheticizes, ventriloquizes, and nearly erases Dolores inside the story he tells about her. The same mechanism recurs across the present American landscape: in the official refusal to release the Epstein files, in the renewed criminalization of reproductive choice, and in the systemic public discrediting of women journalists who challenge executive authority. Where *Gatsby* exposes the seductions of public myth, *Lolita* exposes the intimate mechanics of subjugation that such myths require. Nafisi’s enduring intervention lies in treating reading as civic practice. For Iranian women under state repression and military violence, and for American women confronting democratic retrenchment, literature offers the recovery of language, the assertion of interpretive authority over one’s own experience, and the construction of intellectual community capable of contesting the official record.

Bio

Gabriela Debita is a PhD candidate in English and American Literature and adjunct lecturer in English at “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Romania. She holds a BA summa cum laude in English Literature from the State University of New York at Plattsburgh and an MA in English



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Literature from the University of Ottawa. Her doctoral research focuses on textual heterotopias in the fantasy and speculative fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin, Patricia A. McKillip, and Sofia Samatar. She has presented her research extensively at national and international conferences, with a sustained focus on Le Guin, Samatar, and Nnedi Okorafor, and has published several articles and book chapters on their works.



SESSION 3

Panel 3B

Chair: Dr. Linda Levitt, Stephen F. Austin State University, USA

1. Shame and Gendered Silencing in Fanny A. Garcia’s Short Fiction

John Andrew M. DEL PRADO

Ateneo de Manila University | UST Graduate School, Philippines

Abstract

This paper examines how Fanny A. Garcia’s short fiction, particularly short story “Pina, Pina, Saan Ka Pupunta?” represents the persistence of colonial desire and its role in producing gendered forms of silencing. Framed by an epigraph from U.S. President William McKinley that justifies American colonization as a civilizing mission, the narrative situates personal aspiration within a broader historical structure that equates Western affiliation with progress, mobility, and legitimacy. The protagonist’s desire to marry an “Amerikano” reflects the internalization of this hierarchy, where foreignness becomes a perceived pathway out of poverty. Drawing on Frantz Fanon and Miranda Fricker, this paper argues that colonial desire produces conditions of epistemic vulnerability that constrain women’s voices. Pina’s limited access to education and language renders her dependent on others to communicate, while her perceived lack of credibility makes her susceptible to deception. Following her abandonment, shame further regulates her silence, demonstrating how affect functions as an internalized mechanism of control. The paper also situates the text within contemporary Filipino cultural discourse, where humor and everyday narratives continue to frame relationships with foreigners as markers of success. These discourses reveal how colonial desire persists as a lived ideology that shapes not only aspiration but also the conditions under which women can speak and be heard. Ultimately, the story exposes how structures that promise mobility simultaneously produce forms of silencing.



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Bio

John Andrew M. del Prado earned his BA (2012) and MA (2016) in Literature from the University of Santo Tomas and is currently pursuing a PhD in Literature at the UST Graduate School. He also studied Comparative Literature and Comparative Culture at Korea University (2018–2022) under the Korean Government Scholarship Program. He is a faculty member of the Department of English at Ateneo de Manila University.



2. Unfit to Speak: Reproductive Epistemology and the Silencing of Deviant Motherhood

Tithi BANERJEE

University of Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), India

Abstract

This paper examines reproductive politics as a site of epistemic silencing, arguing that women are not only denied bodily autonomy but systematically stripped of authority over knowledge concerning their own reproductive lives. In the contemporary United States, particularly in the wake of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, legal and medical institutions have reasserted control over reproductive discourse, determining not only what is permissible but who is authorized to speak. Within this landscape, women's testimonies about pregnancy, abortion, and motherhood are frequently discredited in public and media discourse as irrational, immoral, or ideologically suspect, shifting attention from the content of their speech to the perceived legitimacy of the speaker. Drawing on theories of epistemic injustice, this paper conceptualizes the figure of the “good mother” as a disciplinary construct that regulates narrative credibility. Reading *Burnt Sugar* (2020) and *The Lost Daughter* (2006) as transnational narrative sites, it traces how maternal deviance, manifested through ambivalence, refusal, neglect, or non-normative attachment, results in the systematic delegitimization of female subjectivity. These texts foreground mothers who speak, yet whose speech becomes unintelligible or unacceptable because it violates dominant scripts of care and sacrifice, producing conditions of narrative punishment, social erasure, and psychological pathologization. While these narratives emerge from non-American contexts, they illuminate the structural logic of contemporary American reproductive discourse, where the authority to speak about the body remains contingent upon conformity to normative motherhood. Briefly invoking *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) as a speculative benchmark, the paper argues that reproductive politics operates as an epistemic regime that disciplines not only bodies but the conditions of intelligible speech itself.

Bio

Tithi Banerjee is a research scholar who has qualified the UGC NET with JRF and the WB SET. Her research has been published in two international peer-reviewed open access journals, and she has presented at national and international conferences and seminars. She has also participated in the workshop “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Literary Studies.” Her research interests include feminist literary criticism, Affect



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Theory, and the intersections of literature and maternal ambivalence. Her work examines questions of gender, identity, and cultural discourse in contemporary fiction and media, with particular attention to how digital spaces shape subjectivities and reconfigure narratives of selfhood.



3. Reproductive Silencing for/of/by Women: Eugenics in Sherri S. Tepper’s *The Gate to Women’s Country*

Lynn DEBOECK

University of Utah, USA

Abstract

Sherri S. Tepper’s 1988 feminist dystopian novel *The Gate to Women’s Country* exemplifies Margaret Atwood’s definition of speculative fiction by reimagining new ways women may be silenced in a future still shaped by the past. In particular, the vestiges of eugenics feature heavily in the novel alongside broader ecofeminist commentary on humankind’s interference with nature. The narrative imagines a post-devastation world in which surviving humans establish small towns named after their female founders. These communities cooperate through trade and shared knowledge, and girls and women appear to hold positions of leadership. The setting initially resembles a feminist utopia. Yet the novel also presents male-led communities that treat women as reproductive slaves for the continuation of male lineages. More significantly, Tepper ultimately reveals that the supposedly progressive women’s towns participate in their own forms of reproductive control. Using the novel as a framework, the paper asks whether contemporary societies have moved far beyond the histories of eugenics practiced on enslaved populations in the nineteenth century, through the legacies of Albert Johnson and Harry Laughlin in the early twentieth century, to present-day detention and deportation regimes. It argues that speculative fiction remains a crucial medium for exposing the persistence of reproductive coercion.

Bio

Lynn Deboeck (MA, PhD) is Associate Professor of Theatre and Lecturer in Gender Studies and the Honors College at the University of Utah. Her research interests include gender performance, representations of maternity and motherhood in Western theatrical traditions, pedagogy, and feminist directing of live performance. Her work has appeared in *Theatre Journal*, *PARtake: The Journal of Performance as Research*, and *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies*. She recently published the chapter “Trans Identity and Neurodiversity in Dramatic Literature: Diego Casado Rubio’s *milliones de segundos*” in *Inhabiting Utopia: Science Fiction in Film, Performative Arts, and Digital Media* (Springer, 2025). She also co-edited *(M)Other Perspectives: Staging Motherhood in 21st Century North American Theatre & Performance* (Routledge, 2023).



Panel 3B

Chair: Dr. M. Carmen Gomez-Galisteo, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Spain

1. Theatrical Commentary from Belle Rêve’s Red Velvet Curtains to Crunchem Hall’s Paper Roses: The Femme Madonna of Blanche DuBois and Miss Honey in Case Study and Spectacle

Z. I. MAHMUD

Independent Scholar, Bangladesh

Abstract

This paper offers a theatrical commentary tracing the fragile, performative spaces occupied by Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Miss Honey in *Matilda*, reading their lives as both case study and spectacle in the politics of feminine voice. From the red velvet curtains of Belle Rêve to the paper roses of Crunchem Hall, these women inhabit moral and social architectures that shape, constrain, and mediate their speech, vulnerability, and authority. Anchored in Margaret Atwood’s *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*, which distinguishes speculative from science fiction and emphasizes the historical grounding of imagined worlds, the paper situates Blanche and Miss Honey within frameworks of plausibility and precedent, highlighting how institutional cornerstones, familial structures, and cultural pressures historically condition the silencing, scrutiny, and regulation of women’s voices. Blanche’s performative fragility collides with social expectation, while Miss Honey’s tender vigilance navigates structural oppression, creating spaces where moral authority, credibility, and ethical agency are constantly negotiated. Both function as femme Madonnas, figures whose tenderness and moral solicitude are simultaneously idealized and disciplined, aestheticized and scrutinized, rendering femininity a spectacle under observation. Using these characters as case studies, the paper interrogates how vulnerability becomes a medium of resistance and witness across literary and theatrical spaces, from Southern Gothic parlor to classroom stage. It argues that these figures illuminate enduring patterns of credibility, vulnerability, and silencing, showing how the quiet theatre of women’s voices negotiates authority, prudence, and conscience across contrasting worlds.



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Bio

Z. I. Mahmud is an alumnus of Satyawati College, University of Delhi, India, where he earned his Honours degree in English. Based in Bangladesh, he plans to pursue a Double Honours degree in Linguistics and Literature at the Department of English and Modern Languages, North South University. His interests include critical methodologies, performance criticism, close reading, forensic textual analysis, and archival research. His scholarship spans medieval and early modern studies, global modernism, and transcultural literary reinterpretation. His forthcoming book chapters include “Ecocosmic and Cybernetic Femininities: Posthuman Metamorphosis in *Wuthering Heights* and *Great Expectations*” in *Emerging Trends and Future Directions in Comparative Literature* (Empyrean Publishing House, 2026), and “Savitri’s Indianization of Eurowesternist Alter Ego” in *Explorations in English Language and Literature: Theories, Texts, and Critical Approaches* (KY Publications, 2026). He has also presented at conferences including BARS 2026 Romantic Retrospection and the Haskoli Islands Student Conference on the Medieval North. His work in progress, *Airborne Orphans of Collapse at Extinction’s Fading Horizon*, will appear in *Bodies that Breathe, Volume I*.



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2. Digital Silencing: Gendered Harassment and the Policing of Women’s Voices in Online Media Ecosystems

Yash Singh SISODIYA

Devi Ahilya University, India

Abstract

This paper examines how gendered harassment and coordinated trolling function as mechanisms of reputational silencing within contemporary digital media ecosystems. Through a comparative discussion of the United States and India, it explores how online hostility directed at women journalists, scholars, and activists reflects broader sociological dynamics surrounding gender, media participation, and feminist public discourse. The study argues that digital platforms do not merely host misogynistic speech but structurally amplify practices that discourage participation, punish visibility, and discipline dissenting voices. By situating online abuse within wider systems of gendered power, the paper shows how digital environments reproduce longstanding exclusions while presenting themselves as open forums of expression.

Bio

Yash Singh Sisodiya is a social researcher. His work focuses on media cultures, public discourse, and contemporary sociological questions surrounding digital participation and power.



3. Two Marys

Scott ENNIS

Independent Scholar, USA

Abstract

Two Marys stages a liminal dialogue between Mary Magdalene, whose testimony of the resurrection was marginalized, and Mary Shelley, whose authorship of *Frankenstein* was overshadowed, joined by Hester Prynne, the fictional heroine of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Set in a symbolic garden at dawn, the dialogue examines how women's voices are suppressed, reinterpreted, or erased across religion, literature, and society. Through overlapping speech, half-spoken truths, and subtle interruptions, the piece dramatizes silencing while highlighting the persistence of female voice. By merging creative writing, literary scholarship, and performative structure, *Two Marys* offers a creative-critical exploration of historical silencing and the reclaiming of narrative authority.

Bio

Scott Ennis is an independent scholar whose work explores literature, humor, and performative writing, with a focus on recovering marginalized voices in historical and literary contexts. His research blends creative and critical methodologies, emphasizing the recovery and reimagination of silenced women's narratives.



SESSION 4

Chair: Dr. Cristina Albu, University of Missouri-Kansas City, USA

1. Mirrors of Malice: Domestic Abuse in “The Perfect Slap” and “My Artist”

Tina JOSE

Mahatma Gandhi University | St. Stephen’s College (Kottayam, Kerala), India

Abstract

Though many women succumb to the idea of a happily ever after, recent World Health Organization statistics indicate that one in three women experience domestic abuse globally. In India, domestic cruelty accounts for forty per cent of crimes against women. Comparable figures in the United States suggest that the problem remains similarly pervasive. Because the perpetrator is often a husband or intimate partner, reporting abuse or leaving such relationships becomes especially difficult. For women facing domestic abuse, awareness is the first step toward receiving assistance, though this recognition is often resisted or delayed. Artists such as Ana Mendieta, Silvia Levenson, Sukanya Mani, and Nikki Luna have addressed domestic abuse through visual and performance art. In this context, the paper studies two performances that mobilize art to generate awareness. The first is “The Perfect Slap,” performed by Vandana, in which the audience often leaves with a profound sense of unrest. The second is “My Artist,” a performance of Ellisa Brown’s poem by Anne-Marie Halovanic, combining narration, music, movement, and painting to produce an unsettling visual experience. The paper analyzes how both performances represent the dread, alarm, and psychological violence associated with domestic abuse while transforming artistic practice into a mode of public intervention.

Bio

Tina Jose currently works as an Assistant Professor at St. Stephen’s College, Kottayam (Kerala, India). She is also pursuing her doctoral degree at the School of Letters, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. When not teaching or researching, she pursues photography, writing, and travel. She is the author of two books: the anthology *Docile No More* and the travelogue *Wandering Woman*, both available on Amazon, in addition to several academic publications in international journals.



2. Look Don't Look: Censoring Sally Mann (Again)

Linda LEVITT

Stephen F. Austin State University, USA

Abstract

Artist and writer Sally Mann is best known for black-and-white photographs centered on her family and the natural and built environments around Lexington, Virginia, where she was born and later settled with her husband Larry on a 400-acre farm. Mann photographed her children throughout their lives, sometimes nude and sometimes in playful poses that conservative critics interpreted as sexualized. Her book *Immediate Family* was published by Aperture in 1992. During the culture wars of the period, politicians and activists who targeted art, music, and film they considered objectionable publicly attacked the work, accusing Mann of producing child pornography. No charges were filed, but the moral panic surrounding the photographs proved personally devastating. Mann's artistic reputation continued to grow, with exhibitions held internationally. Her exhibition *Diaries of Home* opened at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth in November 2024 and included photographs from *Immediate Family*. Four of those images were removed from the exhibition, prompting a police investigation into Mann's role as a supposed child pornographer. A grand jury refused to hear the case, and the photographs were returned. Mann warned that she had again become a flashpoint for a new round of culture wars. This presentation addresses both the photographs and the controversies surrounding them, arguing that attacks on the work also censor Mann's identity as an artist and as a mother photographing her children.

Bio

Linda Levitt is a professor of media and communication at Stephen F. Austin State University. She has published widely in academic journals and edited collections. She is currently researching the role of camp performance in 1970s game shows.



3. Visualizing Silence: Real-Time Drawing as Practice-Based Critique of Gendered Voicelessness

Erin FINLEY

OCAD University (Toronto), Canada

Abstract

This alternative-format presentation combines short analytical commentary with a real-time drawing to examine the cultural and political mechanisms through which women’s voices are constrained or delegitimized. Taking its point of departure from Margaret Atwood’s framing of *The Handmaid’s Tale* as speculative fiction grounded in documented historical precedent, the presentation approaches gendered silencing as an ongoing institutional practice rather than a purely dystopian scenario. During the fifteen-minute presentation, the speaker will produce a real-time drawing while offering brief analytical reflections on visual motifs of silence and speech. The drawing will initially depict fragmented and partially obscured facial forms, emphasizing the recurring cultural image of the muted or obstructed mouth. Through successive layers of mark-making, including redactions, interruptions, and erasures, the image will evoke the visual grammar of censorship and silencing. In its final stage, the drawing will shift toward articulation as previously suppressed lines re-emerge, gradually forming a composed and visibly voiced protagonist. The process functions as both visual metaphor and methodological experiment: a practice-based exploration of how voice can be erased, contested, and ultimately reclaimed. By situating live drawing as a mode of critical inquiry, the presentation demonstrates how artistic practice can contribute to scholarly discussions of gendered silencing across literature, visual culture, and contemporary media.

Bio

Erin Finley is an award-winning visual artist and practice-based researcher working at the intersection of drawing, feminist theory, ageism, memory-based research, and visual culture. Their work examines how bodies and voices are mediated within structures of power, censorship, and representation. Through live and durational drawing processes, Finley investigates mark-making as both a record of vulnerability and a mode of radical resistance. Their research engages with speculative literature, dystopian media, and contemporary debates surrounding epistemic injustice and the regulation of speech. By integrating analytical commentary with real-time visual production, their projects position artistic practice as a method of timely critical inquiry. Erin Finley has exhibited internationally and recently delivered similar alternative-format presentations at TEDx McMaster University and the University of Oxford.