Comparative Literature Program
Graduate Master’s Essay Presentations

Thursday, May 20, 2021
Life Sciences Center 201
Panel I: 5:00 PM - 7:05 PM
Panel II: 7:35 PM – 9:05 PM

Please join us through ZOOM
Meeting ID:
https://dartmouth.zoom.us/j/95389714504?pwd=bE1WRnN2OEFCSy93WTNoaStWMDIFQT09

Left to right front: Elizabeth Cornick, Yuliya Komska
Back row left to right: James Johnson, Nathan Leach, Stephen Valeri,
Caroline King, Victoria Pipas, Sophie Frank, Irene Kacandes
PANEL I 5:00 pm – 7:05 pm

Introduction: Professor Irene Kacandes (5:00-5:05 pm)

5:05-6:35 pm: Victoria Florio Pipas
Translatio materiae: Spenser, the Humanists, and a Poetics of Matter

5:35-6:05 pm: Caroline King
Spaces for Becomings? Genre as Gender in Preciado’s Testo Junkie

6:05-6:35 pm: Nathan Leach
Dostoevsky as Bluesman in Baldwin’s Writerly Imagination

6:35-7:05 pm: James Lion Johnson
The Site of the Reader in the “Gaza” of Johannes de Alta Silva

7:05-7:35 pm: BREAK
Victoria Florio Pipas

*Translatio materiae: Spenser, the Humanists, and a Poetics of Matter*

In this paper, I propose that sixteenth-century humanist descriptions of Rome’s decay, together with paradigms of *translatio imperii* and *studii*, shaped Edmund Spenser’s poetic conceptualization of matter. I identify a new *translatio* in Spenser’s corpus, *translatio materiae*—matter’s movement or change—born from Spenser’s contact with Joachim du Bellay’s sonnet sequence, *Les Antiquitez de Rome* (1553). *Translatio materiae* runs through Spenser’s corpus as depicted matter’s resurrection from states of decay into material afterlives as narrative object or poetic device. Where early humanists, with recourse to the division between earthly mutability and heavenly permanence, lament Rome, Spenser favors matter’s potential for *translatio* into new forms. I examine this phenomenon in the opening episode of *Faerie Queene* Book One (1590/96), Redcrosse’s defeat of Errour, which I treat as the beginning of matter’s proliferation, propagation, and *translatio* into the poem’s narrative and structure.

**Advisors:**
Alexandra Halasz (English)
David LaGuardia (French and Comparative Literature)
Caroline King

Spaces for Becomings? Genre as Gender in Preciado’s *Testo Junkie*

This article examines the possibilities and limits of gender becomings in Paul Preciado’s book *Testo yonqui (Testo Junkie)*. A genre-fluid “body-essay,” his text theorizes a departure from gender through contemporary medicine. Following Preciado in his self-administration of testosterone, the book labels today’s reality a “pharmacopornographic era,” a new iteration of Foucault’s biocapitalism. After designating Preciado’s self-generated transformations as *becomings*, I explore how the book’s heterotopic spaces—including its genre—facilitate Preciado’s forward-moving gender identity. A Foucauldian term, heterotopia has not yet been applied to *Testo Junkie*, however it offers insight into the book’s potential to motivate individuals to shape their own identities. To conclude this analysis, I consider how, while these instances of becomings are exemplified especially in *Testo Junkie*’s fictional passages, the text’s theoretical passages fail to qualify as heterotopic. Preciado’s pharmacopornographic theory therefore limits the book’s power to cultivate a reader’s ability to destabilize societal expectations around bodies.

**Advisors:**
Silvia Spitta (Spanish and Portuguese and Comparative Literature)
Tarek El-Ariss (Middle Eastern Studies and Comparative Literature)
Nathan Leach

Dostoevsky as Bluesman in Baldwin’s Writerly Imagination

In this talk, I examine James Baldwin’s passion for the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky. While it is commonly noted that Dostoevsky was one of Baldwin’s foremost literary interests, the specific contours of Dostoevsky’s influence on Baldwin, as well as the question of why Dostoevsky of all the Dead White Men of the Western canon, have yet to be fully enumerated. With a focus on Baldwin’s essays and interviews, I distil how Baldwin’s dialectical understanding of suffering influences his particular conception of the artist. Then, by turning to Baldwin’s commentary on Dostoevsky and the blues, I show how Dostoevsky, for Baldwin, modeled the transfiguration of human suffering into witness-bearing art—the very thing that Baldwin admired about blues musicians. In light of this, I argue that Dostoevsky was an ideal model for Baldwin because of what Baldwin perceived to be Dostoevsky’s blues sensibilities.

Advisors
Lynn Ellen Patyk (Russian)
James Lion Johnson

The Site of the Reader in the “Gaza” of Johannes de Alta Silva

This talk places the reader at one of three sites of interpretation in Johannes de Alta Silva’s “Gaza,” located at the levels of 1) story, 2) frame narrative, and 3) reader. Identifying these levels as distinct spaces within which interpretation unfolds, I examine the level of the reader to demonstrate how the text explicitly shapes the reader’s role. Composed c. 1200 CE, “Gaza” is one of ten stories in Alta Silva’s Dolopathos, which forms a part of the larger medieval tradition known as The Seven Sages. Drawing upon concepts from narratology (Genette, Prince) and the phenomenology of reader response (Iser), I show how the text foregrounds the act of decoding by setting the story within a frame narrative that guides the reader’s process of interpretation. Through this focus on the reader’s relationship to a single story, I can offer insight into the peculiar didacticism of The Seven Sages.

Advisors
Nancy Canepa (French and Italian)
Monika Otter (English and Comparative Literature)
Comparative Literature
Master's Essay Presentations

BREAK
We will resume at 7:35 pm sharp
PANEL II 7:35-9:05 pm

7:35-8:05 pm: Elizabeth Cornick
Woolf as Window: A View into Martín Gaite’s Treatment of Alienation in
The Back Room

8:05-8:35 pm: Stephen Valeri
Interlingual Morphology and Wakean Topology

8:35-9:05 pm: Sophie Frank
banal/QUEER/spectacular: Reframing Blue is the Warmest Color
Elizabeth Cornick

Woolf as Window: A View into Martín Gaite’s Treatment of Alienation in The Back Room

In this talk, I explore the Spanish writer Carmen Martín Gaite’s affinity with Virginia Woolf’s modernism. In particular, I analyze the modernist theme of alienation so prominent in Woolf’s To the Lighthouse that Martín Gaite refashions in her novel El cuarto de atrás (The Back Room). To do so, I provide historical analysis of Woolf’s and Martín Gaite’s respective cultures to contextualize the ways in which the writers treat modernization as an alienating condition of modernity in the novels. I focus on Woolf’s depiction of estrangement experienced by the character Mrs. Ramsay from To the Lighthouse to frame how Martín Gaite treats alienation felt by the female narrator-protagonist of The Back Room. By structuring The Back Room as a parody of the novela rosa (romance novel), Martín Gaite illustrates the dynamics of a female character who experiences women’s social roles evolving under the pressure of modernization with a critical edge.

Advisors:
Antonio Gómez (Spanish and Comparative Literature)
Melissa Zeiger (English)
Stephen Valeri

Interlingual Morphology and *Wakean* Topology

As an example of limit literature (literature that exhausts the entirety of what is possible in a given form), *Finnegans Wake* has been an inspiration for the theories of figures like Kristeva and Derrida to reveal the structural and linguistic operations of texts generally. In defamiliarizing the processes of word formation, the *Wake* compels us to attend to morphology’s structuring role in a work. My project focuses on Phillipe Sollers and Stephen Heath’s French translation of part of the concluding section of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* to observe how the attempt to approximate Joyce’s interlingual morphology in translation contributes to reshaping the text’s arrangement of parts. The fact that the most minute level on which units of meaning in a text relate (morphology) of the *Wake*’s invented words has consequences magnified at larger levels of structure, leads us to attend to the totality of a text’s internal relations (topology). Morphology might thus be understood alongside other conceptualizations of the structure of texts and in relation to post-structuralist theories of language and narrative.

**Advisors:**
Lawrence Kritzman (French and Comparative Literature)
James Dorsey (Asian Societies, Cultures, and Languages)
Sophie Frank

banal/QUEER/spectacular: Reframing *Blue is the Warmest Color*

In this talk, I interrogate visual representations of a lesbian love story in Jul’ Maroh’s graphic novel *Le bleu est une couleur chaude* and its film adaptation by director Abdellatif Kechiche, *La vie d’Adèle : Chapitres 1 et 2*. By studying the diegesis of each work’s opening scene, I reveal that the graphic novel embodies Barthes’s concept of a writerly text, or one that requires its reader to produce its meaning, while the film, as a readerly work, constructs a passive viewing experience for its audience. I argue that each author’s narratological approach exemplifies the particular manner in which they portray queerness throughout these stories: the reader of the graphic novel is urged to interpret the lesbian plot point as banal, while the film steers its audience towards viewing the love story as a spectacle.

**Advisors:**
Annabelle Cone (French)
Paul Young (Film and Media Studies)
A special thanks to our advisors:

Nancy Canepa
Annabelle Cone
James Dorsey
Tarek El-Ariss
Antonio Gómez
Alexandra Halasz
Irene Kacandes
Lawrence Kritzman (Program Chair)
Yuliya Komska (Program Director)
David LaGuardia
Monika Otter
Lynn Ellen Patyk
Silvia Spitta
Paul Young
Melissa Zeiger