
Introduction

It is no news to anyone that 2020 was a difficult year to inhabit this planet. We were pushed to our limits in all areas of our lives while we juggled our daily routines inside and the pandemic outside. As educators, we were challenged to adapt quickly and change long-applied methods to fit the new reality of our universities.

One of the biggest difficulties I faced in the Literature courses I teach, was to come up with an evaluation alternative that served the purpose of measuring the students' performance and that at the same time could be technology-functional. The average written midterm was out of the picture as, being unable to meet in the classroom, it was rather hard to articulate a synchronic and simultaneous exam with over thirty students. Presentations were no good either since the process would take weeks preventing us from advancing with the syllabus. Many other options were considered and they all ended up being just as impractical. It was then decided that the students would write a brief critical piece about the novels we read in the English and North American Literature course, *Jane Eyre* and *The Great Gatsby*. The requirements were manifold, the two most important ones were to avoid generalities and address any aspect of interest in depth and to conduct research to support the chosen arguments. When the time for grading the papers came, I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the essays. Some students had read an incredibly large number of sources and some had shed light to previously unexplored themes.

When the school year finished, it dawned on me that what had happened on our virtual classroom, would stay on our virtual classroom. It saddened me to think that no one would ever had access to any of these wonderful pieces. I wondered then if these works could be gathered in a collection and be published in some way. I shared the idea with Verónica Repetti who immediately manifested her interest and was in charge of elevating the proposal to Paula Ortiz, our director. Once the approval came, I realized that although the essays were here, there was a lot of work ahead in the selection, edition and communication with the now authors. Luckily, I was not alone in this task. Joaquín Panigatti Bustelo, a remarkable former student, was up for the challenge and we formed the most amazing editorial board one could ever ask for an endeavor like this one. What you will find in the pages to come, is the result of a collective effort that did not finish once the school year did.

The present volume reflects a year's journey in which together, the students and I, discovered new ways of teaching, new ways of learning, new forms of evaluation, new ways of approaching research and new ways of interpreting and analyzing fiction.

We would all like to thank everyone who endured this journey with us: colleagues, friends, family, pets. We thank our School of Modern Languages for giving us the possibility of publishing and I personally thank the authorities for the freedom under which I have been allowed to work all these years. Finally, I would like to thank specially the wonderful students who have so generously shared their thoughts and words with me and who will now share them with the world in the pages you are about to read.

Prof. Andrea Fabiana Rodríguez
English and North American Literature
School of Modern Languages
USAL

