

EAAS Postgraduate Travel Grant Report (2024)

Sara Soler i Arjona (University of Barcelona, Spain)

Host institution: Cornell University (United States)

Located within Literary Studies and Queer Studies, my PhD thesis examines the relationship that unites queer figures in contemporary U.S. fiction with the temporalities that they inhabit and the relationalities that they (re)formulate, with special attention to different configurations of time, belonging, kinship, and diaspora. Furthermore, my project intends to analyze the narrative and formal strategies through which the selected literary texts (dis)engage with the dominant Western system of representation, particularly concerning temporal and relational notions. Particularly, my analysis so far has focused on the literary production of Vietnamese-American writer Ocean Vuong.

During the fall of 2024, I completed a three-month research stay at Cornell University (Department of Literatures in English), from September 1 to November 26, under the supervision of Dr. Kate McCullough. This was possible by the generous support of the European Association for American Studies through the EAAS Transatlantic Grant program. During this period, I carried out the activities outlined in my doctoral work plan, which is part of the PhD program in Linguistic, Literary, and Cultural Studies at the University of Barcelona. These activities were directly aligned with the objectives of my thesis.

Dr. Kate McCullough is a recognized specialist in the fields of Queer Studies and contemporary American literature and has an outstanding career in areas such as queer temporalities and diaspora, which are central to my thesis. The various mentoring sessions that we held during my stay significantly contributed to consolidating the theoretical framework of my project, allowing me to incorporate the most recent contributions in the field and apply them to the analyzed corpus. Specifically, I had the chance to share with Dr. McCullough the first chapter of my thesis, which is dedicated to the analysis of queer temporalities in Ocean Vuong's novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. Dr. McCullough provided valuable feedback that enriched both the content and the approach of my chapter. Furthermore, my supervisor at Cornell shared with me the latest draft of her upcoming book, titled *Never On Time, But Always in Time: Queer Temporalities and Narrative Form* (Ohio University Press). This work is closely aligned with my thesis's research lines and offered me access to the latest innovations in the field.

On the other hand, my research stay also facilitated contact with Dr. Taegan Bradway, who is a collaborator of McCullough and a specialist in the fields of queer kinship and queer narrative theory—both areas are also pivotal in my thesis. The exchange with Dr. Bradway complemented Dr. McCullough’s expertise by updating my project’s bibliographic framework and contributed to achieving one of the main objectives of my stay: the preparation of a chapter applying the theoretical framework to the corpus. Specifically, this chapter will explore how the selected literary works reformulate models of kinship, relationality, and belonging to endow queer subjects with agency, placing special emphasis on queer formal and narrative strategies. During the months that follow this research stay, these contributions will be reflected in the writing of my thesis and will be disseminated in conferences and doctoral seminars. Furthermore, the contact with these two leading researchers during my stay in Cornell has not only enhanced the quality of my PhD project but also laid the groundwork for future academic collaborations.

Finally, my stay at Cornell University provided access to up-to-date libraries (the Uris Library and the Olin Library) at an internationally renowned center for Literary and American Studies. Additionally, I had the chance to attend two graduate courses, “Trans Theory and the Question of Gender” and “Modern Literature and the Erotics of Style”, which contributed to improving my academic background and expertise in Literary and Queer Studies. This experience also allowed me to share my PhD project with fellow graduate students, fostering an enriching exchange of ideas.

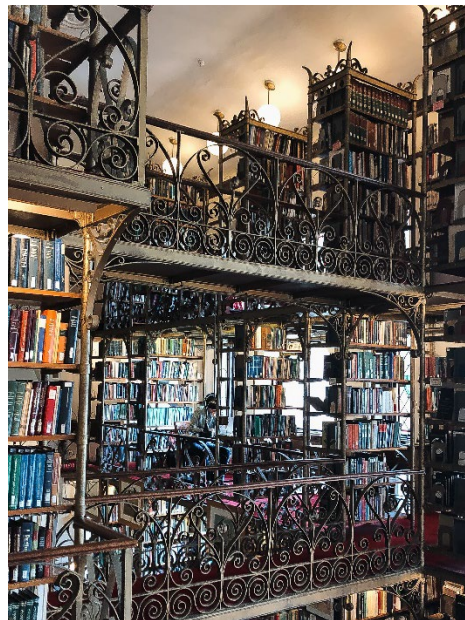
In conclusion, this research stay has been a key opportunity for my academic development and for advancing my thesis, enabling me to establish valuable international academic connections, update my framework, and significantly enhance the quality of my project. I am deeply thankful to Dr. Kate McCullough, Cornell University, and the EAAS foundation for granting me this opportunity.



Goldwin Smith Hall, where the Department of Literatures in English is located.



Olin Library



Uris Library