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The past year has been a busy and exciting one for students and faculty in Romance Languages and Literatures (RLL). We worked hard to incorporate constructive feedback from external reviewers, the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA), and students into our undergraduate curriculum. We have broadened our course offerings to include more classes on culture, film, visual arts, creative writing, and language practice (conversational and writing skills). We have created larger classes, exposing more students to faculty lectures, while still practicing conversation and reading in their target language. We are in the process of creating courses on great authors in Romance languages in translation, so students who may not wish to concentrate or minor in one of our national traditions can nevertheless be exposed to pivotal work.

This past year we organized an outstanding program of talks and workshops, inviting distinguished scholars from around the U.S. and the world. Among them we enjoyed the visits of María Mercedes Carrón (Emory U), Roberto Dainotto (Duke U), Dwight Reynolds (UC Santa Barbara), Rafael Castillo Zapata (U of Central Venezuela); Nadine Kuperty-Tour (Tel Aviv U), Enrico Palandri (University College London), and Chilean writer Lina Meruane. We also had the pleasure of hosting two exceptional intellectuals. Professor Samuel Weber (Northwestern U) joined us in February for our Hayward Keniston Lecture, which is our opportunity to remember and celebrate the intellectual life of renowned historian Professor Hayward Keniston, who was Domingo Faustino Sarmiento University Professor and served as dean of LSA at the University of Michigan from 1945-1951. We also enjoyed having philosopher Jacques Rancière with us. RLL graduate students invited him as the keynote speaker of their annual Charles Fraker Conference and to give a workshop. Finally, we had the wonderful opportunity to co-sponsor a series of lectures, dedicated to the Mediterranean, with the Center for European Studies (CES). Our colleague Karla Mallette was a key organizer of this series.

RLL faculty have also been busy with research and writing. Karla Mallette, Alison Cornish, Frieda Etkotto, Gareth Williams and I have recently published a book: David Caron who has co-edited a book with a former graduate student, Sharon Marquart (U Houston) (please see pg. 3 for more details). Giorgio Bertellini won the Robert K. Martin Prize for best book published by a member of the Canadian Association for American Studies (CAAS), and Karla Mallette received the 13th Annual Susanne M. Glasscock Humanities Book Prize for Interdisciplinary Scholarship, awarded by the Melburn G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research at Texas A&M University. A significant number of faculty in the language program have received awards as a result of their excellent work. María Dorantes, Tatiana Calixto, Romana Habekovic, Carla Iglesias, Andy Noverr, Dennis Pollard, and Amariyliz Rodríguez have either received funds to develop projects related to teaching or have been selected to travel with students abroad.

By way of introduction, I would just like to say that this year we have hired three outstanding scholars and teachers in Spanish and Portuguese (please see pgs. 4-5 for details). Since we have one of the most popular minor/concentrations in LSA, the College is providing resources for us to expand offerings. Our plan now is to start building a minor in Mediterranean studies and one in sociolinguistics. For the former we are interested in a scholar whose expertise covers either two Romance languages and cultures, or one Romance and one Iberian language and culture. As you can imagine, one of RLL’s priorities is teaching our outstanding concentrators and minors and our excellent group of graduate students. I am happy to announce that this year we have two faculty searches in progress: one in Mediterranean studies and one in sociolinguistics. For the former we are interested in a scholar whose expertise covers two Romance languages and cultures, and one Romance and one Iberian language and culture.

As you can imagine, one of RLL’s priorities is teaching our outstanding concentrators and minors and our excellent group of graduate students. I am happy to report that we currently have about 700 minors and concentrators. I would like to congratulate the 240 concentrators and minors who graduated in winter 2011 and those who won RLL awards. I would like to congratulate our six graduate students who successfully defended their dissertations last academic year.

As always, I want to take this opportunity to show my and my colleagues’ deep gratitude to our donors. Your generosity and support is what allows us to support our students with scholarships, internships, stipends, awards, and fellowships. We would love to hear from you and receive your input on some of the projects described in this newsletter. So please stop by the MLB if you are ever in Ann Arbor, or send us an alumni update to include in “Alumni News.”

With best wishes,

Cristina Moreiras-Menor, Chair
Eric Calderwood

Eric Calderwood received his Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literatures from Harvard University in 2011. He has also studied and done research at Brown University, the University of Chile, the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Arabic Language Institute of Fez (Morocco), the University of Damascus (Syria), 'Abd al-Malik al-Shar' University in Tetouan (Morocco), and the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) in Madrid.

Calderwood's work explores the politics of representing the past in modern Spanish and Arabic literature and culture. His research is primarily focused on Spanish colonialism in Morocco (1859-1956), as represented by Spanish and Moroccan writers, but he is also interested in Spanish and Arabic historiography, Spanish and Arabic travel narratives, the history of convivencia, and the emergence of an al-Andalus "culture industry" (consisting of museums, festivals, and tourist routes) in twentieth-century Spain, Morocco, Algeria, and Syria. Though his research focuses mostly on the nineteenth century, it responds to the changing ethnic and religious demographics of the contemporary Spanish citizenry and also reflects a concern for Spain and Morocco's continuing roles as thresholds between Europe and Africa, and between Christianity and Islam. In addition to his scholarly interests, Calderwood also writes literary essays and other forms of creative non-fiction for popular magazines and newspapers.

Daniel Nemser

Daniel Nemser received a M.A. in Latin American Studies in 2006 and a Ph.D. in Hispanic Languages and Literatures in 2011 from the University of California, Berkeley. His research focuses on colonial Latin American literatures and cultures, race and indigenous studies, and history and historiography.

Nemser is currently working on a book project about mestizaje (racial and cultural mixing), a familiar concept that plays a key role in the construction of identity in Latin America today. This project is an attempt to complicate conventional histories that treat mestizaje, explicitly or implicitly, as a single, linear process that begins with the conquest. By considering the ways in which mixing and purity are themselves constructed and contested across the colonial period, in such varied sites as the chemical composition of an indigenous alcoholic beverage called pulque and the space-time of Nahua (Aztec) pictorial genealogies, Nemser traces a genealogy of colonial mestizajes and analyzes their tactical and strategic operations in the field of what the literary critic Ángel Rama famously called the "lettered city."

At the same time, he is engaged in several other projects, including a study of the seventeenth-century intellectual Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and the colonial origins of Mexican archaeology; and an analysis of miracle and purity which mixing and purity are themselves constructed and contested across the colonial period, the fact of colonialism. From this perspective, he is interested in political movements in Latin America today, such as that of the Zapatistas in Chiapas and beyond, as contemporary manifestations of the long history of struggle against colonial violence.

In Remembrance

With great sadness, we note the passing of Guy R. Mermier, emeritus of French in RLL on March 23, 2011. Professor Mermier's area of research included medieval French literature. He came to the University of Michigan in 1961 as an instructor in French and joined the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures and the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies. He received his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley in 1949. He taught for 16 years in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies at the University of Michigan. He is the author of Utopias of Otherness: Nationhood and Subjectivity in Portugal and Brazil (University of Minnesota Press, 2003) and co-editor together with Susan C. Quinlan of Lusoxex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World (University of Minnesota Press, 2002). He has been a visiting professor at Universidade Federal Fluminense (Rio de Janeiro) and at Harvard University. In 2005-06 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for the completion of the book manuscript, Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence (University of Minnesota Press, 2011). Currently he has several research projects: (1) on the contemporary cultural production of African immigrants and their descendants in Portugal in order to analyze the emergence of Afro-diasporic identities that are re-defining the boundaries between postcolonial Portugal and its former African colonies; (2) a comparative study of the cinema of urban violence in Brazil and South Africa; (3) an expansion of the book chapter on the globalization of Cape Verdean music featured in Lusophone Africa to be converted into an autonomous book.

Fernando Arenas

Fernando Arenas is professor of Lusophone African, Brazilian, and Portuguese Studies with an emphasis on literature, film, and popular music, which he studies through an interdisciplinary and theoretical prism centering on the dyad of post-colonialism and globalization. Fernando holds a dual appointment between the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures and the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies. He received his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley in 1994. For taught in 16 years in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies at the University of Michigan. He is the author of Utopias of Otherness: Nationhood and Subjectivity in Portugal and Brazil (University of Minnesota Press, 2003) and co-editor together with Susan C. Quinlan of Lusoxex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World (University of Minnesota Press, 2002). He has been a visiting professor at Universidade Federal Fluminense (Rio de Janeiro) and at Harvard University. In 2005-06 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for the completion of the book manuscript, Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence (University of Minnesota Press, 2011). Currently he has several research projects: (1) on the contemporary cultural production of African immigrants and their descendants in Portugal in order to analyze the emergence of Afro-diasporic identities that are re-defining the boundaries between postcolonial Portugal and its former African colonies; (2) a comparative study of the cinema of urban violence in Brazil and South Africa; (3) an expansion of the book chapter on the globalization of Cape Verdean music featured in Lusophone Africa to be converted into an autonomous book.

Focus on Faculty

Professors Vincenzo Binetti (Italian), Juli Hightfill (Spanish), and Peggy McCracken (French) each won a Michigan Humanities Award.


French Lecturer Sabine Gabaron assisted Olivia and Hil Press with the "Correlations" portions of their French textbooks. She also worked with UM Professor Zeynep Devrim Gürsel to translate and write subtitles for a documentary on Turkey and its relationship to Europe.

Professor of Spanish Enrique Garcia was elected the 2011 Senior Fellow for the Michigan Society of Fellows.

Professor of Spanish Enrique Garcia was elected the 2011 Senior Fellow for the Michigan Society of Fellows.

Spanish 232 Coordinator Andy Novell received a Faculty Development Grant from the CRILR to investigate how to further the University’s goals to internationalize the undergraduate experience in the culturally unique environment of Santiago de Compostela.

Professor William Paulson, E. L. Walter Collegiate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, was awarded a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to teach two Mellon Dissertation Seminars in the Humanities on the topic of “Science Studies, Cultural Theory, and Scholarship Writing.” The first seminar was held in June and July 2011 and brought together twelve Ph.D. candidates from eight different Michigan departments, including Rachel TenHaafl of Romance Languages and Literatures. As part of the grant, each graduate student received a summer stipend to provide support both for the period of the seminar and for dissertation research during May and August. The second edition of the seminar will take place in either 2012 or 2013.
In Her Own Words: Katherine Cook

UM student Katherine Cook (double concentrator in Romance Languages and Literatures, studying Spanish and French, and Organizational Studies) talks about her recent trip to Madrid and one of the most memorable moments of her life.

With the generous aid of the Vincenti Study Abroad Scholarship, I was able to spend my winter term 2011 in Madrid, Spain. It is difficult to condense that experience except to offer a line by a Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, which roughly translates as “your path [of life] is made by walking.”

I decided, as a double concentrator in Romance Languages and Literatures and Organizational Studies, that a semester abroad would be a good “walk” to take, but this walk was far beyond anything I could have imagined.

The Madrid program included possible internship opportunities at Spanish companies. I sent applications in Spanish and English during my December 2010 final exams and I was lucky enough to be selected as a communications intern at Club de Madrid, an independent non-profit organization composed of 80 former presidents and prime ministers including former President Clinton.

Club de Madrid’s mission is to promote democracy around the world. It focuses its efforts in two areas: ethical governance and crisis/post-crisis assistance. While attending classes in Madrid, I committed 15 hours a week to professional experiences, and growth.

My most memorable day at Club de Madrid was the day of the board of directors meeting in April 2011. I was responsible for the event’s communications and logistics. Unfortunately, Chandrika Kumaratunga, former President of Sri Lanka (1994-2005), was delayed in arriving, and I was personally responsible for escorting her to the meeting.

President Kumaratunga, the first female president of Sri Lanka, is a truly heroic figure. She lost both her father and her husband to political assassinations, and she herself survived an assassination attempt. Sitting in a cab talking with her was fascinating and inspiring. I don’t think I’ll ever forget that cab ride or her wise words.

In addition to my study abroad program classes, I took two classes at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. The classes were taught in Spanish and I was expected to speak and write entirely in Spanish. It took me some time to get up the nerve to comment in a classroom full of Spaniards. When I finally did, it served to polish my communication skills and taught me to speak on subjects far beyond basic everyday conversation.

As I return to my junior year at Michigan, I have an augmented interest in global civic duty and a full fluency in Spanish. These will help me academically but they will also be invaluable as an executive board member of PALMA (Proyecto Avance: Latino Mentoring Association), my extra-curricular community service.

My semester abroad in Madrid provided a rigorous academic curriculum as well as an invaluable professional experience. Together they were a path far beyond anything that I could have ever dreamed. I could never have imagined how much studying abroad would expand my global perspective and pique my intellectual curiosity. Most of all, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Vincenti Scholarship for this opportunity.

“My walk,” as Machado has called it, was full of learning, insights, friendships, professional experiences, and growth.

Language, Culture, and Soccer

Alumna Bethany Neigebauer (BS ‘10 Architecture and BA ‘10 Italian) explains how soccer gave her insight into Italian culture and the lives of Italian women.

When I first arrived in Florence, Italy for my study abroad program, there were so many options. The students in the program were invited to teach, play sports, and even work for the mayor of Sesto Fiorentino. I decided to teach English at the local high school and play on the local soccer team, since I’d played soccer for 12 years when I was younger and wanted to play again.

The first few weeks on the Sesto Fiorentino women’s soccer team were a challenge. My Italian was good, but not necessarily good enough to keep up with local slang. As time went on, I got to know the women very well. The team was made up of girls from 18-28. Female teams are less common in Italy, so they are rarely divided by age.

After a month or so, the girls began to invite me to dinner with them, introduce me to their children (the few that had children), and accept me as a teammate. By the end of the season, I was attending all the group dinners we had after practice, starting in the once-a-week games, and actually becoming friends with the girls. I will never forget when one of the team dinners, I taught and was taught tongue twisters in English and Italian. One girl even tried to teach me Italian gibberish.

No matter how hard it was to become a part of the team in the beginning, I wouldn’t trade my time with the Sesto Fiorentino women’s soccer team for anything. It was the best way for me to learn culture, language and just a little bit of what it means to be Italian.
The RLL graduate program welcomes this year, a new cohort of outstanding and enthusiastic graduate students: Shannon Dowd, Silvina Yi, Paige Rafoth, Juanita Bernal, Catalina Esguerra, Susan Abraham, Lucia Naser, Mariano Olmedo Gomez, Jocelyn Frelier, Roberto Mosciatti, and Mattia BegHELLi. Our community will certainly be enriched by their presence and we are all looking forward to working with them in the future.

During this past academic year, our graduate students have been very active in organizing public events, conferences, workshops, film series, and inviting international speakers to the department, while at the same time successfully fulfilling their academic requirements and pursuing their research projects here in the United States and abroad. Their commitment and vitality have contributed enormously to enhance the intellectual atmosphere of our department as a whole and we are all very proud of their accomplishments and professionalism. For the coming academic year our graduate students will be organizing, among other things, their Annual Charles Fraker Conference, slated for February 9-11, 2012. We are sure that this conference will be, as in the previous years, a very successful and intellectually stimulating public event and we are all very excited to learn more about it.

We wish an excellent and productive year to all our graduate students!

Best,

Vincenzo Binetti
Professor of Italian, Graduate Chair

Challenges in Transition: Creating Tiresias, Issue 5

RLL graduate students David Collinge and Shannon Dowd explain how the new editorial team of RLL’s graduate student journal, Tiresias, channeled tensions and difficulties into an interesting topic.

Over the past year, Tiresias has gone through a number of changes and challenges as students who worked on the journal’s early issues have moved on to different projects and places. As Tiresias transitioned to a new editorial team, we discussed the tension, or the double blind, that characterized almost every problem we considered as a journal topic. Many of the issues we discussed involved sets of ideas such as individuals/communities, intellectual practices/political practices, and older/newer generations. While we talked and added to a growing list of idea-pairs, Christian Kroll pointed out that in the middle of it all was tension or impossibility itself.

The idea resonated with the group’s theoretical interests as well as with our own experience of being between one country/language and another, between professions, between institutional and non-institutional spaces, etc. Abigail Celis started the writing process, which several of us ended up working on before it reached its current state as the call for the fifth issue of Tiresias: “Systole to Diastole: Interventions in Fluid Spaces.” For our title we borrowed the image of the two phases of the heartbeat as a figure for the separate but necessarily intertwined nature of many of the issues that interest us.

Currently we are preparing visual materials for the design of the fifth issue while planning for its release in winter 2012. The release will involve a presentation of creative works from the journal and a debate involving one or more of the articles published therein. One of our goals is to invite artists and scholars that have contributed to Tiresias to this event. The fifth issue will also contain a published version of Samuel Weber’s Kerstion lecture, “The Singularity of Literary Cognition,” in addition to transcriptions of the seminar discussions on political theory and practice that took place in RLL with Colectivo Situaciones in January 2011.

We would like to take this chance to thank the faculty members that have acted as advisors for Tiresias since its inception: Professors Cristina Moreiras-Menor, Jarrod Hayes, Kate Jenckes, and Daniel Noemi. Professors Javier Sanjinés and Mattia BegHELLi. Our community will certainly be enriched by their presence and we are all looking forward to working with them in the future.

Meet the New Graduate Students

We also offer our best wishes to the following PhD recipients this year:

**Mariano Olmedo Gomez**
(Spanish)
BA, MA Univ Autónoma de Madrid
Interests: Early modern Spanish literature, 17th century narrative forms deriving from Cervantes, comparative culture studies

**Javier Entrambasaguas**
(Spanish)
BA, Case Western Reserve Univ
Interests: Contemporary Mexican literature, cultural production of autonomous Mexican social movements, the state and neoliberalism

**Silvina Yi**
(Spanish)
BA, Univ California, San Diego
Interests: contemporary Peninsular and Latin American literature and film

**Susan Abraham**
(Spanish)
BA, Wesleyan Univ
MA, Univ Illinois at Chicago
Interests: Medieval and early modern Ibero-Muslim and Judaeo studies; Mediterranean studies

**Mattia BegHELLi**
(Italian)
BA, Univ degli Studi di Verona
MA, Ohio State Univ
Interests: cinema and contemporary Italian literature

**Juanita Bernal**
(Spanish)
BA, MA, Univ de los Andes
Interests: 20th century Latin American literature, Italian culture, and transatlantic flows between them

**Shannon Dowd**
(Spanish)
BA, Univ Michigan
Interests: contemporary Latin American literature, critical theory, translation

**Catalina Esguerra**
(Spanish)
BA, College of William and Mary
MA, Amercan Univ
Interests: memory, trauma, space, tensions of memory and resistance in post-dictatorship Southern Cone

**Jocelyn Frelier**
(French)
BA, Univ of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Interests: women’s studies, Belle Epoque France, early 21st century French literature, and Francophone North African literature

**Roberto Mosciatti**
(Italian)
BA, Univ degli Studi Macerata
Interests: philosophy, political theory, and literature

**Lucia Naser Rocha**
(Spanish)
BA, Univ Federal de Bahia
MA, Univ de la Republica
Interests: performing arts and politics of aesthetics

**Jennifer Solheim**
(French)
Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

**Javier Entrambasaguas**
(Spanish)
Postdoctoral Lecturer, University of Michigan

**Alejandro Quin**
(Spanish)
Assistant Professor, Michigan Technological University

18th Annual Charles Fraker Conference
“Caring, Protecting, Policing: Unveiling the Rhetorics of the Guardian”
February 9-10, 2012
For more information, please visit http://www.lsa.umich.edu/rll/fraker/2012-Fraker-Call-for-Papers.pdf

5th Call for Papers for Tiresias Review
“Systole to Diastole: Interventions in Fluid Spaces”
Deadline: January 4, 2012
Submissions to tiresiasonline@umich.edu
For submission details visit http://lsa.umich.edu/rll/tiresias/call.html

www.lsa.umich.edu/rll
The Mediterranean holds particular importance for understanding today’s world. It is home to the longest continuous interactions among Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. It is the meeting-point of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Its civilizations profoundly contributed to the evolution of knowledge and institutions at the basis of modern Western society, in science, medicine, law, philosophy, mathematics, literature, the arts, and politics. It also contains some of the world’s most precious commodities.

The interconnected histories of Mediterranean cultures have, in modern times, become eclipsed by division and conflict in the geopolitical sphere, and by disciplinary boundaries within the academy, based on national, ethnic, religious, linguistic, or continental interests. Recently, however, scholars have begun to examine the connections and contacts made possible by the sea — through trade, travel, conquest, and the like —, making the Mediterranean an ideal site for studying the porosity of cultures and the intercultural dynamics that national, sectarian, and linguistic histories often obscure. Centered on a body of water which facilitates exchange and, in this way, this conception of the Mediterranean represents the porosity of cultures and the intercultural dynamics that national, sectarian, and linguistic histories often obscure. Centered on a body of water which facilitates exchange and, in this way, unites different cultures.

Our project will bring to UM a group of scholars in the arts, humanities, and social sciences to study the Mediterranean as an inclusive medium of contact and exchange, a region whose transnational and transcultural histories are especially relevant for understanding global relations in the world today. RLL will seek a scholar in comparative Romance studies who will be able to examine the connections and contacts made possible by the sea — through trade, travel, conquest, and the like —, making the Mediterranean an ideal site for studying the porosity of cultures and the intercultural dynamics that national, sectarian, and linguistic histories often obscure. Centered on a body of water which facilitates exchange and, in this way, unites different cultures.

We want to hear from YOU!!

Send an e-mail to rll.editor@umich.edu. Be sure to include your full name, your graduation date and degree/language, and what you’re doing these days. Please indicate whether you want your email address listed with your posting or not.
The range and variety of RLL graduate student research is the window into the cultures, languages, dialects, politics, social structures, and history of the Romance world. Currently some of our students are researching the literature of Francophone Africa; feminism, cinema, and theater in Italy; violence, political resistance, ethnic identities, and social movements in Latin America; and U.S. and Mexico border relations. Their fluency in the native language allows RLL graduate students to study first-hand, un-translated, unfiltered materials to form a more accurate perspective and interpretation of the target community and culture they are studying, which later results in articles, essays, and other publications useful to the general public. However, gaining access to these materials requires time abroad, a potentially prohibitive cost.

As the necessity of global insight, understanding, and engagement continues to rise, RLL has made it a priority to help as many of our students as possible conduct research abroad. Annual endowments and fellowships range $15,000-$50,000 each. With over 60 active graduate students, your donation to RLL to support graduate students is crucial. Please help support RLL graduate students today by contributing to:

Endowed Fellowship
First-Year Graduate Student Fellowships
Fifth-Year Graduate Student Fellowships
Summer Graduate Student Fellowships
Graduate Research Fellowships

To learn more about these opportunities and to donate today, please visit http://lsa.umich.edu/rll/alumni/giving.html