

Friday PhD Talks 2023-2024

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Contested Motherhood in Post-pandemic US Literature: The First and Only Conclusion in my First Year of Doctoral Thesis

Abstract:

Although reflection on the issue of motherhood has not stopped since the second feminist wave, it has not received either the theoretical consideration or the political, social, and cultural value that such a significant issue for defining gender roles would require. In this sense, motherhood is considered the pending subject of feminism in the 21st century to the point that numerous scholars and essayists have been calling for a feminism specific to the issue of motherhood. This demand increases when we place the focus on the situation of precariousness and poverty in which the mental health of women mothers finds itself. It is therefore vital to examine, strategically and specifically for their 21st-century context, the causes, and agents most detrimental to the experience of motherhood.

In light of this, in this presentation, I would like to briefly share with you my research to date. Broadly speaking, my doctoral thesis focuses on the representation of mothers' psychic suffering in the post-pandemic US narrative. More specifically, I intend to conduct a comparative study between American post-pandemic works-*Nightbitch* (2021) by Rachel Yoder, *The School for Good Mothers* (2022) by Jessamine Chan, and *The Upstairs House* (2021) by Julia Fine- to demonstrate that these authors are part of a new trend, not only literary but cultural, that aims to show a defiant discourse on the experience of motherhood through which to expose the interrelation between the experience of motherhood, as demanded in the s. XXI, and psychological suffering or even its aggravation leading to mental illness.

Bionote:

Paula Serrano Elena holds a B.A. in English Studies from the University of Zaragoza (2017-20) and an M.A. in North American Studies from both Complutense University of Madrid and Franklin Institute of Alcalá de Henares University (2020-21). Her PhD thesis investigates the representation of mothers' psychic suffering in post-pandemic North-American narratives. Her research interests are feminism, gender and motherhood studies as applied to North American women's literature. Her research usually chooses the following topics: childbirth and motherhood, domestic and gender-based violence, psychic suffering, mental health, and madness.