Important note: These sessions will operate as work-in-progress workshops. Presenters submit a draft of their paper ahead of time. At the convention, each presenter will briefly (10-minutes) summarize their paper so that there will be ample time for workshopping each paper. For MLA convention-goers interested in attending any of these sessions, please write to Gema Pérez-Sánchez at gema@miami.edu to request copies of the draft papers. These are all works-in-progress and we kindly ask you not distribute, cite, or use them in any way without explicit permission from the authors.

Friday, 10 January 10:15 am-11:30 am, 618 (WSCC)
Session 240

Thematic focus: “Artivism,” Social Media, Rave Culture, and Films.

Papers discussed:

1. Carmen San Juan-Pastor, Scripps College. “Rage as a Source of Agency and Knowledge in Anti Colonial, Anti-Racist, and LGBTQI Artivism”

   Abstract: In The Promise of Happiness (2010), Sara Ahmed identifies the hurt of the melancholic migrant who won’t let go as a source of knowledge, thus following Audre Lorde’s injunction to investigate what causes the hurt, why violence is directed to some bodies and not others. I am interested in investigating the politics of rage in anti-colonial interventions in the public space lead by migrant, diasporic, and racialized activists and cultural producers in Spain. Specifically, I propose to look at the rage poetics of artivists, such as Francisco Godoy Vega, Yos Piña or Vicky Boisan, who investigate racist constructions of white heteronormative desire in the public/private realm while rejecting institutional and private appeals to integration and calling for a re-elaboration of notions of the human, life, affect, sexuality, and non-colonial forms of knowledge. Establishing a bridge between the transnational women of color feminist approach to interrogate pain as a tool to diagnose structures of power (Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzadúa, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and others), and an affect critical lens, I examine whose rage, at the historical rise of ultra-right movements in Europe, is culturally legible and how rage can be a form of agency for minorized groups. The work of these anti-colonial artivists reflects on vulnerability and centers the pain caused by the still-open colonial wound, yet, anger, not vulnerability, is established as a critical space to analyze, make visible and ultimately reject the (neo)colonial discourses of otherization that continue to sustain the structures of violence directed toward the peoples of the Global South.

2. Adrián Gras-Velázquez, Swarthmore College (and Toni Maestre Brotons, Universitat d'Alacant). “InstaTrans: Spanish Trans Culture and Affect on Social Media”

   Abstract: One of the most iconic images of the Spanish transition to democracy is trans. José Pérez Ocaña, aka Ocaña (1947-1983) or Bibiana Fernández (1954) were soon regarded as pop
emblems of the democratic success, since the new pro-European Spanish state seemed interested in eradicating LGBTIQ+ oppression, as well as protecting and promoting sexual and emotional diversity. However, scholars have stressed the homonationalist and homonormative agenda of linking modernity and LGBTIQ+ rights. Brice Chamouleau (Tiran al maricón, 2017) has questioned the narrative of sexual tolerance of the post-Francoist state and argued that Spanish trans people have been by far the most repressed LGBTIQ+ group in our recent history, even in democracy. Recently, however, social perception of trans people could have changed thanks to self-narratives in popular media, which have provided greater visibility to them. Actresses like Abril Zamora, for example, use the Instagram platform as a means to naturalize their trans experience. Like Zamora, many trans people in Spain and all over the world weave empowering narratives of their transition with images of their bodies and texts that convey their pride. These narratives explore issues of vulnerability, anxiety, and positive interpersonal interactions among others, and are examples of both personal stories and social activism. In this paper we will explore the role of affect in Instagram profiles of Spanish trans people to analyze how the trans community uses it to build their new identities and bodies.


Abstract: Resorting to the documentary “72 horas... Y Valencia fue la ciudad” as a cinematic mode of historiography, my paper documents the history of the Valencian queer club scene and rave culture in the 1980s and early 1990s (erroneously referred to as “la ruta del bacalao”), which developed directly from, or it overlapped with, the “movida valenciana,” a local countercultural and avant-garde movement overlooked and eclipsed by the academic emphasis on the “movida madrileña.” My paper explores the micro-political implications underpinning the 1980s and 1990s Valencian “queer” club scene and rave culture in terms of the production of new forms of subjectivation. My paper also considers this phenomenon, though not exclusively associated with the LGTB community, as the condition of possibility for expressing a queer way of “being-in-the-world” and a queer ethical way of relationality based on (im)personal intimacies beyond heteronormative conceptions of sexual and affective relations, thus rejecting heteronormative conceptions of social belonging. I pay attention to how such alternative conceptions of caring and community belonging were predicated on an emotional embrace of “altered states of mind,” fashion (given the influence of designer Francis Montesinos), dancing, music, or the “democratization of illegality.” Hence, an evaluation of the promises and failures, as well as the dramatic, if not traumatic, consequences of the Valencian queer club scene and rave culture enables us to expand our understanding of the history of queer cultures in Spain and of the cultural history of Valencia.


Abstract: In the context of a growing rhetoric of homonationalism often nurtured by governments and public administrations, Spanish cinema has become in recent years a privileged vantage point for the critical reflection of queer identities in transition. This paper problematizes queer migrant and transnational affects as they respond to, and are impacted by,
multiple layers of regulation and normalisation in a multicultural, multilingual part of Europe. Basque films *Ander* (dir. Roberto Castón, 2009) and *A escondidas* (dir. Mikel Rueda, 2014) thematise queer migration from Peru and Morocco respectively. Both films critically engage with the three key notions this paper seeks to mobilise: (i) queer transitional identities in an increasingly (homo)nationalistic Europe that places huge expectations on migrants' bodies and sexualities; (ii) the queering of geographies and locations, such as rural and urban areas, that are often represented as alternative spaces to hegemonic urban queer and that metonymically connect cosmopolitan Europe to preconceived ideas of the peripherical Other; and (iii) the unsettling potential of transnational queer affects to, in the words of Hanadi Al-Samman (2013), "complicate the binaries of the closet/coming out, shame/pride, and complicity/resistance." The conceptual assemblage thus proposed renders both films particularly eloquent in relation to Nacira Guénif's 2014 idea of the migrant body not only as nomadic in Braidotti's terms but also as resistant to normalizing agencies and protocols.

**Saturday, 11 January 8:30 am-9:45 am, 615 (WSCC)**

**Session 433**

*Thematic focus: Novels*

*Papers discussed:*

1. **Enrique Álvarez**, Florida State U. “Gay Pride? Chirbes’ Pastorals of Return (and a Queer Feeling of Regret)”

*Abstract:* Rafael Chirbes’ posthumous novel, *Paris-Austerlitz* (2016) has been read as his triumphant, overdue exit of the homosexual closet. However, a raw male homoeroticism is also present in Chirbes’ very first, critically acclaimed novel *Mimoun* (1988). These two novels are set during Spain's transition to democracy and a common feature of both of them is the return of the protagonist-narrator to Madrid, the place he had previously left in search of professional and emotional self-realization. Contrary to Spain's seemingly restrictive societal norms, different places located in Morocco and France represent for Chirbes’ narrators spaces of sexual freedom and emotional turmoil. However, these emotional experiences would eventually decide the return of the protagonist-narrators to their place of origin, fitting in this way a narrative structure characteristic of the pastoral novel.

In this paper I argue that contrary to the triumphalism assumed in coming out narratives of gay pride, what I call Chirbes’ “pastorals of return” are also determined by a queer feeling of shame and regret. I will also argue that these contradictory affective narratives unveil a critique of same-sex desire still marred by homophobic violence and the ideological traces of hegemonic masculinities. My arguments will be grounded on a framework built on recent theoretical developments on cultural geography (Robert T. Tally Jr; Bertrand Westphal) juxtaposed to Heather Love’s notion of “feeling backwards.”

2. **Carmen Moreno Díaz**, St.Olaf College. “From Kleenex to Rage: Inspiring Activism through Lola Van Guardia’s Trilogy.”
Abstract: Isabel Franc’s literary trilogy, written under the pseudonym Lola Van Guardia, serves as a vehicle for political activism within Spain's lesbian and bisexual communities. The trilogy includes *Con pedigrí* (1997), *Plumas de doble filo* (1999), and *La mansión de las tribadas* (2002) and was produced under the conservative policies on same-sex adoption by the government of the Popular Party (PP). Throughout these novels, Franc exploits conventional literary tropes used in sentimental romantic literature that encourage her readers' identification with the protagonist; her books serving as an engine that shapes a collective “we.” The portrayal of lesbian identities in Franc’s work visibilizes heterogeneity among the lesbian community as well as its daily life; parodying stereotypes and in so doing reclaiming them in spite of the socio-politically conservative environment. I understand Franc’s work as an example of Claudia Breger’s “narrative worldmaking”, in which “characters, readers, and author(s)” are actively engaged in constructing layers of meaning. I aim to study how collective emotions are showcased as a vehicle for empowering the lesbian community in Franc’s trilogy. My paper explores the reception of these novels, focusing on its/their impact on readers as a transformative source of positive identification and collective empowerment.


Abstract: The deeply affecting, queer “archive of feelings” (Cvetkovich) that are Robert Roth’s Papers of Cornell University’s Human Sexuality Collection highlights how transnational emotional bonds marked 1970s pre-AIDS activism. Containing international magazines, personal and professional correspondence, and gay pornography, this archive extends a transhistorical “queer touch” (Dinshaw) to Eduardo Mendicutti’s 2005 novel *California*. A comedic erotic gay romp set in early 1970s Los Angeles, *California* becomes a serious meditation on democratic responsibility, human rights, and an individual’s activist potential. Unfolding between July 1974 in Los Angeles (during Franco’s agony) and 2003 Madrid (during debates on LGBT rights, eventually leading to the 2005 marriage equality law), the novel chronicles the transformation of Charly/Carlos from heartless, apolitical, gay pornography star and gigolo in 1970s Hollywood to closeted, yet successful, businessman in early twenty-first century Spain. Confronted with the inhumane, homophobic treatment of a young colleague, middle-aged Carlos takes an activist risk for which he pays professionally, but which leads him to reconcile with his youth and validate its sex-positivity as another important form of activism. Investigating the role that transnational affective bonds play in the development of the protagonist’s activist consciousness and the emotional connection that he develops towards an iconic US location and time period, I analyze Mendicutti’s novel in light of documents from the Roth Papers, including Roth’s correspondence with gay activists in Spain, which provide poignant examples of how the LGBT liberation movement was always already transnational and how its world-wide success has always depended on affective connections across borders.

4. **Danny Barreto**, Colgate U. “Untamed Bodies: A Return to the Wild in Emma Pedreira’s *Besta do seu sangue*”

Abstract: In 2018, Emma Pedreira, a Galician writer and member of the feminist collective *A Sega*, was awarded the Premio Xerais de Novela for *Besta do seu sangue*. The novel revisits
the myths surrounding Manuel Blanco Romasanta, a nineteenth-century serial killer alleged to be a werewolf. Although numerous books and films have drawn on the figure of Romasanta to express anxieties around gender, sexuality and Galician identity (Barreto 2012), Pedreira’s novel is noteworthy for its representation of Romasanta as intersex.

Arguably the most underrepresented part of the LGTBQI initialism, intersex is a useful position from which to critique heteronormative and bionormative gender categories. In Pedreira’s *Besta do seu sangue*, the intersex body of Manuel(a) is a site of convergence for normativizing medical, religious, popular and legal discourses; yet, the hapticality of the literary prose resists such impulses, inviting us to feel with and through the intersex body.

*Besta do seu sangue*, I argue, thrusts readers into the “wildness” of queerness, that which “anarrange[s] gender, sexuality, ability, and other modernist paradigms of normalization into unstable vocabularies and idiolects” (Halberstam & Nyong’o 2018: 456). Pedreira’s text embraces chaos and brokenness—whether the fragmented text or the ravaged bodies of the werewolf’s victims—to allow readers to “see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming” (Halberstam 2013: 6). For Manuel(a), becoming an animal offers the possibility of becoming human outside of normative constructions of gender.

**Sunday, 12 January 10:15 am-11:30 am, 615 (WSCC)**

**Session 689**

**Thematic focus: Poetry**

**Papers discussed:**

1. **Paul Cahill**, Pomona College. “Placing Queer Affect in the Poetry of Ariana G. García.”

   **Abstract:** While a number of recent Spanish cultural productions frame Spain as a space that is supportive of queer identity, the poetry of Ariadna G. García (Madrid, 1977) presents a more nuanced—and in some instances pessimistic—view of Spanish society’s reaction(s) to the expression of queer, and specifically lesbian, identity and desire. Her poetry explores queer identity, desire, and affect, and their expression in different spaces. Some of the feelings that appear and circulate in these poems include love, intimacy, and comfort, but also fear, shame, resentment, and hesitation.

   By describing gestures and how they are perceived, her work presents lesbian desire and love as precarious and proscribed, highlighting the tension between public and private space(s) and the different levels of freedom they allow. Her poems seek to preserve instants of freedom and intimacy as memories to help make coping with societal restrictions more manageable.

   The poems that make up García’s first two collections (*Construyéndome en ti* [1997] and *Napalm. Cortometraje poético* [2001]) and the paratextual elements that frame them posit and explore a tension between confessionalism and fragmentation, between private and public space and the role that space and social factors play in the expression of both queer desire and queer identity, a queer identity, in this case, that extends beyond sexual acts to the larger realities of queer life, including co-habitation and aging. These texts also engage in the debate surrounding contemporary Spanish poetry and the role(s) that identity and experience play in poetry’s dialogue with its readers.

*Abstract:* With incisive pen and penetrating eye, Cristina Peri Rossi offers in her poetry collection *La noche y su artificio* [The Night and its Artifice] (2014) an introspective reflection on love and lovelessness, on memory and desire; her poetry explores those affections and emotions that make us human. Peri Rossi’s collection exemplifies what Sara Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* calls “the emotionality of texts,” the way “texts are ‘moving,’ or how they generate affects...the way in which texts name or perform different emotions” (13). For Ahmed, “Emotions are performative and they involve speech acts, which depend on past histories, at the same time as they generate effects”(13), and Ahmed comments on the subversive value of emotions and emotions as cultural constructions: “Feminist and queer scholars have shown us that emotions ‘matter’ for politics; emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well worlds. So in a way, we do ‘feel our way’”(12). She affirms that “This analysis of how we ‘feel our way’ approaches emotion as a form of cultural politics or world making” (12), and it is this approach to feeling our way as a mode of world-making that I build on in this paper. In this essay, I analyze *La noche y su artificio* and the poetics of affect/ions that Cristina Peri Rossi develops in her poetry, with an eye to the phenomenological experiences that poetics indexes.


*Abstract:* Mario Merlino (1948-2009), who lived in Madrid since 1976, was an exile from the repressive politics of the Argentina of that epoch, but also, more specifically, from the repression of homosexuality. Merlino, a scholar of the Spanish Middle Ages, an oral performer of poetry, playwright, grammarian, frequent contributor to Spanish cultural journals, and co-author of children’s books, lived for decades in the Chueca neighborhood, earning a living by translating primarily Portuguese and Italian language texts to Spanish. All of these trades suggest various relationships with language, languages, voice, and text that are manifest in his 2000 poetry volume, *missa pedestris*, which resists identity positions even while it marks them, in part through a refiguring of the concept of infancy, particularly as it is represented in and through language and as it is linked rhetorically to desire, kinship, questions of resistance to authoritarian power. The repetition of key phrases from infancy-, the various apparitions of the infant and adult “Yo,” and the multilingual expressions in the latter part of the text, suggest a continuity of experience, in the sense Agamben gives it, an intent to retain linguistically some of the mystery of infancy and resist the estrangement and repression of modernity (48). The text’s hybridity also mixes oral and written expressions culled both from Argentine usage and Castilian literature and grammars, as well as Portuguese, Italian, French, and Latin, as a reminder of linguistic impurity.

4. Final discussion on the working group as a whole and future directions.