

Résumés des ateliers – doctoriales de littérature

Babakhani, Nasrin, Göttingen Universität. Advisors: Prof. Dr. Andrew. S. Gross, University of Göttingen, Prof. Dr. MaryAnn Snyder- Körber, John F. Kennedy Institute. 2015
A cross-cultural investigation of Magical Realism: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*

The last three decades has seen an increasing interest in magical realism as a narrative form related to important issues in cross-culturalism, postmodernism and postcolonialism. Some investigators examine magical realism as an important trend in contemporary international fiction that has led to 'an imposition of cultural homogeneity'. However, my study is founded on the argument that magical realism is a means of voicing difference rather than a sign of cultural homogeneity. This study will show how Toni Morrison and Gloria Naylor consciously deploy aspects of African American culture, called "magical" by Western standards, to challenge dominant white culture and the tradition of women's submissiveness.

I will substitute the term "Cultural realism" for magical realism because I think what has been called magical can be interpreted a strategic turn to magic as meaning something else. The dominant culture has labelled some aspects of African American culture magical and supernatural in order to ignore or devalue them. I will argue that Morrison and Naylor do not create a supernatural or fantastic effect, but write from particular cultural perspectives. Indeed, they challenge dominant conceptions of reality without sacrificing the claim to be true to experience.

I will discuss that Cultural realism is a reality that violates realism, this sounds paradoxical, for "the aim of traditional realism is to give objective, factual description of external world", whereas Cultural realism insists that the concept of reality cannot be restricted to the empirically perceptible and it does not always function according to "rational" Western outlook. Rather, people from non-Western cross-cultural backgrounds have multiple ways of observing and creating their world that must be accepted as real. The dominant Western world-view, on the other hand, considers this reality, which is simply understandable through cultural codes, as fantastic. Rationalism and science, thus, cannot explain the reality of human beings who are multiply marginalized. In fact, these bicultural writers use Cultural realism to challenge the scientific and rationalistic assumptions of Western modernity, in particular the view that "reality is knowable, predictable, and controllable" (Zamora 498).

Considering the fact that many magical realist authors have rejected the label "magical realism", because they dissociate themselves from fantasy and magical that it implies, I will discuss what is realism, what is magical? And even more controversially, who decide what is magic, what is real? Consequently, I show how cultural realism uses magic to resist dominant Western narratives and how these two women writers, Morrison and Naylor, illustrate the female protagonists' struggle for self-definition under conditions of cultural and patriarchal oppression and marginalization. Indeed, my aim is to show that these bicultural writers in *Beloved* and *Mama Day* portray a new picture of women that throughout history has been erased, misrepresented or excluded entirely.

Bascoul, Anne-Catherine, Université de Lorraine. Co-advisors : Jean-Philippe Héberlé, Lorraine University, and Jean-Yves Pellegrin, Paris IV University. 2015

The Gold Bug Variations, The Time of Our Singing, Orfeo or Musical Variations in Richard Powers's Novels.

This thesis studies three novels by the contemporary American writer Richard Powers, where music is omnipresent: *The Gold Bug Variations, The Time of Our Singing, and Orfeo*. Taking a definition of "the music novel" and using recent musico-literary theories, we consider the common elements in music and novelistic writing. We examine the integration of these elements in the texts and the

different conversions used. Our analysis suggests several approaches: structural, thematic, and musical. The study of this creative process uncovers the fact that music is intrinsically linked to the notion of time. The latter becomes synonymous of non-ending, of timelessness, of a-temporality, and immortality allowing to reach a form of freedom because music changes itself in a means of action. But the author doesn't stop at that point and, his novels are texts about music. Musical references evolve to be thematic and a close look at them makes us identify a complex web made of echoes and repetitions creating a unity. Music can turn itself into a political act. So, it is the symbol of a liberation allowing to escape from social obligations, conventions, confinement. Freedom of writing finally, because music is associated with the musicality of the text. Confronting the musical rhythm to the story, we want to show that Richard Powers uses music to give his reader a new time experience: he is listening to a novel and he is reading a musical novel. The author, between modernism and postmodernism, is out of time as well. He explores new forms of aesthetic expression; music becomes the symbol of beauty, order, harmony. Thus, the musico-literary approach shows that music and its variations, as used by Richard Powers, create hybrid novels enlightening the reader on the author's point of view on time, leading to freedom and immortality. I would like to present my research domain but I would also like to confront my point of view with other young researchers as well as with more experienced ones. More particularly, music on the thematic level raises many questions concerning the way the different approaches can be organized. Richard Powers refers to many different types of music and his temporal scope is very wide as well. Choices must thus be made: to organize all these references according to a chronological order, to musical genres, or to the way they are linked to the different characters. All these different options have some positive aspects, but also negative ones. To take part in the "Doctoriales de l'AFEA" would be a real opportunity to discuss and exchange about how to be more efficient to prove my different points at this stage of my research.

Cogan, Michaëla. Université de Franche-Comté. Co-advisors : Prof. Michèle Bonnet (Université de Franche-Comté) and Prof. Sophie Vallas (Aix Marseille Université). 2014

Idiocy in Jerome Charyn's fiction.

I am currently conducting research on Jerome Charyn's fiction, focusing more specifically on the notion of idiocy. Charyn himself, an American-born contemporary author who has published, worked and lived in both Paris and New York for most of his life, clearly states his interest for the idiot character as "a perverse [child]" who is also "a kind of genius." As his works embrace various genres and topics – from *roman noirs* to historical novels, from children's books to *autofictions* – the main focus at this stage of my research is to analyze a wide and diverse range of texts, in an attempt to bring out a systematic view of how the trope of idiocy informs Charyn's writing. The first step in the analysis is to consider characterization, in order to expose the link between the oddities of his singular characters and the meaning they convey. Do they serve as foils for their normal counterparts, are they grotesque versions of the part of the psyche we reject, or do they embody an altogether different set of values, *ie* centered on innocence (in the tradition of the Dostoevsky idiot)? At this point in the research, the chosen angle of analysis is voice or showing how a character's eccentricity is in fact an idiolect, a personal language that will provide the ability to live and integrate into the world that was lacking. Narrative techniques will then be addressed with regard to how Charyn's plot or lack thereof serves his definition of language as chaotic or lacking inner coherence. Limit experiences or transgressive themes such as death, madness, violence and love provide the grounds for an exploration of the ineffable, of what can be described only by forms of silence – ellipsis, what he calls the "interspace" between words, sentences or images (in graphic novels) – and specific use of language as a poetic means – in Charyn's case, an acute sense for visual transcription. Emptiness, loss and lacuna are among the initiating factors of his writing ("Music comes from the absence of music") and for him

the purpose of language is to voice the unspoken and give a voice to the inarticulate.

My foremost difficulty resides in establishing connections between the existing theory on idiocy (both current and past, as the subject has raised scholarly interest increasingly since Dostoevsky's *Idiot*) and Charyn's prose, mainly because his perception of idiocy – seen as mental retardation or as a form of singularity – is somewhat alien to the mainstream discourse on this theme.

It is also necessary to discriminate between my field of research and that of the previous (and only) thesis written on Jerome Charyn, which focuses on chaos. This notion also raises questions that I am addressing, particularly those associated with logic, order and norm.

Another area of my work that will require further investigation is the bibliography dedicated to the relationship between language and identity, particularly in the light of psychoanalysis, and also to the dysfunction of body, mind and speech (dyspraxis, dysphasia, etc) from the point of view of the neurosciences.

I expect to clarify the current working title, which will ultimately be in French. The original notion of “idiocy” carries negative undertones, but so do the French *bêtise* and *stupidité*, as well as the English “dumbness”. This latter term does not translate well but conveys a richer meaning, referring both to

mutism and retardation, while at the same time shying away from medical technicalities by remaining in the area of common speech. I will also have to address the more conceptual aspects of the French *non-savoir* (which translates as “unknowledge”), bearing in mind the array of themes related to alternative forms of knowledge – such as emotion, imagination, intuition, instinct – and the way they oppose the more conventional forms – reason, intellect, rationality, convention, etc. I hope to be able to emphasize Charyn's original view on idiocy and eventually elucidate how and to what extent he has developed a personal aesthetic of idiocy. Ultimately, this research aims at underlining Charyn's staging of helplessness, failure and marginality as strengths.

I might add that by the time of the Doctoriales in June, it is most likely that I will have met Charyn for an interview and have gathered some of his personal insights on the subject.

Fernández García, Andrea, University of Oviedo, Spain. Advisor: Dr. Esther Álvarez López. 2014

Geographies of Girlhood in Coming-of-Age Stories by U.S. Latina Writers

Despite the continuous demographic growth of Latina girls, little is known about them. Not only are they an understudied and marginalized group but, more often than not, research tends to focus on the negative outcomes of this population (e.g. teen pregnancies, drop outs, etc.) and the pathology that results from said outcomes. In a similar vein, mass media and popular culture reproduce the hegemonic image of the troubled Latina. The absence of more diverse representations led Latina authors such as Sandra Cisneros and Esmeralda Santiago to write stories that could accommodate a wider array of girlhood experiences. Both writers have resorted to different literary genres in their attempt to uncover a voice that had remained unheard for decades. This dissertation focuses on the *bildungsroman* or coming-of-age narrative, a literary genre that has traditionally been used to portray the process of self-development. In this sense, this narrative form has been crucial for Latina writers to explain what it is like to grow up Latina in a country that frequently sees them as foreigners. The central focus of this thesis analyzes the self-development of the Latina girls portrayed in Julia Alvarez's *Return to Sender* (2009), Norma E. Cantú's *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera* (1995), Mary Helen Ponce's *Hoyt Street* (1993) and Esmeralda Santiago's *Almost a Woman* (1999) by using space and place as hermeneutical tools. Many social and human geographers are surprised that in the United States the incorporation of place and space as tools for reading literature has been generally undertheorized and understudied. Geographer Edward Soja and literary scholar Mary Pat Brady elucidate how place can illuminate the process of self-development, for identities evolve through the experiences involved as we encounter new spaces and places. Thus, spatiality and subject formation are closely connected to each other.

In addition to examining the link between self-development and the locales where this takes place,

my study investigates the following research questions: How do characters negotiate their teenage, sexual and gender subjectivities and the spatial ordering of their bodies? Do the selected works interrogate the assumptions about the racialized spatial locations of Latina/o communities in general and Latina girls in particular? How are emotions implicated in the characters' everyday spatial experiences? How are belonging and citizenship conceptualized?

The main hypothesis that I seek to test is that the representation of spatiality and subject formation in the selected works is informed by decolonial and border thought, an epistemology that emphasizes fluidity, connections, contradictions and dialogue across differences over rootedness and homogeneity. This perspective sees spaces and girl identities as offering possibilities, uncertainties, play and performance. The decentering of spaces and identities brings about a redefinition of gender, race, class and age relations, thus altering existing patterns of domination and inequality. This subversion is made possible through the characters' performances and negotiations, thus emphasizing girls' agency over structures of power.

Grilli, Chiara, University of Macerata (Italy). Advisor: Prof. Marina Camboni, University of Macerata. 2014

The Collective Self: Towards the construction of an Italian American Narrative Identity.

In my research project I am discussing the relation tying individual and collective identity in Italian American communities in the United States. The theoretical basis of this research draws critical strength from the works of Paul Ricoeur, Pierre Bourdieu, Itamar Even-Zohar and from the so-called memory studies. My starting point is that, as neuroscientists like Antonio Damasio have recently explained, subjectivity takes its form after the creation of felt-memories narratively told as stories. However, the narrative self is not only born from this innate human tendency towards storytelling, but it is consolidated and even shaped by the influence of collectivity. In this sense, the group acts through institutions that are entitled to modify the individual's narration of the self, using—or abusing—their influence at every level of social life, imposing memories and narratives to avoid oblivion.

This is what happened between the end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX century in the Italian American communities of the United States, where, by creating a common set of signs and felt-memories, the collectivity tried to define and strengthen the boundaries of its identity against the “threat” of the Other, represented by both Americans and other ethnic groups. Through the soft imposition of old and new traditions, collectivity (intended not only as the whole community, but also as the single family) hoped to perpetually revive those boundaries and to maintain its identity unified in difference. Thus, individual identity was “collectivized” and considered as something as fix and immutable as the identities of mythic and folkloric characters.

However, when, after coming into contact with the allegedly freer New World's way of life, the individual discovered the apparent opportunity America gave everybody to build one's own destiny, s/he tried to free him/herself from the ties of Italian restrictive traditions. Through autobiography, then, the Italian American individual sought to get rid of his/her collective chains and to write a story of his/her own. To better understand this sort of “awakening” of the narrative self, I will discuss some main elements that a great number of Italian and Italian American autobiographies have in common, by taking into consideration the works of Pascal d'Angelo, Constantine Panunzio, Rosa Cavatelli and others.

Jacquel, Jessica. Universite Paul-Valery Montpellier 3. Advisor: Prof. Claudine Raynaud, Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3. 2015.

“What has cast such a shadow upon you?”: Race and the Gothic in Antebellum American Sea Novels.

This paper follows up on my previous contribution to the 2016 Conference which gave me the opportunity to present

my research on race in the antebellum American sea novel as part of the workshop “Writing African-American History from the Margins”. I then suggested that slave narratives and antebellum sea novels written by white authors shared a number of characteristics relating to maritime imagination, writing and American identity. My conclusion was that slave narratives influenced white authors to the point that they themselves borrowed some of the images and representations that slaves used to relate their stories, and thereby questioned, within their own texts, the claim that the racial other is an inferior being outside the scope of American identity. I also argued that the sea novel, as a literary genre, was highly compatible with this imaginary reappraisal of the place of the racial other in nineteenth-century American society.

In *The Red Rover* by James Fenimore Cooper, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* by Edgar Allan Poe and *Benito Cereno* by Herman Melville, the sea as a liminal space enables the characters to explore and experience the unknown, the impossible and even the taboo. The sea voyage is invariably pregnant with a progressive or transgressive quality that blurs the limits of American identity and thus effectively deconstructs the racial theories sustaining it. This identity crisis takes on its full meaning when we examine the conventional combination of the maritime and the Gothic. Indeed, the purpose of this paper is twofold: to re-examine the gothic as another point of contact between the slave narrative and the sea novel, and to determine the added value of the maritime gothic when dealing with the issues raised by the pervading presence of the racial other.

In *Playing in the Dark* (1992), Toni Morrison argues that Africanist figures in Cooper, Poe and Melville’s works represent the gothic other, that is to say everything that is repressed to build a specifically white American identity. In other words, racialized characters go through a process of “othering” supported by gothic devices, thus drawing a clear line between the enslaved black savage and the free civilized white. On the other hand, according to Teresa Goddu in *Gothic America* (1997), the Gothic in slave narratives such as Douglass’s serves an altogether different purpose which is to “haunt back” by speaking the unspeakable about slavery, and to question conventional hierarchy by implementing a reversal of the gothic in which the monstrous other is none other than the white master. Considering the porosity that can be observed between American sea novels and slave narratives, it is appropriate to wonder whether these two aspects of the Gothic discussed by Morrison and Goddu can somehow overlap or come together, especially when they are plunged in the water setting of nineteenth-century works written by white American authors that appear to question, rather than build, a sense of national identity.

Lapinska, Joanna, SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities Warsaw, Poland. Advisor : Dr. Tomasz Basiuk, Institute of the Americas and Europe, University of Warsaw, American Studies Center, University of Warsaw. 2014.

Love relationships between humans and machines in Anglo-Saxon science fiction films.

In my dissertation I am exploring love relationships between the humans and the machines (AI agents, robots, cyborgs...) in the Anglo-Saxon science fiction films – from these made in the 60s to the latest ones, made in the twenty-first century. My argument is that in a changing human’s relationship with a robot known from science fiction films – from robot as a slave/toy/enemy to a robot as a love partner – one can see the changes in the paradigm of human subjectivity: from essentialist, anthropo- and phallogocentric subjectivity to the post-human, relational, hybrid, composite one.

In my project I advance the thesis that human’s relationship with the machine in the romantic/love context in science fiction films is based on two orders: 1) speculative (from the Latin “speculum” – mirror) – in which an artificial being is primarily a reflection/extension of the human, as well as the analog of his sex drive. Personality and status of artificial beings are based here on the projection of human interior ideas about it, they do not come from the machine itself; and 2) singularity order – in which artificial creature endowed with intelligence gets to the point in its development, when it is no longer controlled by man. In the science fiction films both these orders can be found, however, in earlier films (from the 60s to 80s) speculative order dominates, and later (since the 80s) – singularity order prevails, what correlates with the changes of the perception of human subjectivity (from “human” to “post- human”).

The outline of my PhD project is divided into three parts. The first part, which I called “The Man and His Machine”, emphasizes the importance of humans’ belief of machines belonging to them completely. Man thinks here of the machine/technology as something that entirely belongs to him and what can be used without hindrance. The man is the owner of the machine and it is the mirror for his dreams, without its own agency or subjectivity (films “Barbarella”, “Cherry 2000”,

“Stepford Wives”, “Westworld”...).

In the second part – “Man or Machine?” – I focus on the question of the distinction between man and machine in the spirit of ethical posthumanism. Question “if the man in his affective reactions is like a machine?” is asked since 80s more and more seriously in science fiction films. This is the moment in which man and robot are close to each other and the differences in their affective capabilities are blurred. The machine can become human’s equal partner in love in emotional terms (like in “Blade Runner”).

In the third part – “Machine and Its Human” – I analyze the latest films focusing on romantic relationships between real and artificial humans (“Her”, “Ex Machina”, “Uncanny”, “Creative Control”, “Operator”, TV series “Black Mirror”, “Humans”, “Westworld”, etc.). It is no longer man who is “a master of a machine” in their romantic relationship. Now the products of technology sometimes take emotional control resulting in changing the way humans think about their subjectivity. In this part of my project I use primarily the category of “affect” derived from Silvan Tomkins’ works, and its interpretations made by contemporary researchers – Rosi Braidotti, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Mieke Bal and others.

Monasterolo, Chloé, Université de Toulouse-Jean Jaurès. Advisor: Prof. David Roche, Université de Toulouse-Jean Jaurès.

Youth in North-American cinema in the era of convergence culture, or, narrative identity challenged by intermedia and transmedia.

My research regards film representations of the generation that grew up during this era of digital revolution, the millennials, a generation that has integrated the use of screen technology into their everyday lives. Like any object of consumption, cinema takes into account its consumers, and is therefore bound to develop a filmic discourse to best speak to its viewers. In his study of the emergence of the teen film genre, Thomas Doherty notes: “Since the mid-1950’s the most dependable suitors have been exploitation films; the most seducible clients have been teenagers.”¹ Even so, the representation of young people in films has often served as the measure of contemporary innovations and anxieties. In my thesis, I investigate the contemporary era and expand the focus to independent as well as Hollywood productions, in order to encompass a variety of gazes on the object of my work: youth in the era of convergence culture.

Young characters in film are routinely confronted to the turmoil of maturation and the challenge of asserting their identity. In his definition of identity, Paul Ricœur develops the idea of the “intervention of narrative identity in the conceptual constitution of personal identity.”² Adopting a literary perspective, Ricœur defines narrative identity as the assimilation of dialectics that enables a subject to tell his own story and thus construct his identity, thereby stressing the relationship that identity entertains with time and others’ discourses, allowing it to “include change, mutability, in the cohesion of a life.”³ Drawing from this vision, and from Ricœur’s assertion that “It is the identity of the story that determines the identity of the character,”⁴ my aim is to insist not only on a parallel between the identity of film genre and that of the characters it develops, but beyond that, the permeability of the media employed with regards to other media.

With his ground-breaking work defining the contemporary culture of media convergence, Henry Jenkins compelled researchers to follow in his efforts to apprehend contemporary media practices and mutations. In so doing, he devoted part of his study to the practises of franchises that engage with fans by using transmedia storytelling, which he defines as a “story [that] unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole.”⁵ Cinematic narration in such cases is extended to include complementary narrative elements that engage with viewers through a variety of competing media. Thus one may see how cinematic identity may be disrupted by the relationship entertained between its viewers and technology. Furthermore the multiplication of

1 Doherty, Thomas, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenization of American Movies in the 1950s*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002. 14

2 Ricœur, Paul. *Soi-même comme un autre*. Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1990. 143. My translation of “intervention de l’identité narrative dans la constitution conceptuelle de l’identité personnelle.”

3 ---. *Temps et récit. Tome III*. Paris: éditions du Seuil, 1985. 443. My translation for “inclure le changement, la mutabilité, dans la cohésion d’une vie.”

4 ---. *Soi-même comme un autre*. 175. My translation for “C’est l’identité de l’histoire qui fait l’identité du personnage.”

5 Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York : New York UP, 2006. 97

media and their common usage by young people is increasingly translated in films by the intervention of intermedia elements in film narration, contributing to the construction of the protagonists' identity. Thus I will show how screening millennials, a generation whose images and discourse are spread across new media, allows filmmakers to apprehend the digital age within the very fabric of narration.

Trigo, Laura Alvarez, the Graduate School of American Studies at Universidad de Alcalá (Madrid, Spain). Advisor: Luisa Juárez Hervás, Modern Philology Department, Universidad de Alcalá. 2015.

Don DeLillo and Media Theory.

DeLillo's highlight of the importance of communication, media and language has become one of the defining characteristics of his writings. Previous research has in fact identified the central role that mass mediated productions play in this author's portrayal of the postmodern American identity. Stemming from such ubiquitous presence of communication – in its broadest sense - I aim to present an interrelation not yet explored between media theory and DeLillo's body of work. I argue that utilising communication and media theory as a starting point to interrogate DeLillo's writings, we might be able to drive forward the understanding of his attitude towards human communication and, additionally, assert the central role that mass media has had in American literature particularly since the second half of the 20th century.

From a literary perspective, the portrayal of audiences' behaviour will be looked at through form, the use of language and the specific choices the author has made in these respects. This section will analyse and compare how the narrator and the characters explain and justify their media consumption, with the objective of identifying whether there is a unified understanding of mass media consumption through the narrator's voice. The theories of uses and gratifications (Blumler & Katz), direct effects (Frankfurt School), and limited effects (Lazarsfeld) will be essential here.

Continuing at the micro-level analysis, this project will examine communication, language and interactions at an interpersonal level. Through abnormal and disconnected dialogues, DeLillo brings attention to the functioning of language and the importance of human communication. It will explore if the style through which the characters understand their own stories reflects mass media language and ultimately sees life through the lenses of a media-saturated society. In order to tackle this issue I will look into the theories of authors such as Marshal McLuhan and Elihu Katz.

Finally, this thesis will deal with the recognition of media as collective consciousness. It will situate the analysis of DeLillo's books in relation to theories that look at communication as a central part of our culture, and how media influences DeLillo's work in various aspects: from the structure of the narrative, to continuous references to media productions as a form of understanding and explaining the world. I sought to show this notion by focusing on the text itself and looking at the idea of media-constructed hypereality and the different mediums that appear in DeLillo's fiction, drawing primarily on the works of theoreticians Jean Baudrillard and Marshall McLuhan. By finding examples of the effects that mass media has in his character's opinions, their emulation of the cinematic, their fascination with advertising, and how they experience art and trauma I intend to show how DeLillo's interest in communication represents a larger preoccupation for human relationships, tainted by the limitations of language, power discourses, and our media saturated lives.

Young, Angus, University of Leeds (UK). Advisor: Dr. Andrew Warnes, University of Leeds. 2014.

A Cultural Study of Self-Killing: The Banalisation of Suicide During America's Great Depression, 1929-1941.

The widely reported myth of bankers jumping from skyscrapers during 1929's Wall Street Crash, and then the sharpest increase in suicide rates in recorded American history, marked the 1930s with the image and the reality of voluntary death. The cultural production of The Great Depression then went on to negotiate the representation of suicide in a variety of ways. In my thesis I argue there is a discernible trend across different forms of media that suggests self-killing was at first seen as a disruptive and destabilising force. By the end of the decade, however, the portrayal of suicide appears to be incorporated and becomes a means of sustaining social order. I thus propose that the cultural production of the 1930s both reflects and helps enact a banalisation of suicide.

I argue that the portrayal of voluntary death in the early 1930s challenges a 'common sense' of reality by destabilising the dominant social order. Within the understanding of hegemony from Antonio Gramsci, later developed by Raymond Williams, these disruptive representations of suicide can be considered "oppositional". In works by John O'Hara, Rudolph Fisher, Lillian Hellman, Horace McCoy, William Faulkner, Frank Capra, and Laurel and Hardy there appears to be an inability to attribute concise meanings to voluntary death. The suicides that occur in these works then disrupt

the hegemonic orders that these writers and filmmakers envisage as they cannot be incorporated or contained within the dominant senses reality suggested by these works and thus they disturb the social logic of the narratives in which they appear. I then trace how this form of representation changes over the decade. William Faulkner's work exemplifies this transition when the disruptive potential of Joe Christmas' self-orchestrated lynching in *Light in August* (1934) is replaced by a conception of suicide as submission in *Wild Palms* (1939). A similar change can be seen in the films of Frank Capra from *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1933) to *Meet John Doe* (1941) and *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946). A new sense of voluntary death as an act that can be articulated emerges and then becomes progressively more prominent in works by authors such as James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler, and Carson McCullers. In these texts at the end of the decade the representation of suicide is closed and defined. In this manner, the portrayal of self-death is incorporated as a tool with which to sustain a hegemonic order. By articulating a limited reason for self-killing, for instance the fear of being punished for committing a crime, these representations become functional means of reinforcing the logic of a stable, dominant sense of reality. As such, I propose a different perspective on the pursuit of happiness in which dominant, stable order incorporates, banalises, and numbs the disruptive potential of suicide in order to favour a celebration of perpetuation and survival. Thus, counter-intuitively, the restrictions of representing self-death in 1930s American culture suggest an equal confinement on the possibilities of "oppositional and alternative" happiness.