



UNIVERSITY BIELEFELD
FACULTY OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY
M.A. WORLD STUDIES - ORDERS, POLITICS, CULTURES

JASMIN KAMPA

**DEAF SPOTS OF
INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM:**

**Racialised Masculinities and Cultural Memory
between Hegemonic and Counter-Narratives
through Gayl Jones's "Corregidora"**

MASTER THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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Master Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

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Hamm, 30.09.2025

PREFACE

Feminism has long accompanied me not only as an academic interest, but as a deeply personal concern. Antiracism has likewise shaped my life for many years, both through political activism and in my personal reflections. When I began my studies in *World Studies*, I found a space where these long-standing commitments feminism, postcolonial thought and critiques of racism could be explored on a theoretical level and connected to broader global debates.

The issue of how feminist rhetoric is instrumentalised for racist and nationalist agendas has preoccupied me for a long time, both in my political engagement and in my everyday life. Discovering that I could make this question the focus of my Master's thesis was a decisive moment: it allowed me to bring together personal conviction, political commitment, and academic inquiry.

My background in a migrant working-class family has also shaped the way I approach academic work. For me, studying has never been self-evident, and the decision to interrupt my degree in order to take up full-time employment made it at times uncertain whether I would ever return to finish my studies. Academic writing has often been a challenge, which made the process of bringing this project to completion even more demanding. I am deeply aware that I write from a white position. My contribution can therefore only be partial, but I hope it may still serve as a small step toward a more reflexive, antiracist feminism. In this sense, this thesis is written from a white academic to other white readers, in the hope of encouraging awareness and responsibility.

This thesis is therefore more than the final requirement of my degree. It represents a project of the heart and an opportunity to close my studies with the topic that has challenged, motivated, and inspired me the most.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to **Professor Dr. Kirsten Kramer**, who encouraged me to expand an earlier seminar paper into this thesis and who agreed to supervise the project despite limited time resources. Without her support, this thesis might never have been started.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to **Professor Dr. Birte Förster**, who kindly agreed to take on the role of second examiner at short notice and immediately offered her support. Her willingness and openness meant a great deal to me.

My heartfelt thanks also go to my partner, **Justin Erhabor**, whose patience, encouragement, and practical support, whether by listening to my anxieties, keeping me grounded, or cooking meals during long writing days, carried me through the most difficult phases. More than that, he motivated me to continue my Master's program after a break and believed in me when I could not.

I also want to thank my **friends and family**, who accompanied me in countless smaller but meaningful ways, by simply listening or by reflecting back.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge myself. Writing this thesis alongside full-time employment demanded perseverance, discipline, and continuous self-motivation. I am grateful for having trusted my own ability to stay focused, to manage my time, and to keep sight of the goal. Choosing a topic that has accompanied me for many years, and having the courage to dedicate my Master's thesis to it, has been both the greatest challenge and the greatest reward.

Declaration of own work

I hereby declare that I have written this thesis without outside support and that I have created the data sets, drawings, sketches and graphical representations shown, unless otherwise stated, by my own hand. I have not used any sources other than those indicated and have labelled the passages in the work that are taken from other works – including the tables and figures used – in each individual case, indicating the source as a borrowing.

I used the following AI software for the work steps and parts of the thesis:

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Hamm, 30.09.2025



Place, Date, Signature

Abstract

This thesis argues that dominant narratives of gender justice within Western feminist discourses contribute to the discursive marginalisation and negative codification of racialised masculinities. Drawing on postcolonial, feminist and memory-theoretical frameworks, it contends that intersectional feminism, despite its critical orientation towards multiple axes of oppression, frequently fails to interrogate the colonial epistemologies underpinning its own conceptual premises, as it fails to critically engage with the colonial epistemic logics that construct racialised masculinity in opposition to white feminist subject positions. Through a close literary analysis of Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*, the study examines how literature can operate as an epistemic space that disrupts hegemonic interpretative frameworks, evokes suppressed histories and enables alternative modes of remembrance. The novel's narrative engagement with genealogical violence, colonial afterlives and the ambivalences of Black male subjectivity challenges reductionist gender logics and reveals the epistemic limitations of dominant feminist paradigms. By foregrounding the transformative potential of counter-narratives in literature, the thesis contributes to a reconfiguration of intersectional feminist critique as a power-sensitive, self-reflexive and epistemologically situated practice.

Keywords

intersectional feminism; racialised masculinities; postcolonial memory; counter-narratives; Gayl Jones; cultural memory; literary epistemology

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die Frage, inwiefern dominante Narrative westlicher Diskurse über Geschlechtergerechtigkeit zur diskursiven Unsichtbarmachung und negativen Codierung rassifizierter Männlichkeiten beitragen. Ausgehend von postkolonialen, feministischen und erinnerungstheoretischen Ansätzen wird argumentiert, dass intersektionaler Feminismus trotz seines Anspruchs auf Mehrfachdiskriminierung häufig blinde Flecken im Hinblick auf strukturell verankerte Machtverhältnisse zwischen Race und Männlichkeit aufweist. Mittels einer literaturwissenschaftlichen Analyse des Romans *Corregidora* von Gayl Jones wird demonstriert, wie Literatur als erkenntnistheoretischer Denkraum fungieren kann, in dem alternative Wissensformen entstehen und epistemische Ungerechtigkeiten sichtbar gemacht werden. Die vorliegende Untersuchung irritiert somit hegemoniale Narrative, aktiviert verdrängte Erinnerungsdynamiken und eröffnet alternative Perspektiven auf koloniale Gewaltverhältnisse und Schwarze Männlichkeit. Der Roman thematisiert generationale Traumata und kollektive Erinnerung, wobei er sich einer vereinfachenden Opfer-Täter-Binarität entzieht. Er fordert zu einer selbstreflexiven und machtsensiblen Weiterentwicklung intersektionaler feministischer Theorie auf, indem sie die epistemische Verortung weißer Rezipient:innen reflexiv adressiert und deren strukturelle Eingebundenheit in koloniale Wissensordnungen sichtbar macht.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| PREFACE | II |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENT | III |
| DECLARATION OF OWN WORK | IV |
| ABSTRACT | V |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | VI |
| | |
| 1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| | |
| 2 ANALYTICAL APPROACH | 5 |
| | |
| 2.1 Methodology | 6 |
| 2.1.1 Reading and Listening | 6 |
| 2.1.2 Positionality and Reflexivity | 8 |
| 2.1.3 Literature as meaning-making space | 9 |
| | |
| 2.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Approach | 11 |
| 2.2.1 Racialisation as Discursive Logic and Postcolonial Theory..... | 11 |
| 2.2.2 The Patriarchy and Black Feminism..... | 13 |
| 2.2.3 Memory and Transmission | 15 |
| 2.2.4 Corregidora (Gayl Jones) | 16 |
| | |
| 2.3 Disciplinary Positioning and Analytical Tools | 17 |
| 2.3.1 Disciplinary Positioning..... | 18 |
| 2.3.2 Analytical Tools..... | 19 |
| | |
| 2.4 Structure of Argument | 20 |
| | |
| 3 COLONIAL LOGIC OF POSSESSION AND CULTURAL MEMORY | 22 |
| | |
| 3.1 Colonial Logics and the Foundations of Structural Violence | 22 |
| | |
| 3.2 Genealogical Violence and Cultural Memory | 25 |
| | |
| 3.3 Structures of Colonial Violence: The Omnipresence of Corregidora | 28 |
| | |
| 3.4 Fragmented Narrative Structure as a Countermodel to Hegemonic Memory | 29 |
| | |
| 4 RETHINKING BLACK MASCULINITY – BETWEEN PATRIARCHY AND COLONIAL INHERITANCE | 32 |
| | |
| 4.1 Facets of Patriarchy in Corregidora | 33 |
| | |
| 4.2 Black Masculinity and White Projection | 36 |
| | |
| 4.3 The Structural Complexity of Black Masculinity | 37 |
| | |
| 5 FEMINISM AND THE BLIND SPOT - RACIALIZED PERCEPTIONS AND THE REVERSAL OF PATRIARCHAL LOGIC | 39 |
| | |
| 5.1 Femonationalism and the Political Weaponization of Feminist Narratives | 40 |
| | |
| 5.2 Black Feminism and Situated Struggles: Ursa's Voice as Counter-Narrative | 42 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 5.3 Colonial Reversals: Patriarchy's Racial Legacy in Feminist Logics..... | 44 |
| 5.4 The Blind Spot: Epistemic Violence in the Perception of Sexism | 46 |
| 6 TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ENTANGLED COUNTER-NARRATIVES | 50 |
| 6.1 Counter-Narratives in Corregidora..... | 51 |
| 6.2 Corregidora as a Literary Space of Epistemic Reflection | 53 |
| 6.3 Feminism and Antiracism as Entangled Struggles..... | 56 |
| 6.4 Blues as Embodied Cultural Memory | 58 |
| 6.5 The Deaf Spot – Listening as Epistemic Humility | 60 |
| 7 CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK | 63 |
| 7.1 Revisiting the Research Question: Racialised Masculinities and Feminist Blind Spots..... | 63 |
| 7.2 Theoretical Contribution: Toward a Postcolonial-Feminist Critique of Epistemic Violence | 66 |
| 7.3 Future Directions: Decolonial Knowledge and Literary Epistemologies | 67 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 69 |

1 Introduction

In contemporary public discourse, the rhetoric of women's rights is increasingly recruited to legitimise racist and nationalist agendas. Feminist demands are mobilised to devalue cultures marked as "foreign" in migration contexts and to insinuate that gender equality has largely been achieved in the West, a move that relativises ongoing inequalities and conceals structural gender injustice. What emerges is a central blind spot: while sexism is readily condemned in communities of colour and in contexts that diverge from dominant Western norms, the entanglement of racism and patriarchy within Western settings remains less visible. Accordingly, a politics designed for liberation and solidarity can reproduce exclusion by negatively coding racialised masculinities and by stabilising colonial power asymmetries.

The term "racialised masculinities" designates constructions of masculinity shaped by racist attributions rather than neutral abstractions. In hegemonic discourse, understood as the society-wide production of meaning across media, policy, academia and quotidian communication, such masculinities are frequently coded as deviant, violent, culturally deficient or threatening. They function as screens for social anxieties and as relays of colonial hierarchies. This coding surfaces in everyday interaction and in media debate, where ostensibly feminist arguments can slide into frames that stabilise racist structures. Claims that debates on gender inequality in Western contexts are redundant perform a dual operation: they obscure existing inequalities, and they shift the focus of conflict by marking racialised communities as deficient. These strategies reproduce exclusion and cement hegemonic interpretative authority. This constellation defines the starting point of the thesis and underscores the need to link feminist and anti-racist perspectives consistently. Sara Farris's account of femonationalism is instructive here¹, for it shows how feminist rhetoric can be instrumentalised to justify racist policies, a process that sits within broader colonial epistemic frameworks and continues to silence or distort racialised subjects through epistemic violence.

The relevance of the topic is at once political and theoretical. Politically, the project addresses resistance to right-wing appropriations of feminist rhetoric; theoretically, it

¹ Farris, Sara R., *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism* (Durham and London, 2017), pp. 3–6, 9, 13–15, 17, 20–21.

raises questions about the epistemic premises of feminist inquiry and the conditions of solidarity practice. The thesis seeks to render implicit exclusions within feminist narratives visible, to develop a power-critical perspective and to explore the prerequisites of coalition. It is situated at the intersection of Gender Studies, Cultural Memory Studies and Postcolonial Theory. *Corregidora* is approached as a literary resonance space, and the analysis combines cultural discourse analysis with narratological methods. Literature is treated not merely as an object of study but as an epistemic agent that can unsettle hegemonic narratives and open alternative pathways of knowledge. On this basis, the study examines genealogical violence, racialised masculinities and feminist blind spots, showing how *Corregidora* articulates epistemic alternatives and transformative counter-narratives. The argument proceeds from theoretical groundwork to literary analysis and then to epistemological reflection.

Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality² provides the foundational premise that racism and sexism cannot be understood in isolation. bell hooks adds decisive perspectives by foregrounding the specific experiences of Black women and by probing the limits of universalist feminist frames.³ Of particular relevance for the present study is her analysis of how hegemonic public discourse frames Black masculinities as dangerous, criminalised and hypersexual, rendering Black men visible chiefly through stereotype and denying representational agency. Drawing on *We Real Cool*, hooks shows that such representations are shaped by racist projection and that elements of feminist discourse can at times recycle these frames. She insists that racialised masculinities should not be read as monolithic conduits of patriarchal power but must be situated within colonial and socio-economic structures that constrain and script masculine subjectivities.⁴

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reformulates debates on the colonial limits of representation and knowledge through the concepts of epistemic violence and subaltern speech.⁵ Sylvia Wynter critiques dominant Western categories of the human

² Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*, *Stanford Law Review*, 43/6 (1991), pp. 1243–1245, 1296–1299.

³ hooks, bell, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), pp. 55–61, 67–72, 110–112, 40

⁴ hooks, bell, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York and London, 2004), pp. 1–3, 15–21, 52–53, 63–67, 139–140.

⁵ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York, 1994), pp. 66–111, esp. pp.

as colonial constructs and proposes alternative epistemic frameworks.⁶ Aleida and Jan Assmann's cultural memory⁷ theory explains how collective memory, narrative transmission and intergenerational trauma are rendered in literature and allows *Corregidora* to be read as a practice of cultural memory that resists archival closure, in which history is not fixed but performatively reactivated.

From a political-science perspective, Sara Farris's notion of femonationalism clarifies how feminist rhetoric is recruited in the service of racist agendas. Taken together, these theories provide an interdisciplinary foundation and frame the literary analysis of Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* as a critical epistemic space. Within literary scholarship, the novel has been read through trauma, memory and embodiment. Stella Setka⁸ and Joanne Lipson Freed⁹ show that *Corregidora* negotiates both individual and intergenerational trauma.

The novel's blues aesthetics of repetition, fragmentation and affective resonance have been analysed as subversive epistemic practices that challenge dominant narratives. This overview is representative rather than exhaustive; the subsequent analysis mobilises additional specialist studies, including recent repository theses, where their arguments refine or contest established readings.

Corregidora is also read as a neo-slave narrative that reimagines the history of slavery from an Afro-diasporic and feminist perspective, foregrounding the interconnection of gender, race and economic exploitation.¹⁰ These perspectives define the scholarly context in which this thesis is situated. Against this backdrop, the reading shifts emphasis from trauma as terminus to the ambivalent coding of Black masculinity as a diagnostic for feminist blind spots, while retaining trauma and memory as the media through which such codings are produced and contested.

74–75 (two senses of representation), pp. 76–83 (definition and workings of epistemic violence), pp. 90–91 (programmatic statement on subaltern speech).

⁶ Wynter, Sylvia, *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument*, CR: The New Centennial Review, 3 (2003), pp. 257–337, esp. pp. 260–263, 281, 287, 327–330.

⁷ Assmann, Jan, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1997), pp. 13–15, 20–21, 26–27; Assmann, Aleida, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich, 1999; 2018 pbk edn), pp. 12, 15–18.

⁸ Setka, Stella, *Haunted by the Past: Traumatic Rememory and Black Feminism in Gayl Jones's Corregidora*, *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 47.1 (2014), pp. 129–144.

⁹ Freed, Joanne Lipson, *Gendered Narratives of Trauma and Revision in Gayl Jones's Corregidora*, *African American Review*, 44 (2011), pp. 409–420.

¹⁰ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd edn (New York and London, 2000), pp. 221–231.

Building on them, the thesis extends current debates by analysing the ambivalent coding of Black masculinities and by identifying epistemic blind spots within feminist theory.

A notable research gap concerns the treatment of racialised masculinities. While scholarship has predominantly centred women's experiences of trauma and patriarchal violence, the present study advances an intersectional feminist analysis by examining how Black masculinity is positioned as simultaneously structurally marginalised and prefigured as violent, and by tracing how such scripts may be appropriated, negotiated or refused within colonial and socio-economic constraints. It also highlights literature's capacity to act as an epistemic space that can extend intersectional theory, a capacity that has received limited attention so far. Building on hooks, the study asks where and how patriarchal scripts become available and examines how *Corregidora* renders these processes legible.

The central claim is that discursive patterns within Western narratives of gender equality reproduce racist logics through the negative coding of racialised masculinities. Such blind spots in feminist rhetoric stabilise colonial power structures, obscure structural gender inequality and inhibit power-critical reflection within intersectional frameworks. In turn, the thesis contributes to a reflexive and power-sensitive development of intersectional feminism by showing, through a literary analysis of *Corregidora*, how collective memory, generational trauma and postcolonial violence are narratively negotiated. Literature functions here as an epistemic space that recalls what is forgotten, unsettles dominant narratives and opens possibilities for transformation, a point that is also relevant for a situated white readership.

The study asks the following question: How do dominant Western narratives of gender equality contribute to the discursive invisibility and negative coding of racialised masculinities, and how can a literary analysis of *Corregidora* reveal these blind spots, make colonial memory dynamics visible and contribute to the further development of intersectional feminist perspectives?

Accordingly, the thesis posits that feminist narratives are shaped by colonial epistemologies and that, as a result, racialised men are often portrayed as one-dimensional threats. *Corregidora* opens alternative epistemic spaces that make visible genealogical violence and epistemic absences and that offer impulses for feminist

theory. The novel is well suited to this task since it thematises trauma, memory and patriarchal violence and also formalises them through blues poetics, orality and fragmentation. These devices produce alternatives to the colonial archive, enable critical reflection on the limits of Western theory and invite a rethinking of feminist narratives.

The thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter 2 sets out the methodological and theoretical framework and defines the interdisciplinary scope. Three stages then structure the analysis of *Corregidora*: first, the colonial imprint on memory and violence; second, the depiction of racialised masculinities; third, the entanglement between feminist rhetoric and colonial power. The penultimate chapter reflects on the epistemic dimensions of literary representation and discusses the wider theoretical implications. The final chapter synthesises the findings, outlines prospects for a power-critical and decolonial development of feminist theory and highlights the potential of literature to offer alternative modes of knowledge and remembrance.

2 Analytical Approach

This chapter is structured according to a clear methodological logic. It explains both the content and the rationale for the order in which the individual sections appear. The aim is to make transparent how epistemological assumptions, theoretical positions and analytical tools interact throughout the work.

The chapter begins with an epistemological grounding (2.1). This section defines how knowledge is understood and produced within the study. It clarifies the reading position adopted. It also addresses the role of situated knowledge and reflexivity. This foundation comes first because it sets the conceptual framework that informs all later decisions, including text selection and the use of analytical tools.

Next, the primary text, *Corregidora* by Gayl Jones, is introduced and contextualised (2.2.6). The section outlines its historical background, literary influences and formal strategies, such as fragmentation and the use of blues poetics. Presenting the text at this point prepares the ground for the analysis. It shows why the tools introduced later are particularly suited to this specific material.

The following section (2.3.1) locates the study within relevant academic fields. This disciplinary positioning connects the epistemological stance developed earlier with the

practical steps of the analysis. It also clarifies which kinds of questions are being asked of the text and from which intellectual traditions these questions arise.

Only after this foundation are the analytical tools presented (2.3.2). The tools are not used in a fixed or mechanical way. Instead, they form a flexible and context-sensitive toolkit, adapted to the specific demands of the text. Their placement in the chapter reflects the logic of the approach: practice follows theory.

The final section (2.4) outlines the overall structure of the argument. It provides a clear overview of how the methodological, theoretical and analytical components work together across the thesis.

2.1 Methodology

The methodological orientation of this thesis is grounded in an understanding of analysis as a situated, reflexive, and ethically informed epistemic practice. The aim is to engage the literary, cultural, and political dimensions of *Corregidora* in all their complexity. Classical tools of textual analysis such as close reading are therefore combined with approaches informed by postcolonial, feminist, and epistemological critique. Rather than applying pre-established analytical categories, the interpretive process is framed as a dialogical engagement with the text, which is understood not merely as an object of inquiry but as an epistemic agent in its own right. At the centre of this methodological framework is the question of how literature generates knowledge, disrupts hegemonic narratives, and opens up alternative forms of remembering and understanding. Furthermore it is shown how these processes can be made analytically accessible. The following subchapters unfold a pluralised set of methodological tools, designed to account both for the materiality of the literary text and the situated position of the reader.

2.1.1 Reading and Listening

This thesis approaches *Corregidora* through the understanding that reading and listening are not passive or neutral acts, but epistemic practices shaped by cultural, historical and material conditions. Rather than limiting itself to a conventional literary reading, the analysis integrates a hermeneutic model of listening as a form of interpretive attention. This draws on theoretical contributions such as Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak's reflections on representational limits¹¹ and Miranda Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice¹². Reading, in this context, is conceived not merely as a cognitive act, but as an ethically situated engagement with what the text articulates, conceals or evokes indirectly.

At the core of this approach lies a method best described as text- proximate formal analysis. This combines detailed attention to stylistic and narrative features, such as repetition, symbolic structures, and voice, with a contextual and reflective mode of interpretation. Repetition, for example, is read as an inscription of genealogical coercion, while fractured or broken voices are interpreted as signals of epistemic disruption. While the reading remains close to the text, it does not aim for formalist isolation. Instead, it treats the text as a site of meaning that is both historically embedded and responsive to the situated position of the reader. The analysis thereby attends to formal aspects without detaching them from the cultural, political and epistemological dimensions in which they operate.

A central methodological strategy employed in this thesis is what may be termed two-axis bimodal reading. The first axis moves between the text- proximate formal analysis described above and broader discursive contextualisation. The second engages with the novel in two sensory modes: as a printed text and as an audiobook. This dual engagement enables a layered reading practice that connects textuality with sound, rhythm and vocality. The novel's use of repetition, vocal intensity and affective resonance reflects the aesthetics of blues poetics, which function as a counter-archive within cultural memory. Listening, in this framework, becomes an epistemological practice that reveals dimensions of meaning often carried by tone, rhythm, silence and sonic atmosphere.

This form of attentive listening is not limited to acoustic perception. It operates as a critical mode of reception that responds to the text's polyphonic structure, including its gaps, silences and unresolved tensions. The methodological value of this two-axis approach lies in its capacity to hold together aesthetic form and epistemic critique. A purely formal reading would risk neglecting the novel's engagement with memory and

¹¹ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Can the subaltern speak?', in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York, 1994), at pp. 70–76 (on the two senses of "representation" and their limits) and pp. 104–105 (representation has not "withered away")

¹² Fricker, Miranda, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford and New York, 2007), pp. 1–2.

power, while a purely discursive approach might overlook its poetological specificity. In practice, scenes are first approached through text- proximate formal analysis and subsequently expanded through discursive and historical contextualisation.

This reading model provides the methodological foundation for the analytical chapters that follow. It also prepares the ground for moments of textual silence, affective dissonance and representational limits that recur throughout the novel. These moments will be examined more closely in Chapter 3 and later theorised through the concept of the “deaf spot”, introduced in Section 2.4 and fully developed in Chapter 6.5.

2.1.2 Positionality and Reflexivity

Analysing a literary text such as *Corregidora*, which engages with colonial violence, racialised masculinity and Black memory, requires careful reflection on one’s own position as a knower. This thesis is written from a white, European, academically trained perspective, one that is historically embedded in power structures and privileges certain ways of knowing while marginalising others. Acknowledging this positionality is not an evasion of responsibility but a necessary step in laying bare the epistemic conditions under which interpretation takes place and in recognising the limits of one’s own understanding. Within the structure of this chapter, positionality and reflexivity constitute the third level of reading. Alongside text- proximate formal analysis and contextual discursive framing, this section establishes situated self-reflection as an integral part of the method:

Reflexivity is here understood as an ongoing practice of self-questioning. What assumptions do I bring to the text? What blind spots shape my reading? How do my privileges, as a white reader and as an academic subject, affect what I perceive and what I overlook? These are not peripheral questions but constitutive elements of the analytical process. They also form the conceptual basis for the use of the terms “blind spot” and “deaf spot” in this thesis. These terms are employed not only as theoretical tools for interrogating feminist discourse but also as self-reflexive descriptors of a situated white reading position. Recognising what cannot be known or heard is a first step toward confronting the epistemic limits shaped by structures of whiteness and coloniality.

This thesis does not claim to speak for Black people. It addresses predominantly white academic contexts and emerges from a white position. The aim is not to represent but

to analyse the conditions that distort and marginalise racialised masculinities and to confront white complicity in those processes. When engaging with Black masculinities, the position assumed here is not one of experiential authority but of committed epistemic inquiry. This work is therefore addressed primarily to white readers. It seeks to assume responsibility within a privileged academic discourse and to respond to the call for power-conscious research. This dual orientation toward the text and toward one's own situatedness is not rhetorical but constitutes a key element of scholarly credibility and critical rigour.

The perspective developed here is also shaped by social and biographical factors that exceed academic and racial categories. The author is situated within positions that are structurally disadvantaged and frequently marginalised. This position is not invoked as a claim to authenticity but as a methodological sharpening. It allows for greater attentiveness to the interrelation between class, race and colonial legacies, which informs the interpretive process itself. It complements the reflection on whiteness with a differentiated awareness of social inequality as an epistemically relevant dimension. This reflexive stance is informed by theoretical positions such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critique of representation in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* and bell hooks's insistence on the ethical imperative not to appropriate the margins but to listen differently.¹³¹⁴ Knowledge, in this perspective, does not arise from mastery but from relation. In this sense, literary analysis becomes an ethical practice. The text is not treated as an object to be mastered but as a space in which knowledge can emerge only through self-critical engagement and epistemic humility. The aim is not full comprehension but an honest encounter with its structural impossibility, while continuing to read, to listen and to inquire.

2.1.3 Literature as meaning-making space

This thesis approaches literature not merely as a representational medium or a supplement to social discourse, but as an autonomous epistemic space in which knowledge is produced, negotiated and transformed. This understanding draws, among others, on Cornel West's pragmatist literary theory, which frames literature as a site of

¹³ Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', pp. 66-111, 57-58, 104-105.

¹⁴ hooks, bell, 'Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness', *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 36 (1989), pp. 15-23, at pp. 21-22 (on refusing to speak for/appropriate the "other"; the demand to hear the marginal voice) and p. 16 ('Language is also a place of struggle').

thinking and intervention.¹⁵ The central idea is that literature does not simply reflect reality but constitutes a space where alternative forms of memory, knowledge and critique become possible. This perspective rests on four interlinked pillars that orient the reading practice in this thesis: first, a bimodal reading that combines text-proximate formal analysis with contextual discursive hermeneutics; second, the contextual discursive framing itself as a sustained interpretive method attentive to coloniality, intersectionality and cultural memory; third, the explicit situatedness of the reader, which adds a further dimension of contextuality and establishes self-reflection as part of method; fourth, the conception of literature as a meaning-making space in the pragmatist sense after Cornel West.¹⁶

This epistemological dimension is particularly evident in *Corregidora*. The novel's blues poetics, marked by repetition, fragmentation, affective intensity and rhythmic structure, constitutes a form of narration that eludes hegemonic models of rationality. The narrative voice invites the reader to engage not only with what is said but also with what remains unsaid, with silences, disruptions, repetitions and the knowledge that resides in the spaces between words. Literary complexity thus becomes a mode of generating knowledge that is not systematic but relational, not stable but in flux.

In this regard, literature also functions as a counter-archive. Drawing on Aleida and Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory¹⁷¹⁸, *Corregidora* may be read as a repository of nonhegemonic memory that resists the violence of official archives of writing, property and documentation. The novel engages with oral history and performative acts of storytelling and singing to make colonial and patriarchal violence visible and memorable. These literary strategies do not simply transmit content; they evoke the affective dimensions of trauma, resistance and subjectivity.

At the same time, literature realises its epistemic potential through polyphony, ambiguity and formal openness. The non-closure of meaning produces a productive disturbance that challenges dominant interpretive frameworks and opens new possibilities of understanding. In this way, literature is not only a source of knowledge

¹⁵ West, Cornel, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison, 1989), pp. 211–214 (pragmatism as a political form of cultural criticism) and p. 12 (evasion as occasion for cultural criticism and political engagement).

¹⁶ West, *American Evasion of Philosophy*, p. 5, 235–236.

¹⁷ J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, pp. 23–24 (archive growth in literate cultures; shifts between canonical/central and apocryphal/marginal memory).

¹⁸ A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, at pp. 133–140 (Funktions- vs. Speichergedächtnis) and p. 343 ('Archiv').

but also a critique of knowledge itself; it interrogates the very conditions under which meaning is made possible.

This perspective has methodological consequences. Literature is not treated as a collection of extractable claims but as a dialogical space that resists totalisation while inviting engagement. Reading thus becomes an ethical practice that responds to the demands of the text rather than subordinating it to external theoretical agendas. In this thesis, literature is not used as evidence but recognised as a co-constitutive epistemic agent whose significance lies not only in what is said but also in how it is said, in the aesthetics, performativity and textuality through which it approaches the world. Accordingly, the analytical tools outlined in 2.3.2 are mobilised to attend to these epistemic functions of form and voice. Taken together, this section completes the methodological groundwork by defining the epistemic status of literature within the present study. On this basis, section 2.2 introduces the theoretical framework that underpins this approach and provides the conceptual vocabulary deployed in the subsequent analyses.

2.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Approach

The following section outlines the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the thesis. It introduces the key terms, frameworks and critical traditions that inform the analytical engagement with *Corregidora*. Emphasising the intersections of gender, race, colonialism and memory, the chapter traces how these concepts are not only thematised in the novel but also structurally embedded in its narrative form. At the same time, the section is designed to provide a clear and accessible entry point into the theoretical landscape of the thesis, ensuring that the conceptual basis for the subsequent analysis is both transparent and traceable. By drawing on postcolonial theory, Black feminist thought and memory studies, this chapter establishes the epistemological coordinates that guide the literary analysis and frame *Corregidora* as a space in which knowledge is both contested and created.

2.2.1 Racialisation as Discursive Logic and Postcolonial Theory

Understanding racism requires a historical and structural perspective. Rather than treating racism as an individual prejudice or isolated social phenomenon, this study approaches it as a system that emerges from and continues the logics of colonial

domination. In this sense, race is not a neutral descriptor of human difference but a powerful mechanism of classification, control, and exclusion, rooted in the global histories of colonialism.¹⁹ To engage critically with racialised representation and identity, it is therefore essential to ground the analysis in postcolonial thought.

Race, as this framework understands it, is not a biological reality but a discursive and material construct. It was through colonial conquest, enslavement, and epistemic violence that modern notions of race were consolidated. These were not merely systems of exploitation, but also of knowledge production, systems that defined who counts as human, who speaks, and who is rendered invisible. The effects of these classifications persist, structuring contemporary societies at multiple levels: economically, symbolically, politically, and affectively.

Postcolonial theory provides the analytical tools to examine these enduring colonial formations. As Aníbal Quijano argues, colonialism did not simply end with formal decolonisation; its foundational structures live on in what he terms the coloniality of power. This concept describes the persistence of racial hierarchies, Eurocentric epistemologies, and capitalist exploitation that continue to shape global relations. Coloniality thus names the afterlife of empire, not in the form of direct rule, but as a matrix of power embedded in modern institutions and modes of thought.²⁰

A crucial aspect of this coloniality is its epistemic dimension. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak highlights in her critique of Western intellectual traditions, colonial discourse not only silenced colonised peoples politically, but also denied them epistemic agency. Her concept of the subaltern draws attention to those whose subjectivity is structurally unrepresented within dominant systems of knowledge. To recognise this violence is not merely to include marginalised voices, but to question the very frameworks through which knowledge is legitimised.²¹

Sylvia Wynter radicalises this critique by addressing the colonial foundations of the category of the human itself. She argues that the modern West over-represented one specific figure: white, male, bourgeois, European, as the universal standard of “Man,” relegating all others to the realm of the less-than-human. Her call to deconstruct the

¹⁹ Aníbal Quijano, *Coloniality of power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America*, in Catherine E. Walsh/Walter D. Mignolo/Rita Segato (eds), *Aníbal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power* (Durham and London, 2024), pp. 256–261.

²⁰ Quijano, *Coloniality of power*, esp. pp. 85–94.

²¹ Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak*, p. 66-111.

coloniality of being, power, and truth demands not just the inclusion of excluded identities, but a complete rethinking of what it means to be human.²²

These structural and epistemic dimensions of colonial power are inseparable from the lived realities of race, gender, and representation. bell hooks has shown how race and gender intersect as co-constitutive systems of domination. Her work insists that cultural production is not peripheral to structures of power, but a primary site where identities are shaped and challenged. Racism, in this view, is not simply a matter of individual bias but a system that normalises white subjectivity while pathologising racialised bodies, especially those marked as female, queer, or poor.²³²⁴

Taken together, these perspectives demonstrate why postcolonial critique is indispensable for any meaningful engagement with racism. Without understanding its colonial roots and continuing logics, anti-racist politics risk reproducing the very structures they seek to dismantle. Postcolonial theory does not offer a fixed set of answers, but a critical orientation, one that foregrounds history, challenges normative categories, and opens up space for alternative ways of seeing, knowing, and being.

In the context of this study, these theoretical insights form the foundation for examining how racialised and gendered subjectivities are constructed, mediated, and resisted in cultural texts. They provide the conceptual tools needed to interrogate the discursive and affective dimensions of racism as a construct to gain power.

2.2.2 The Patriarchy and Black Feminism

Any serious critique of racialised violence must also account for its gendered dimensions. In Black communities, patriarchy cannot be understood as a universal system of male dominance detached from race or class. Instead, it emerges from the specific historical conditions of slavery, colonialism, and racial capitalism. This study therefore frames patriarchy not as personal behaviour, but as a structurally encoded logic of possession, in which bodies, particularly Black women's, become instruments of social control.

bell hooks's concept of the imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy describes a system that produces gendered identities through racialised hierarchies of

²² Wynter, *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being*, p. 257–261, 264–272.

²³ hooks, bell, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (New York, 1981; repr. London and New York, 2015), pp. 7–15, 159–165.

²⁴ hooks, *We Real Cool*, pp. 1–5, 15–21, 63–67.

domination. Under slavery, Black women's bodies were not only subordinated but commodified; their reproductive and sexual capacities were regulated through violence. This logic extends beyond the plantation into contemporary cultural, legal, and domestic contexts, where Black women are still framed as resilient yet disposable, visible yet voiceless.²⁵²⁶

Black masculinity is similarly shaped by structural contradiction. As hooks argues, Black men are excluded from hegemonic masculinity by racism yet are often encouraged to assert patriarchal control within their communities. This produces what she calls damaged masculinity: where care becomes control, and vulnerability manifests as violence.²⁷

To analyse these dynamics, this study draws on intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how overlapping power structures marginalise Black women in both feminist and antiracist discourses. Their experiences emerge from a distinct positionality shaped by the convergence of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Intersectionality is not only an analytic of oppression, but also a critique of dominant knowledge production. ²⁸ Hooks shows how Black feminist thought has long been marginalised by mainstream feminism, which often centres white, middle-class experiences. At the same time, Black men are frequently pathologised or erased altogether.²⁹³⁰

This framework also clarifies how feminist discourse can be co-opted geopolitically. As Sara Farris notes in her concept of femonationalism, feminist rhetoric is at times mobilised to justify racist or nationalist agendas, particularly through the policing of racialised masculinity. This underscores the importance of a feminism attentive to racial power, lest it reinforce the systems it aims to dismantle.³¹

More than background concepts, intersectionality and Black feminism constitute a critical method that reveals how structural violence operates through intimacy, memory, and identity. They enable readings of cultural texts such as *Corregidora* as counter-narratives, ones that unsettle hegemonic frameworks and foreground race not

²⁵ hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, p. 42 – 44.

²⁶ hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, p. 15-22, 39-45.

²⁷ hooks, *We Real Cool*, p. pp. 1–5, 63–70, 84–90.

²⁸ Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins*, p. 1241–1299, at pp. 1243–1246.

²⁹ hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, pp. 1–15, 159–165.

³⁰ hooks, *We Real Cool*, pp. 15–21, 63–67.

³¹ Farris, *In the Name of Women's Rights*, p. 3 – 14, 92 – 99.

simply as difference in appearance, but as a historically saturated structure of power and relation.

2.2.3 Memory and Transmission

The concept of cultural memory, as developed by Jan and Aleida Assmann, offers a valuable framework for understanding how historical knowledge is transmitted across generations. Cultural memory refers to collectively mediated forms of remembrance that exceed the span of individual life. It relies on symbolic carriers such as texts, images, rituals, and oral traditions, rather than on direct personal experience. Unlike communicative memory, which is embedded in everyday interaction among contemporaries, cultural memory is institutionalised, durable, and selectively shaped to preserve meaning over time.³²³³

This type of memory is particularly significant in contexts marked by historical trauma, displacement, or silencing. In such cases, cultural memory functions not simply as preservation, but as resistance. It enables the articulation of experiences that are excluded from official records and dominant historiographies. The Assmanns emphasise that cultural memory is non-linear; it operates through repetition, resonance, and ritual, rather than chronological sequence. It often re-emerges in symbolic forms that evoke rather than explain, suggesting that what is remembered is not always consciously known.³⁴³⁵

In this context, the body becomes a crucial site of transmission. Memory can be embodied as gesture, affect, or silence, particularly when verbal articulation is blocked or unavailable. This understanding aligns with Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory, which addresses the relationship of subsequent generations to traumatic pasts they did not directly witness. Postmemory is characterised by affective proximity, imaginative investment, and a deep sense of belatedness. It emerges when the memories of others are so powerfully transmitted that they seem to constitute one's own.³⁶

³² J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 48 – 56.

³³ A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 33 – 41.

³⁴ A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, pp. 130–137, 148–153.

³⁵ J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 57 – 62.

³⁶ Hirsch, Marianne, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York, 2012), pp. 5–8, 33–38.

Hirsch argues that postmemory is mediated through visual, narrative, and performative forms that blur the line between memory and imagination. It is not an act of recollection, but of reconstruction and response. While the Assmanns focus on cultural structures of remembrance, Hirsch adds a focus on familial, intimate, and affective transmission. Together, these perspectives illuminate how historical knowledge is not only archived in texts, but also inscribed in bodies, emotions, and cultural practices. This chapter therefore adopts cultural memory and postmemory as key theoretical tools. They make visible the recursive, embodied, and symbolic dimensions of remembrance, and provide the conceptual groundwork for analysing how knowledge about the past circulates beyond direct experience.³⁷³⁸

2.2.4 Corregidora (Gayl Jones)

Published in 1975, *Corregidora* marks Gayl Jones's debut novel and is now widely regarded as a foundational text of Black feminist literature in the United States. Emerging during a period shaped by both the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of Black feminist thought, the novel was mentored and edited by Toni Morrison, who recognised in Jones a distinct voice capable of articulating the silences and violences of Black women's histories. *Corregidora* gained early recognition for its uncompromising exploration of sexual violence, slavery, intergenerational trauma, and voice. It blends the aesthetics of the blues with a fragmented narrative form, refusing linear resolution and eschewing binary moral frameworks. In doing so, the novel creates a space where structural violence is not merely narrated, but embodied, broken, and re-inscribed across generations. The novel's significance lies not simply in its subject matter, but in its form and epistemic function. Rather than offering a straightforward narrative of victimhood, *Corregidora* constructs a discursive space where racialised and gendered violence can be confronted without reduction. The novel resists closure and coherence, forcing readers into a listening position that foregrounds discomfort, rupture, and contradiction. It is this refusal to simplify that

³⁷ Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, pp. 22–29, 33–38.

³⁸ J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, pp. 48–56; A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, pp. 33–41.

renders the text an epistemic resonance space: a place where hegemonic logics of memory, gender, and race are unsettled and reimagined.³⁹⁴⁰⁴¹

The novel was translated into German under the same title *Corregidora*, published in 2019 by Fischer Verlag. The translation by Pieke Biermann raised important questions around language, particularly regarding the novel's explicit vocabulary, its portrayal of sexualised violence, and the translation of racial slurs. Biermann has reflected on the difficulty and necessity of engaging with such texts aloud. She notes that very few listeners are truly willing to hear what the novel forces into speech. To read *Corregidora* attentively, she argues, is to confront one's position within a racialised culture of reception that often silences precisely these voices.⁴²

2.3 Disciplinary Positioning and Analytical Tools

This section outlines the methodological instruments that guide the practical analysis of *Corregidora*. Building on the methodological foundations established in 2.1 and the theoretical concepts discussed in 2.2, it provides an operational framework that is textually grounded and conceptually responsive. The approach adopted is interdisciplinary.

Rather than following a fixed checklist, the study proceeds through a flexible analytical structure organised along four guiding axes. These include theoretical framing, which situates the readings within postcolonial, feminist and memory scholarship; literary articulation, which focuses on the formal and narrative strategies of the text; the novel's function as a counter-narrative within cultural memory and archival regimes; and positionality, understood as a co-productive epistemic dimension that shapes how reading and listening take place.

Throughout, the analysis adheres to core methodological principles: proximity to the text, contextual sensitivity, reflexivity and an ethics of reading that foregrounds listening and accountability. Section 2.3.1 defines the disciplinary orientation and introduces the four analytical axes. Section 2.3.2 then demonstrates how these are

³⁹ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, esp. pp. 45–69, 123–149.

⁴⁰ Jones, Gayl, *Corregidora* (New York, 1975)

⁴¹ Setka, Stella, *Haunted by the Past: Traumatic Rememory and Black Feminism in Gayl Jones's Corregidora*, *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 47.1 (2014), pp. 129–144, at pp. 129–131.

⁴² Jones, Gayl, *Corregidora*, trans. by Pieke Biermann (Frankfurt am Main, 2022).

operationalised through specific analytical tools and reading strategies tailored to the demands of the text.

2.3.1 Disciplinary Positioning

This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach grounded in literary studies, cultural theory, and philosophy. The epistemological questions it addresses, concerning voice, memory, and knowledge production, require a mode of analysis that exceeds the boundaries of any single discipline.

The analysis proceeds along four guiding axes. First, theoretical framing informed by postcolonial, feminist, and memory scholarship. Second, literary articulation, with close attention to language, form, voice, and narrative structure. Third, the function of the novel as a counter-narrative that challenges dominant memory regimes. Fourth, positionality as a co-productive dimension that shapes the conditions of reading and listening. These axes are not applied as fixed categories but operate in dynamic relation to one another.

At the core of this framework is a literary methodology based on close reading and narrative analysis. The text is examined for its formal, poetic, and rhetorical strategies, particularly where literature itself becomes a space for engaging cultural memory, trauma, and processes of subject formation.

Cultural and memory studies enrich this approach with concepts such as collective memory, transgenerational trauma, and oral tradition. These frameworks enable a reading practice attuned to discontinuity, resonance, and embodied knowledge, while also challenging the authority of written archives.

Philosophical perspectives, especially those of Spivak, Wynter, and West, prompt reflection on the conditions of representation and epistemic legitimacy. Questions of who speaks, who is heard, and how knowledge circulates remain central throughout. These perspectives inform and interact with the literary reading rather than stand apart from it.

This disciplinary positioning is integrative by design. Philosophical concepts frame cultural phenomena that are rendered and problematised in literary form. *Corregidora* resists disciplinary reduction: it is simultaneously literature, archive, resistance discourse, and epistemic site. It therefore demands a responsive and theoretically informed reading practice.

Each axis anchors specific lines of inquiry. Theoretical framing engages the work of Spivak, Wynter, Quijano, hooks, Crenshaw, Farris, and the Assmanns, along with West's pragmatist conception of literature. Literary articulation focuses on how the novel encodes structural entanglements of race, gender, and memory through voice and form. The counter-narrative axis investigates how the text intervenes in regimes of memory and representation. Finally, the positionality axis considers the reading subject as epistemically involved, raising questions of interpretive responsibility, listening, and the challenge of the deaf spot.

2.3.2 Analytical Tools

The analytical tools employed in this study form a flexible and context-sensitive methodological toolkit designed to respond to the specific formal, thematic and epistemological demands of *Corregidora*. Rather than functioning as fixed categories, these instruments operate in relation to the four guiding axes outlined in 2.3.1 and are applied according to the requirements of each reading situation. The approach remains grounded in close attention to the text while remaining alert to the historical, cultural and theoretical contexts that inform it.

Close reading is the primary method of textual engagement. It enables detailed analysis of linguistic texture, narrative structure, repetition, and poetic strategies, and is essential for examining how the novel stages meaning through voice, silence and fragmentation. This method supports the axis of literary articulation and facilitates an understanding of how structural entanglements of race, gender and memory are embedded in form. Particular attention is paid to the novel's use of blues poetics, not merely as an aesthetic choice but as a form of epistemological resistance that destabilises linear narrative and hegemonic forms of representation.

Hermeneutic attention complements close reading by foregrounding ambiguity, rupture and interpretive openness. The text is approached not as a stable repository of meaning but as a dialogic space in which sense emerges through tension, discontinuity and polyphony. This tool operates across the axes of literary articulation and positionality, particularly where reflexive reading practices are required. It also enables an attentiveness to gaps, silences and affective residues that resist resolution.

An intersectional lens is applied to examine how race, gender, class and sexuality operate as interlocking structures of power. Intersectionality is not used as a

descriptive category but as a critical method for analysing how subjects are positioned within regimes of visibility and exclusion. This perspective activates the axes of theoretical framing and positionality by foregrounding the complex relations between identity, power and discourse, both within the text and in the act of reading.

Postcolonial critique provides the conceptual foundation for interrogating colonial legacies in terms of representation, ownership and epistemic exclusion. It raises questions about who can speak, who is heard, and how histories are authorised or silenced. Drawing on the work of Spivak, Wynter and Quijano, this framework enables an engagement with the novel as a site of resistance to colonial knowledge regimes and supports the theoretical framing and counter-narrative axes.

Concepts from memory studies guide the reading of the novel as a cultural medium of remembrance. Particular attention is paid to the distinction between oral tradition and written archive, as well as to the ways in which transgenerational trauma is encoded in form and voice. This tool contributes to the counter-narrative axis by conceptualising the novel as a counter-archive, one that resists the logic of historical documentation and centres affective, embodied forms of transmission.

Finally, formal and intermedial tools such as the analysis of blues poetics, multivocality and structural fragmentation are used to examine how the novel mobilises non-linear, affective and polyphonic forms. These elements are not treated as secondary stylistic features but as central to the novel's epistemological force. They enable a reading of the text as a cultural and philosophical intervention that challenges dominant frameworks of meaning-making.

Together, these analytical tools allow for a reading that is textually precise, historically situated and critically aware. Each tool contributes to an understanding of *Corregidora* not only as a literary object but as an active epistemic site. Literature here is understood as a mode of thinking, a site of memory and resistance, and a space in which power relations are interrogated and reshaped through form, voice and narrative strategy.

2.4 Structure of Argument

Building on Chapter 2, this section outlines the structure of the argument. The previous discussions established how colonial legacies continue to shape dominant conceptions of gender, knowledge and memory, and how *Corregidora* functions as a site of epistemic resistance. Two conceptual figures guide the analysis. The blind spot refers

to discursive occlusions within hegemonic frameworks, especially in strands of Western feminism, where racialised masculinities are distorted or erased. The deaf spot designates limits of audibility on the part of readers and interpreters. It is about what remains unheard due to positionality and the epistemic frameworks that shape perception. While the blind spot is primarily addressed in Chapter 5, the deaf spot is traced across Chapters 3 to 5 and articulated in full in Section 6.5.

Chapter 3 lays the theoretical groundwork, showing how colonial structures continue to inform perceptions of race, gender and knowledge. It provides a foundation for analysing genealogical violence, epistemic exclusions and narrative fragmentation, while also anticipating the central tensions around voice, silence and audibility developed in later chapters.

Chapter 4 focuses on the codification of Black masculinities. It examines how racialisation and patriarchy produce structures of visibility, threat and disposability, and how these dynamics are negotiated through voice, repetition and narrative fracture. This chapter links the broader epistemic concerns of Chapter 3 with the critique of feminism developed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 addresses occlusions within dominant feminist discourse. It shows how certain Western feminist narratives displace patriarchy by locating gendered violence in racialised communities. Engaging with Sara Farris's concept of femonationalism, the chapter analyses how feminist rhetoric can be mobilised in support of racist agendas. *Corregidora*, through Ursa's voice and blues poetics, articulates a counter-position, highlighting the need to conceive anti-racism and feminism as deeply interwoven. The chapter clarifies the blind spot and prepares the ground for the theorisation of the deaf spot.

Chapter 6 synthesises the preceding insights and explores *Corregidora* as a mode of knowledge production. Drawing on Cornel West's pragmatist philosophy, it argues that the novel's use of orality, fragmentation and blues poetics challenges dominant memory regimes. Section 6.5 formulates the deaf spot as a critical lens for thinking about the limits of audibility and representation in postcolonial feminist contexts.

Chapter 7 concludes by revisiting the research question and outlining future directions. The thesis thus moves from conceptual foundations to analytical application and theoretical synthesis. Chapter 3 maps the epistemic terrain; Chapters 4 and 5 develop close readings that examine how *Corregidora* negotiates racialised masculinity and

feminist occlusions; Chapter 6 offers a synthesis and a conceptual articulation of the deaf spot. The argument now proceeds to Chapter 3.

3 Colonial Logic of Possession and Cultural Memory

The persistence of colonial power is not confined to material structures or geopolitical hierarchies but is embedded in the foundations of knowledge, cultural norms and political imaginaries. This chapter develops the conceptual framework for the thesis: contemporary discourses on gender and race, remain shaped by colonial epistemologies. The failure to interrogate these legacies sustains exclusions and misrecognitions within feminist and anti-racist discourse, reproducing unequal speaking positions.

Colonial violence is not only historical but continues through the ways knowledge is constructed. By foregrounding the link between colonial histories and present epistemic formations, this chapter examines the logics that determine whose voices are heard and which lives are rendered intelligible within frameworks of gender justice.

Drawing on Spivak, Fricker, Wynter and Gandhi, the chapter explores epistemic violence and genealogical transmission in colonial systems of representation and memory. The chapter thus establishes the epistemological basis for understanding structural inequalities rooted in colonial knowledge systems and frames literature, particularly Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*, as a space where these hegemonic structures are challenged and reimagined.⁴³

3.1 Colonial Logics and the Foundations of Structural Violence

Colonial violence is not only a part of the past but a living structure that continues to shape the ways in which knowledge, history, and subjectivity are produced. Hegemonic narratives obscure this persistence by presenting themselves as neutral or universal, while in fact reproducing colonial logics of possession, representation, and exclusion. To understand how this operates, three interrelated dimensions can be

⁴³ Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak*, pp. 66–111, at pp. 74–83, 90–91; Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, pp. 1–10, 147–153; Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being', pp. 257–261, 264–272; Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 1–12, 82–85.

The learning is not that everything can be understood if only one listens carefully enough. It is that some things cannot be fully understood at all and that this very limit demands responsibility. To inhabit the deaf spot is to practice epistemic humility: to listen, without appropriation, to what resists translation.

With this, Chapter 6 concludes. *Corregidora* emerges as a literary space that renders memory and resistance knowable not through clarity, but through sound, rhythm, and silence. It does not ask to be mastered but to be heard.

7 Conclusion and Outlook

This final chapter revisits the research question by bringing together the conceptual, theoretical and literary strands developed throughout the study. It reflects on the implications of the analysis for postcolonial-feminist theory and outlines directions for future research. The conclusion does not seek closure in the conventional sense. Rather, it proposes a shift in epistemic orientation, calling into question the adequacy of dominant feminist narratives in accounting for the complexity of racialised masculinities and the legacies of colonial violence.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore twofold. First, it articulates the central answer to the research question: in what ways do feminist discourses produce blind spots in relation to racialised masculinities, and how does *Corregidora* intervene in these discursive formations? Second, it draws out the broader theoretical contributions of the study, particularly with regard to the limits of Western epistemologies, the role of literature as an epistemic modality, and the need for alternative, decolonial forms of knowledge production.

Accordingly, the chapter unfolds in three movements: a synthesis of the study's findings in relation to the research question; a discussion of its theoretical implications; and a reflection on the limitations and future trajectories of postcolonial-feminist inquiry. Through this structure, the conclusion not only consolidates the arguments made but also gestures toward the necessity of reimagining feminist theory from within its epistemic fractures.

7.1 Revisiting the Research Question: Racialised Masculinities and Feminist Blind Spots

This study has demonstrated that dominant Western narratives of gender justice significantly contribute to the discursive invisibilisation and negative codification of racialised masculinities. These narratives are deeply embedded in colonial epistemic formations that shape the perception of injustice and delimit the conditions under which certain experiences and subject positions can be recognised as intelligible. Even where feminist discourses define themselves as critical, intersectional or decolonial, they often reproduce reductive representations of racialised masculinity, portraying it as inherently violent or regressive while neglecting its structural vulnerability and historical embeddedness in colonial violence.

This insight foregrounds a central limitation of Western feminist epistemologies that claim intersectional awareness yet fail to interrogate their own colonial genealogy. One of the central findings of this study is that racialised masculinities are not merely negatively coded but appear as doubly encoded: they are both hyper-visible as threats and simultaneously invisible as historically and epistemically wounded. Drawing on the work of bell hooks, it becomes evident that Black men have historically internalised patriarchal patterns, though not from a position of power or privilege, but within deeply constrained and racialised social structures shaped by enslavement and racial capitalism. Their access to patriarchal power has been both restricted and distorted, rendering any direct equivalence between racialised and white masculinities analytically untenable.¹⁴³

The study therefore resists any universalised image of ‘man’ as the sole oppressor. Racialised men appear as ambivalent figures, both victims of colonial dehumanisation and, in certain contexts, partial participants in patriarchal structures. This ambivalence resists simplification or moral categorisation. Violence committed by racialised men must be rigorously addressed and condemned as patriarchal violence. At the same time, it is essential to understand such violence as genealogically embedded: shaped by intergenerational trauma, colonial memory and systemic disenfranchisement. These forms of structural violence often manifest through silence, repetition and affective transmission, without ever being fully articulated in dominant modes of discourse. Mainstream feminist narratives frequently fail to recognise this complexity. Instead, they tend to flatten racialised masculinities into objects of fear and control, which in

¹⁴³ hooks, *We real cool*, pp. 1 – 5, 63 – 67.

turn obscures the historical entanglements of colonial, patriarchal and capitalist formations. In this context, the study draws on Sara Farris's critique of femonationalism, which illustrates how feminist concerns can be instrumentalised within nationalist and racist agendas. The rhetorical mobilisation of women's rights in right-wing politics demonstrates the extent to which feminist discourse can be complicit in racialised logics of exclusion.¹⁴⁴ These structural blind spots are not imposed from outside but emerge from within the epistemic framework of Western feminist thought itself.

Even intersectionally oriented feminist approaches risk reproducing these limitations if they fail to interrogate their own epistemic assumptions. The result is a double movement of invisibilisation: on the one hand, racialised men are constructed as dangerous and hyper-masculine; on the other, the colonial continuities and epistemic violence embedded in feminist theory remain unexamined. Addressing this tension requires a shift from moral critique to structural and genealogical analysis, wherein feminism is understood not as an innocent or neutral critical position, but as historically situated and potentially complicit in the very structures it seeks to challenge.

The literary analysis of Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* serves as a counterpoint to these limitations. Rather than merely narrating trauma, the novel creates a space in which genealogical violence and silenced memory become narratively and affectively legible. *Corregidora* functions not as an illustration of theory but as a form of literary epistemology, in the sense articulated by Cornel West.¹⁴⁵ The novel refuses simple moral binaries and presents a textured, polyphonic exploration of violence, memory and survival. The character of Mutt, for example, is not rendered as a flat perpetrator of violence but as a wounded and fragmented subject, shaped by the enduring legacies of colonial domination. Through silence, fragmentation, and repetition, the novel resists dominant forms of explanation and instead generates what might be termed epistemic friction: an encounter with knowledge that unsettles, disorients, and repositions the reader.

For the white reader in particular, *Corregidora* offers not a passive space of observation but an active site of epistemic disruption. The novel initiates a process of unlearning,

¹⁴⁴ Farris, *In the name of women's rights*, pp. 3 – 7.

¹⁴⁵ West, *American evasion of philosophy*, pp. 211 – 217.

where the limits of Western knowledge frameworks become visible. This is not merely a matter of recognising what is absent, but of confronting what cannot be heard. In this context, the study distinguishes between the notion of a blind spot, which denotes the invisibility of certain experiences due to hegemonic discursive structures. The deaf spot is the structural incapacity to perceive certain voices as credible sources of knowledge. This distinction reframes the critique of feminist theory, suggesting that what is at stake is not simply a lack of representation, but a deeper problem of epistemic reception and intelligibility.

Accordingly, the answer to the research question unfolds in a twofold conclusion. First, it becomes clear that dominant feminist discourses construct racialised masculinities as epistemically ambivalent: they are rendered hyper-visible through racialised projections of violence while simultaneously excluded from structures of recognition that would allow for their vulnerability and complexity to be acknowledged. Second, the literary reading of *Corregidora* has demonstrated that literature provides an alternative mode of knowledge production: one that does not merely supplement theoretical discourse but actively disrupts and transforms it. Through its narrative form, affective intensity and epistemic density, the novel makes visible the limits of Western feminist science and opens up new possibilities for relational, embodied and decolonial ways of knowing.

The broader implication is that dominant feminist discourses, as long as they remain entangled in colonial epistemologies, will be unable to fully comprehend the structural and affective complexity of racialised masculinities. What is needed is not a more inclusive feminism in terms of representation, but a critical reconfiguration of its epistemic foundations. Literature plays a central role in this process, not by illustrating theory, but by challenging its assumptions and extending its horizons. In this sense, *Corregidora* contributes not only to the critique of feminist blind spots but to the ongoing epistemic transformation of feminist thought itself.

7.2 Theoretical Contribution: Toward a Postcolonial-Feminist Critique of Epistemic Violence

This study contributes a postcolonial-feminist critique of epistemic violence by demonstrating that even critical, intersectional and decolonial feminist discourses remain structurally entangled in colonial epistemologies. These are not peripheral

distortions but constitutive conditions that shape the horizon of feminist thought. Building on Sara Farris's critique of femnationalism¹⁴⁶, the findings radicalise her diagnosis by showing that complicity with nationalist and racist logics is not merely external appropriation but also internally embedded within feminist epistemologies. Feminism risks reproducing colonial patterns of representation unless it interrogates its own foundations.

The analysis of racialised masculinity makes this visible. Following bell hooks, it becomes clear that Black men have historically internalised patriarchal patterns under the constraints of enslavement and racial capitalism. They therefore occupy an ambivalent position as both victims of genealogical trauma and partial participants in patriarchal logics.¹⁴⁷ This double encoding is rarely acknowledged within feminist paradigms, where racialised masculinities are often flattened into one-dimensional threats. A theoretical framework is required that condemns patriarchal violence unequivocally while also recognising the historically situated entanglements that produce racialised masculinity as a fractured subject position.

Corregidora exemplifies this demand by staging genealogical trauma, silenced memory and embodied histories in ways that exceed theoretical abstraction. Literature here functions not as illustration but as epistemology, generating affective and relational forms of knowledge that expose feminist blind and deaf spots. By foregrounding the epistemic productivity of literature, the study repositions aesthetic and embodied modes of knowing at the centre of feminist critique.

The theoretical contribution therefore lies in two interrelated claims: first, that feminist theory must engage in sustained epistemological self-critique if it is to confront its colonial complicities; and second, that literature constitutes an indispensable resource for this process, as it generates alternative forms of knowledge grounded in affect, resonance and historical memory.

7.3 Future Directions: Decolonial Knowledge and Literary Epistemologies

The limitations of this study are most evident in its situatedness. Conducted from a white, Western perspective, the analysis cannot transcend the epistemic frameworks it seeks to critique. Moreover, the focus on a single text, Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*, has

¹⁴⁶ Farris, *In the name of women's rights*, pp. 3 – 7.

¹⁴⁷ hooks, *We real cool*, pp. 1 – 5, 63 – 67.

clear methodological implications. While the novel offers profound epistemic insights into genealogical violence, it must not be mistaken for a representative archive of Black voices. Rather, it highlights the necessity of engaging with a plurality of cultural expressions and epistemologies that exceed the scope of this project.

A further limitation emerges in the epistemological question raised by the findings: whether Western science is structurally capable of carrying the full complexity of Black histories, experiences and affective realities. This challenge cannot be met by simply including more content within existing frameworks; it requires a fundamental rethinking of what counts as knowledge and who is recognised as a producer of theory. From this recognition, several avenues for future research emerge. Greater attention must be paid to alternative epistemologies such as oral traditions, music, embodied memory and other affective modes of knowing that disrupt Western epistemic norms. Interdisciplinary approaches that connect literary studies, memory studies, performance studies and musicology could more fully account for the diverse ways in which genealogical violence is transmitted across generations. Comparative analyses of additional literary and cultural works would further develop the claim that literature itself constitutes a distinct epistemic site.

Beyond academic directions, the findings also suggest political and feminist implications. A key challenge lies in imagining forms of feminist solidarity that neither reduce racialised masculinities to stereotypes nor minimise patriarchal violence. Feminist practice must be reconceived as open, relational and epistemically accountable, recognising the structural complexities of racialised masculinities while maintaining a rigorous critique of gendered violence.

The study therefore concludes also with an open question: what forms of knowledge might emerge that can carry marginalised experiences without appropriating or distorting them? Addressing this requires more than expanding existing categories; it calls for the creation of new epistemologies grounded in different relations to memory, body, voice and narrative. Only through such epistemic transformation can postcolonial-feminist theory approach a horizon of justice and inclusivity that resists colonial deformation.

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