

EAAS Posgraduate Travel Grant Report (2022)

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My Ph.D. thesis analyzes a series of autobiographical narratives about sexual violence written around the outbreak of the MeToo movement. My purpose is to examine how these works articulate a politics of vulnerability and an ethics of relationality, through diverse narrative personae in four different sociopolitical spaces: the legal and the medical institutions, the nation-state, and the house. During my stay at the JFK Institute of North American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin, which took place from June 1st to 30th, I focused on the second chapter of my dissertation, about the intersections of gender, race and nationality in the production of violence against women, as presented in Myriam Gurba's *Mean* (2017). Thanks to the support of EAAS and the JFK Institute, throughout this four-week stay, I have managed to devise an outline of this project and write an important section of the first draft, focused on the theme of violence in the context of the Mexican-American border. I expect to divulge and publish the results of this research next year, acknowledging the support of the EAAS foundation.

Perhaps the most relevant aspect that the JFK Institute provided to my research was its interdisciplinary approach to North American Studies. The institution is constituted by six departments with different, yet interrelated research areas: History, Culture, Economics, Literature, Political Science, and Sociology. This multi-perspective background encouraged me to reorient my research through a theoretical approach that included American literary traditions of autobiography, as much as the history and politics concerning the Mexican-American border. In this context, I had the opportunity to attend a series of research colloquia hosted throughout the summer term by the departments of literature and culture, on topics such as the politics of translation or the ethics of modern slave fiction. Most of my day-to-day work at the JFK Institute consisted of working on my chapter and browsing resources at the library. The JFK Institute hosts the largest research library for North American Studies in Europe, and there I could find a number of resources unavailable to me in my home institution, the Complutense University of Madrid.

Additionally, I was invited to attend some of the sessions of the undergraduate seminar “Confession in American Literature 1945–,” taught by Sonja Pyykkö, specialist in the politics of confession in contemporary memoir. Likewise, immensely valuable in this stay was the help and guidance of Dr. Tobias Jochum, specialist in the ethics and the politics of trauma representation, particularly concerning the Juarez femicides, among other cases of border violence. Thanks to Dr. Jochum’s help, I was able to compile an extensive bibliography about femicide and violence against women in the Mexican-American border, as well as the intersections between sexual, economic and political forms of violence. Further, several discussions about my project helped me synthesize my goals towards an analysis of precariousness and vulnerability as the conditions that structure women’s lives in the border. This decision has been essential to make my provisional arguments more coherent and precise and to narrow down my analysis through an intersectional approach.

In sum, this research stay has enabled me to return to my early notes and drafts of this chapter and finally orient it in a realistic, coherent manner. The valuable contributions of the faculty members, the extensive bibliography available at the library and the always inspiring research climate at the JFK Institute has undoubtedly contributed to my progress during these four weeks. I am deeply thankful to the institution, as well as to the EAAS foundation for this opportunity and for helping me find the ways to improve and extend my work.