

YALE DEPARTMENT OF ITALIAN STUDIES

Annual Newsletter



FEATURING

**INTRODUCING OUR NEW
GRAD STUDENTS - 4**

**LETTERS FROM THE LAND
OF COVID - 6**

**EVENTS FROM FALL '20 -
16**

ALUMNI NEWS - 23

Celebrating our Sine Qua Non

After a year of sadness and turmoil, it is a special pleasure to open our newsletter with good, indeed, marvelous news. Ann DeLauro, our wonderful Senior Administrator in Italian Studies, received one of only three Recognition Awards from the Working Women's Network at Yale. Celebrated for her role as a Community Catalyst, Ann's accomplishments were formally acknowledged during a Zoom ceremony on June 10, with many members of the department in virtual attendance.

As anyone who knows Ann will instantly confirm, that she should be the recipient of such an award comes as no surprise.

Ann has dedicated her life to this university, since her first job in the Beinecke Library over three decades ago. We are incredibly fortunate to have had her as a member of our Italian department since 2005. As a still novice chair, I can attest that without Ann's presence, the department as we know it would simply not exist. Her crucial, day-to-day interventions in the work we all do, her constant support for her colleagues, her strategic thinking, her compassion, her wisdom and insightfulness – what would we do without her?



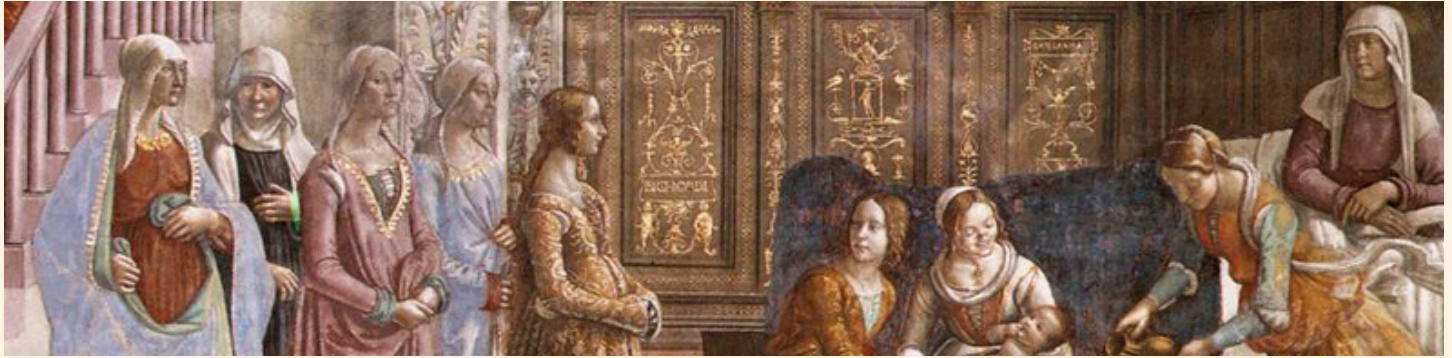
In her own time as chair, and now as DGS, Penny has always found in Ann not only a splendid partner in leadership, but a cherished friend. Among her strengths has been her openness to new ventures—the idea for launching a departmental bulletin, for example, was hers! She immediately embraced the idea of a yearly festival of new Italian cinema. So total was her involvement in planning and executing this event that she has been introduced to festival audiences over the years as “Ann ‘sine qua non’ DeLauro.”

Nor has Ann's dedication been limited to Italian. In her role as Union member and currently in her second term as Vice President of Local 34, the Clerical and Technical Union, she has been a tireless advocate and supportive mentor for all who work at Yale and in southern Connecticut. I cite here the warm praise she received online from Laura Smith, former President of UNITE HERE Local 34, who thanks Ann “for all that you have done and continue to do to make Yale a better place for every one of us to work and teach and learn.” And as Pam O'Donnell writes in words that will surely resonate with many of us, “your “can do” attitude is truly infectious. You spread confidence and joy to all those who are lucky enough to be in your sphere.”

We are indeed lucky – and extend our congratulations to our magnificent friend and colleague on this well-deserved recognition. Please feel free to share with her your warm wishes and thanks for all that she has done!

- Jane Tylus

Reflections from Sine Qua Non by Ann DeLauro



Birth of St Mary in Santa Maria Novella in Firenze by Domenico Ghirlandaio via WikiCommonst

In March, the Working Women's Network recognized me as a woman who is an exemplary member of the Yale community: A Community Catalyst, one who leads in a volunteer capacity at Yale or through a Yale initiative.

It was truly an honor to receive such recognition, but unfortunately, I could not experience the excitement in the same manner that I could have in previous years. On the one hand, the enjoyment of leading diminished, but on the other, it flourished. The faculty, other colleagues, everyone I knew, were all looking for support. The students left for spring break and then were told they were not able to return to campus.

In a blink of an eye, we found ourselves scrambling to make sense of what was happening around the world-- Covid 19. What was that? That is what was (and still is) paralyzing the nation. It was a pandemic spreading rapidly with uncertainties; people were scared; travel bans; lockdowns and isolation. Oh, wait – let us not forget the mask!

Everyone worked quite intensely to rearrange courses from in person to zoom – Zoom? What was Zoom??? Zoom transformed meeting in person to meeting online. Most of us found ourselves working and/or teaching from home, learning new systems, eating more than we should be. We were simply trying to get used to this new “norm”. Some days were more overwhelming than others. Was the country losing control? There was (and still is) no way of knowing what is next for us, our families, and our friends. We are all in this together.

And together we will move forward, because while all this is happening Italian Studies is relocating to a new home along with our cohorts from other humanities departments. A distraction from the chaos but certainly part of the new “norm” for us--the Humanities Quad. We have packed up Wall Street for our new home at 320 York.

The moral of this story is every leader needs support and we are fortunate to have such an amazing team!

Why Italian Studies now? by Jane Tylus

Last spring, the department formally requested – and at the end of the semester, received approval for – an important name change, from the Department of Italian Language and Literature, to the Department of Italian Studies. This comes almost forty-five years after the independent creation of a new department in Italian under the leadership of John Freccero in 1976.

Why the change, and why now? As we wrote to the administration, this has been a direction in which our community has been heading for some time. In the last four decades, Italian has benefitted enormously from the work of colleagues who have engaged not only in linguistic, philological, and literary inquiry, but in a wide range of disciplines including gender studies, history, art history, media and film studies, religious studies, and migration studies. While we remain committed as a department to the teaching of the Italian language – which is the very basis for the work of any scholar committed to things Italian – we also want to signal our interest in including bodies of knowledge that are not strictly tied to the literary. We believe this is crucial for our future interactions with colleagues at Yale in departments such as History of Medicine, Art History, Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, etc., a number of whom are already affiliates and whom we are eager to bring more fully into departmental life. We also believe it is crucial for our students at both graduate and undergraduate levels, as they learn the many ways in which the study of Italian can connect with the rest of the world. Finally, current faculty, staff, and students are currently engaged in working in “Italian Studies” in a variety of manifestations: from research and teaching in areas such as translation theory, gender and sexuality studies, cognitive science, environmental humanities, and the history of Italian art, politics, and society. A glance at a few of this and last semester’s courses – “The History of Naples” (Anna Iacovella), “Italian Film Ecologies” (Penny Marcus), “Early Modern Ecologies” (Jane Tylus), “Exiles from Italy” (Giuseppe Mazzotta, Megan Crognale), “Fascism, Pop Culture and Everyday Life” (Serena Bassi), “Women in the Middle Ages” (Christiana Purdy Moudarres) for just some examples – suggests how our graduate and undergraduate curricula embrace the study of Italian in a broad and inclusive way.

All of this said, as we move forward we are eager to engage with scholars and students from other institutions, and thanks to the enterprising spirit of our own graduate students, we are launching a series of workshops this spring, “Understanding Italian Studies.” The workshops will be led by our own Serena Bassi and Giulia Riccò (Michigan) on March 16 (2:30 EST), Teresa Fiore (Montclair State) on April 7 (1:30 EST), and Rhiannon Welch (UC-Berkeley) on April 14 (1:30 EST). They plan to take up provocative questions such as “If we could today invent a field called Italian Studies, what would it look like?”. My warmest thanks to our students, especially Giovanni Miglianti and Federica Parodi, for all of their organizational work, and we hope you will join us for the three Zoom workshops to explore the future of our discipline.

We’re pleased to present you with the first newsletter of the Department of Italian Studies – leading off with snapshots of our three newest grad students, Antonio d’Amico, Wenbin Gao, and Lydia Tuan. We then turn to personal reflections from some of our faculty, grads, and undergrads on this rather unique year – and how they are making it through. As I note in my own reflection, I’m personally inspired by the resilience of our community, and am happy to share with you their thoughts about why the humanities matter even more in these difficult times. We then turn to accounts of a number of our activities and awards this past year – and end with news from our alumni and a list of upcoming events. Stay tuned, and thanks as always for your interest.

Introducing Our New Grad Students



Scene from *The Bicycle Thief* by Vittorio De Sica via Wikimedia Commons

Antonio D'Amico

I am a Ph.D. student in the departments of Film and Media Studies and Italian Studies at Yale University. I obtained a B.A. in Film Studies at King's College London writing my final year dissertation on Pier Paolo Pasolini's documentary production. As an undergraduate student I spent a semester studying abroad at Berkeley, University of California and cultivated my interest in screenwriting and documentary production. After graduating, I pursued an M.Phil. in Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge (St Edmund's College). My master dissertation focused on the politics of Nanni Moretti's 2010s work in relation to authorship. My current research interests concern Italian post-Neorealist cinema and the relation between film and religion. My experience as a Ph.D. student so far has been certainly different than what I expected, but not unlike that of many others during this period. While I have thoroughly enjoyed attending graduate classes, I still have no idea how tall anyone in New Haven is. In my eyes, the city remains covered in a veil of mystery. At the same time, the challenge of getting to know colleagues and professors through my borrowed MacBook has been extremely rewarding and I look forward to continue being a part of Yale's community.

Wenbin Gao

My life is a constant metamorphosis. Hopefully it has some shape and stability now. I grew up in an impoverished Chinese intellectual family with parents who put a higher premium on books than bread. My father used to own a bookstore and ended up taking his merchandise home because he wanted to sell obscure Western classics that no regular Chinese person was interested in. So we had 200 volumes of "great books" when we did not even have a bathroom or kitchen. I came to Yale wanting to study the French avant-garde, and ended up discovering first Latin, then Italian, then Catholicism, all in Italy. I have more than a few friendships that are stronger than ever from my rebellious anarchist days and I still love reading Marx, though now I respectfully disagree with him on many things. During my brief stay in London, I laid flowers on Marx's tomb in Waterdown Garden and talked and cried with a Greek communist whose grandfather was a guerilla fighter killed by the right-wing dictatorship during the Cold War. I try to remember that poor man and his grandpa in my prayers. This is what I want to bring to Italian studies. I want to bear witness with my own life to the incredible resilience and profound beauty of the human spirit. Penny's undergraduate class on Italian film, which I audited several times almost as a yearly ritual, made me fall in love with films such as *The Bicycle Thief* and *Rome the Open City*. Italian studies for me IS an open city and I am committed to keeping it that way. On the more professional side of things, I am in the process of setting up a working group on poetry and its translation. As my undergraduate mentor professor Mazzotta always loves to say: *Facciamo le cose belle*. People who are interested can always email me. COVID can't kill our spirit, not yet.

Introducing Our New Grad Students (cont.)



Under the Pergola at Naples by Umberto Boccioni via WikiArt

Lydia Tuan

This past semester, I joined the Departments of Italian and Film & Media Studies, and I am extremely grateful for the warm welcome that I've received from both faculty and colleagues in New Haven and abroad (some of whom have quickly become friends) in making my transition to the program as smooth as possible. Despite being limited to interactions online, as well as simultaneously starting and finishing a degree in the midst of a pandemic, I have found my experiences so far to be intellectually and socially enriching, and I am definitely very thankful and fortunate to have been able to choose the Italian department as the place to begin my doctoral study. Prior to starting at Yale, I studied at Berkeley, Cambridge, and Padua, the latter from where I most recently graduated with a laurea magistrale in Scienze dello spettacolo e produzione multimediale and where I discussed a thesis on the role of space in contemporary slow cinema in December. My past work has concentrated at the intersections of cinema, literature, painting, and interactive art installations, and it has also looked at style and form in contemporary Italian cinema, specifically on the films of Michelangelo Frammartino and Paolo Sorrentino, as well as the modes of spectatorship in expanded cinema. In the coming semester, I am looking forward to exploring topics on postcolonial Italian literature and on the contemporary essay film. Later in the spring, I am expecting two forthcoming publications: one article on the role of spectatorship in the desktop film in *Cinéma & Cie* (Mimesis), and a book chapter that will be a reprint of my previously published article, "Paolo Sorrentino's Cinematic Excess" in the edited volume *Paolo Sorrentino's Cinema and Television* (Intellect).

LETTERS FROM THE LAND OF COVID

coVIdependence by **Costanza Barchiesi, GSAS '24**

These are strange times indeed. The earth seems to send us clear messages about the environment, and our social order seems to lack the fundamental humanity to react to the emergency. I am dumbfounded every day by political events, especially in the U.S., but here in Italy, too.

In March, right after the official beginning of the pandemic in the U.S., I decided to come back to Italy and to my family in Arezzo. This choice was not easy, but it was one I took with certainty, at the time. Last summer, I was supposed to participate in the Rome Global Gateway Seminar, conducting research on the classical myth of Parthenope, but Covid has foreclosed the experience and the seminar is bound to happen next summer, fingers crossed. Another event that was canceled because of Covid was the American Association for Italian Studies' 2020 Conference, but I will be able to present my paper in the 2021 online conference in May.

Over the last few months, I had to prepare for my comprehensive exams, which will comprise of a written examination at the end of this month, and an oral one in the spring. In preparation for the exam, Jane has most effectively shaped a new course in our department, which gives grad students space and time to both reinforce previous knowledge and expand it by following our famous "Reading List." Seeing so many of our faculty and graduate students and discussing foundational texts of Italian literature and theory was a real joy and a great example of the extent to which our intellectual community can reverberate constructive energy built around the humanities at large. I am profoundly grateful for this experience.

This semester was also a watershed moment in my career, as I have become an instructor, teaching Elementary Italian I online. Despite all of the Zoom fatigue and the hardships of online teaching as a first teaching experience, this was one of the best experiences of my life. I have not only understood that I like to teach, but also, in a sense, I have become "dependent" on the act of opening up my computer, every day, and waiting for my students' faces to pop up from New Haven, New York, and New Delhi. Their young, bright minds and their incredible willingness to learn have brought me so much joy and optimism in these times of darkness. In addition to departmental requirements, I also took Professor Pepi's class on Marxisms and Feminisms for my WGSST certificate. All in all, it was a lot of work, but I am grateful for the continued support and help I received left and right from the department and from Yale at large.

This piece promises to be the umpteenth "defense of the humanities" article that one easily overlooks these days. Yet, I believe that my call for the humanities could not feel stronger than it does today, at a time of extreme uncertainty and anxiety all around me. The "coVIdependence" that I have half-facetiously coined aims to illustrate my dependence on teaching, reading and discussing texts during my time at home. Be it feminist theory or just sheer vernacular prose, books have kept me going. And the dependence is in fact a codependence because, as any good humanist knows, books don't live a life of their own, but they need to be read and discussed, and called upon time and again before they can achieve their literary scope, endlessly. This codependence, moreover, is something that I am both nurtured by and feed on, in a virtuous cycle that never stops to amaze me. I have found a similar, generative reciprocity in relation to my students, where their desire for learning would be met by my desire to teach them, and by our adventurous experience on Zoom.

This should be, in a nutshell, the meaning of this strange neologism; something which is personal, and hopefully collective, too. CoVIdependence should refer to all of the things or people that have helped and are still helping us to hang on in these troubling times, and I hope that you all may find some coVIdependence of your own. Despite my initial remarks on the human species showing a patent lack of humanity these days, I am not a pessimist. I have hope for future generations and for the world we live in today, but I also think we have an impelling emergency to rediscover and renew our care for "humanitas."

Italian Cultural Studies in a Democracy in Crisis

by Serena Bassi



Paysage napolitain by Gabriele Smargiassi via Wikimedia Commons

As a researcher, I study how ideas about race, gender and sexuality circulate through the translation of literature. This summer, I decided to begin a new project on the reception of African American literature in Italy during the Fascist regime. The project asks how anti-fascist translators used translation to counteract the regime's use of seemingly escapist fiction to push white supremacist ideas amongst readers. Even though so far I have worked predominantly on the second half of the twentieth century, I have long wondered about the extent to which translators who lived and worked in postwar Italian society were still affected by the way the Fascist regime thought about books - and culture more generally - as weapons in an ideological war.

As I asked myself how authoritarian leaders like Benito Mussolini attempted to control entertainment for political ends, I became increasingly aware of the connections between the past I was studying and the present I found myself living in. During the Spring semester, I will be teaching a course entitled "Fascism, Pop Culture and Everyday Life: Belonging and Excluding from Fascist Italy to the Present" that looks precisely at the relationship between popular culture, modern leisure and the far-right throughout the twentieth century and in our own political moment. On January 6th, as I watched on my computer screen the neofascist mob that stormed the US Capitol building taking selfies and parading cosplay costumes inspired, at once, by fantasy sagas and white supremacist imaginaries, I became even more convinced that we urgently need to grapple with the entrenchment of what Hannah Arendt famously called "the banality of evil" in the seemingly unremarkable structures that organize our spare time. While we typically see a fascist approach to the public sphere through the metaphor of a well-oiled top-down propaganda machine, what made Fascist pop culture resonate with many in Italy in the 1930s was its ability to tap into an emerging society of the spectacle and create parallel worlds of the imagination in people's minds, which were then used for exclusionary, authoritarian and altogether terrifying ends.

In these confusing and trying times, I am blessed with a wonderful community of colleagues at Yale and beyond who are committed to thinking about the multiple ways in which our scholarship may help us make sense of the present moment. At Yale, Federica Parodi and I have just started the Diversity & Italian Studies Working Group: in light of conversations about racism and knowledge production in US universities, the group strives to reconsider what we research and teach. This semester, the group will host two exciting speakers - Pier Mattia Tommasino from Columbia and Angelica Pesarini from NYU Florence - whose groundbreaking research (on the early modern Mediterranean and postcolonial Italy respectively) deliberately works to diversify the field. Finally, in the summer of 2020, I founded the Transnational Italian Studies Working Group with my colleague Giulia Riccò who is Assistant Professor in Italian Studies at the University of Michigan. The group thinks about our discipline in capacious ways, as it strives to investigate "Italy" as a hybrid, dynamic and fluid signifier whose meaning takes shape at the crossroads of transnational phenomena like colonialism, migration and translation. As part of our department's new "Understanding Italian Studies" seminar series organised by Federica Parodi and Giovanni Miglianti, on March 16th Professor Riccò and I will be giving a talk on the contribution we see Transnational Italian Studies making to the teaching of modern languages in the US classroom.

Humanities in a Time of Crisis by Giacomo Berchi, GSAS '24

When Yale sent out the email notifying all of us of the COVID national emergency I was on a beach in Puerto Rico. I put down my phone and ran directly into the waves for one last time. Then, I got back to my B&B and prepared myself for my anticipated return to New Haven – getting ready for the lockdown and a new reality. I don't need to recall how the pandemic has impacted everyone's life on the planet. Plans, travels, summer fun, exams, even family reunions or the normality of friends gathering at a pub or someone's apartment – all markers of normality now charged with potential danger and responsibility. Not to mention the tragic counts of illnesses and deaths. Some very direct questions then arise: what about our studies during such times? Is it really appropriate going on reading Torquato Tasso and William Shakespeare while the whole world seems on the verge of collapse? What do Humanities mean during a pandemic era?

I've asked myself these questions a lot this year, and not theoretically. As a person and as a PhD student. When dark news from the world (and from my country, Italy) reached me while I was alone in New Haven in lockdown preparing for my daily class of Ancient Greek or studying for my qualifying exam for the Renaissance Studies program (on a flat screen, of course). But then I started asking myself another question. This year, we heard over and over the word unprecedented. But what is really so and what is not? The COVID crisis showed us that life is a tremendous fragile miracle, that we depend on each other, that no matter how much we love people and places sometimes we are just apart, and no matter how apart we are certain connections are always there. It showed us that human societies are complex and fragile bodies too, and sometimes cries of injustice are dramatically too loud to be ignored again. Some of us confronted losses and breakdowns. Some of us discovered contradictions and strengths. Some of us appreciated again pieces of everyday life just taken for granted. Some of us (all?) just remained the same. Lastly, the COVID crisis reminded us that our condition as human beings is defined by mortality. That it is not true that we can do whatever we want to, even though something is always in front of us to be done.

Are all these facts really unprecedented? To a certain extent, yes, and I surely don't want to downplay the harsh challenging we are facing – first of all, isolation. But what I see emerging from these same facts, and many more, is what I see shining relentlessly at the core of that kaleidoscope called Humanities. And this is not unprecedented at all.

Last Spring, I saw a meme which reads: "Philologist before pandemic / Philologist during pandemic" showing twice the same image of a Medieval scholar curved over his desk full of open books. That's funny. And prosaically true also. But hidden there I see something essential at stake, that can be formulated thus: is there ever an ideal time to sit down and read Icelandic Sagas? To learn a new language? To start teaching Italian? To stay up late at night in the library (when open)? I am not talking about productivity (we all need to sleep and rest more, at least I do). But there is a certain sense in which the world and our lives have always been in crisis, always on the move, always urgent. Never ideal, always unprecedented. And here is what is crucial for me: if studying literature (but also statistics and biochemistry) is something to be seriously done only when everything is alright, when nothing unprecedented is happening and life is under control, well, I think I am not interested in it. This is what these really hard times have once again forced me to confront. Moreover, if we look at the other side, that of the authors we are reading, we see the same pattern. I bet that during his exile in a devastated Italy there was never an ideal time for Dante to sit down and write the Divine Comedy. But he did. Literature, as life, is always happening in times of crisis.

In 1502, the Italian humanist printer Aldus Manutius wrote in a preface to a Greek book: "In this context I and my friends are often surprised by the following fact: although the whole world for so many years has been afflicted by wars of Christians and unbelievers – in fact in the very year when Italy began to suffer from war I undertook the extremely difficult enterprise of printing for the benefit of students – people are so keen on the study of literature, and indeed increasingly enthusiastic, that despite the wars literary studies [...] are reviving". *Omnia ardeant* – the whole world is burning in crisis, and yet here we are, working hard to print books for our students. Isn't printing Greek books amid a raging war in 1502 a foolish and useless enterprise? Isn't studying Renaissance poetry or cartography during a global pandemic in 2021? I personally don't think so. Not because I envision some brilliant new ways the Humanities are going to solve anything, but because *omnia ardeant* in this world, and always will. And it is in our not ideal world of isolation, Zoom classes, distancing, videocalls and isolation again that the Humanities can show once more through their uselessness that as human beings we crave for more than mere survival.

It's not the plague time that is unprecedented, but King Lear.

Boccaccio progressivo. Reading the Decameron during the Coronavirus Outbreak by Roberto Ferrini, GSAS '25



The First Day of the Decameron by Francesco Podesti via Getty Images

As we have tried to find in our collective memory something the Coronavirus outbreak could be compared to, two types of references prevailed over the others: war and the plague. In Italy, references to the plague immediately led to Boccaccio and his masterpiece, the Decameron. In the very first days of the emergency, a girl wrote on the Facebook page of the students of the University of Pisa that she was looking for seven boys and two girls to go to the countryside and spend time telling novelle until the end of the disease. As time passed, and the situation got worse, these references multiplied, ranging from collective readings of the original text to adaptations in which people were asked to narrate particular episodes of their lives in order to create a portrait of the world before the virus. By coincidence, in Spring 2020 I was taking Millicent Marcus' class on the Decameron, which put me in the privileged position of stepping into these references on social media while I was studying the actual text by Boccaccio. I soon noticed that the vast majority of these references tended to privilege two aspects of the relationship between the novelle told by the brigata and the plague devastating Florence. First, escapism: for the girl looking to form a brigata, telling novelle was a way to relax the mind and pass the time until the "plague" was over. Secondly, the memorial portrait they form: the idea to reproduce a collection of stories taken from people's lives imitates Boccaccio's work as it portrays a society which was seriously jeopardized by the disease, and so needed to be preserved through literature.

On the other hand, there is a fundamental aspect of Boccaccio's masterpiece that is missed by these references: its progressiveness. The brigata chooses to flee to the countryside to escape the horrors of the life in wasted Florence, and through their tales they compose a wonderful portrait of medieval society. But the novelle also constitute a penetrating analysis of that society during its crisis, aimed at pointing out what does not work hoping to improve it. This is the meaning of their return to Florence at the end of the collection.

It is surely normal for such popular references to simplify the meanings of a text. However, the loss of the progressive function of literature often marks the general consideration of the humanities in contemporary society. The Coronavirus crisis causes unease, suffering and death, but it also stresses the problems and injustices of contemporary society, and thus offers a chance to make it better. This, I believe, should be the main function of the humanities in such a situation: not only to escape reality or to provide a memorial portrait of society, but to determine how to improve it. In such critical situations, humanities are not a form of evasion or a useless luxury, as one hears too often, but the necessary guides of the rebirth of society after the crisis. Few texts can teach this as clearly as the Decameron.

Teaching The Decameron in the Time of Covid-19: A Very Personal Story by Penny Marcus



The Decameron by John William Waterhouse via Alamy Photos

During my nearly 5 decades (!) in the profession, I have had to teach through several crises of national or international scope: the Vietnam War, when (male) students had to beg me for good grades to avoid the draft; the elder Bush's attack on Iraq and his son's invasion of that country, when students needed comforting in the face of wars on the verge of escalating; the surprise victory of Trump in 2016 when students were stunned and needed solace. But by far my most intense teaching experience of this sort occurred last Spring, when the subject matter of my course converged coincidentally, and terrifyingly, with the pandemic which had swept the world. That Spring I had randomly decided to offer a seminar on *The Decameron*, and the class turned out to be a combination of group therapy, and an engagement with a text which until mid-March we had been able to keep at arms' length—the object of detached literary analysis whose plague chronicle could be relegated to the archival past. Covid 19 proved us terribly wrong in this regard. Once the pandemic struck, we could no longer comfortably distance ourselves from the plight of the brigata, whose young lives had been so violently upended by the plague. In general, the social isolation visited upon all of my students was taking a tremendous toll. But it was the seniors who were the most eloquent in giving voice to the pain caused by their shattered hopes and expectations in the disease's wake. For them, the loss of commencement rituals, the lack of ceremonial closure for their undergraduate years, and most of all, the inability to hug their friends and say good-bye, blighted what should have been the joyous final weeks of their time at Yale. But with this disappointment came something else. The brigata's determination to reverse the plague's social wreckage by forming an ideal community around the act of storytelling had a profound impact on our sense of purpose in studying this text. In the midst of our physical isolation from one another (and with the help of Zoom), we were able to forge communal bonds in our newly acquired depth of understanding for the brigata's plight.

And as our reading came to an end, Boccaccio's insistence on the life-sustaining force of the imagination in the face of catastrophe struck us with particular force in light of the storytellers' courage to re-enter the plague-ravaged city, bolstered by the affirmation of the human power to build worlds. If the urgency of the humanist commitment to literature, history, the arts, and the life of the mind for its own sake, had ever been in question, our study of *The Decameron* in the time of Covid 19 should definitively put those doubts to rest.

Learning Through the Pandemic by Giovanni Miglianti, GSAS '22

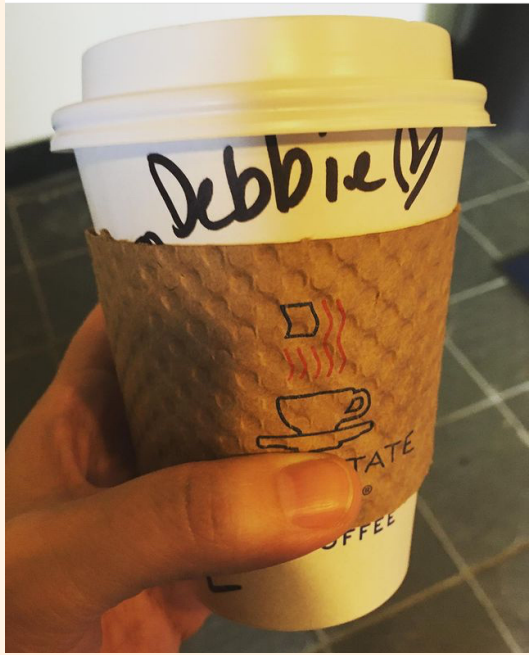
"Protezione", the first short story of Primo Levi's *Vizio di forma* (1971), presents a world where everybody wears an armor (corazza) as mandatory protection from the risk of meteorite rain. Some of the effects that Levi describes with melancholic irony, including an overall atmosphere of sadness as well as positive and negative reactions to such a protective measure (from a vague feeling of security to the loss of physical intimacy with others), are particularly resonant with the 2020 – and 2021 – reader. Many of us have felt lonely and vulnerable over the past months, despite the necessary precautions we have taken to protect ourselves. I would like to share two work-related activities that kept me motivated.

The first was the invitation to join a group of students from an Italian technical high school for a couple of virtual meetings on Levi's works. What began as a provocative discussion of his testimony (*Is Se questo è un uomo* a trustworthy account? And why does Levi parallel his own becoming a witness-writer to the transsexual experience of Tyresias in *La chiave a stella*?) spontaneously developed into a vibrant conversation about the relationship between truth and fiction, art and the world. While neither the students' teacher nor myself claimed to have any definitive answer to questions as big as "Can literature save the world?", we were nonetheless amazed by the depth of the students' engagement with the texts and the issues they raised. These were all seniors getting ready for technical or science-related careers, and yet the discussions ran overtime and in some cases continued over email, with one student wondering how he could make sure that literature remains part of his life also beyond high school.

The second was a plan for the future, looking ahead to eventually being back to New Haven in person. Prompted by recent events as well as by Roberto Esposito's final course at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, where I have been a Visiting Student for the past two years, I delved into biopolitical thought and chose a theme for the advanced Italian language course I will teach at Yale in spring 2022: *Crises and Emergencies in Contemporary Italy: From the Mafia to Coronavirus*. Italy's entire history is pinpointed by crises and emergencies of social, political, and environmental nature; the course will focus on the last thirty years, exploring the role of various media in representing organized crime groups like the Mafia, the migrant crisis, natural disasters, and the coronavirus pandemic. By analyzing the relationship between rule of law and state of exception through case studies to which (to various degrees) the students can relate, we will reinforce their Italian language skills – to the point where they can feel comfortable discussing any topic they care about.

Both opportunities originated from the difficult times we still live in; both have given me renewed confidence in the possibility if not to "save" then at least to try and make sense of the world through what we study and teach. Luckily, at a time of social distancing, these were not the only aspects of doctoral work that made me feel less distant from others. Serving as Teaching Fellow for Millicent Marcus and Maurice Samuels' *Representing the Holocaust* course last fall and collaborating with Federica Parodi to create a new workshop series that we are thrilled to launch this coming spring – *Understanding Italian Studies* – have been great sources of optimism. May 2021 be a year when we can put aside our corazza, and continue learning from and next to each other.

Personal Reflections on Teaching During the Pandemic by Deborah Pellegrino



Teaching remotely during the pandemic has been (and still is) a technical, pedagogical, and emotional challenge for all of us; however, one of the most interesting aspects of my intermediate courses this past Fall semester was that students channeled their private universe into their writing assignments. As part of their workload, students had to write a brief weekly essay (a tema) where they reflected on a variety of topics, practicing and increasing their writing skills. It's not that students don't generally express personal ideas in their compositions; it's just that these essays were a little different. These essays were incredibly profound and rich with hopes, insights, and shared stories. I enjoyed reading them all and they allowed me to feel more connected to my students.

I saw each work as a gift, for which I thanked all of them. Of course, students also had the opportunity to communicate during our discussions in class. The courses, in fact, had a small seminar format online: we read excerpts from literary texts, as well as less scholarly readings; we watched movies and short videos; we used the breakout rooms for more in-depth conversations and for engaging in enrichment exercises. It was, nonetheless, through writing in a foreign yet familiar language that students found their preferred way to articulate their thoughts in a cathartic manner. I miss the Yale community, the animated chats with my colleagues, and my students' positive energy. I miss teaching face-to-face in a lively classroom where students are seated in a semi-circle and are able to see and talk to each other. I miss my half-shot of espresso cappuccino at Blue State Coffee where they call me Debbie and draw a small heart on my cup. Hopefully, we will return to campus soon, but thus far it has indeed been a difficult yet fulfilling experience, both from an educational as well as a humanistic standpoint, which I will cherish for years to come.

A Look Back on My Senior Fall by Marcy Sanchez, SM '21



Scene from Rome, Open City by Roberto Rossellini via BFI

My senior fall was not what I imagined four years ago when I first stepped foot on campus or even a few months ago when I last stepped foot on campus. I think most students could agree that life has completely changed in ways we would have never imagined it could. While I have been privileged enough to stay in my off-campus apartment and continue my studies, this past semester was anything but easy.

I am an Environmental Engineering major pursuing the certificate of Advanced Language Studies in Italian. This past semester I had the privilege of taking Sarah Atkinson's course on Magical Realism and Millicent Marcus's course on Italian Film Ecologies. As an undergraduate engineering major in a graduate film course, I quickly learned I was out of my depth. Regardless of my lack of film theory and history knowledge, I looked forward to every seminar. Professor Marcus knew exactly which meaningful contributions I could make even when I doubted my own usefulness in this setting. My background in water and air pollution informed my final paper that analyzed the ways in which water was depicted in Italian Neorealist film—a topic I could have never imagined myself writing about four years ago or a few months ago. So perfectly were my loves for Italian film and the environment intertwined, I felt that I experienced the academic setting of my dreams.

My experience in Magical Realism was very similar to my experience in Italian Film Ecologies and every Italian course I have taken. I both enjoyed the course and felt like I learned something new each time I exited the classroom, or in this case, logged off Zoom in my bedroom. For the final project, we were asked to translate a few pages from any language to Italian and vice versa. I translated the prologue to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde and an excerpt from Igiaba Scego's *La mia casa è dove sono*. A daunting task at first, translation proved to be an entertaining exercise in language comprehension and construction that pushed me to think of language in new ways.

While the semester was difficult in ways beyond my control, these courses managed to give me something to look forward to every week. With only one semester left at Yale, there are so many courses in this department I wish I could take, but I am grateful and content with those which I have taken.

An Unusual Semester and "Il Ben ch'i' vi trovai" by Francesco Spirli, BF '22



Scene of the Narration of the Decameron by Salvatore Postiglione via Wikimedia Commons

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of this global pandemic was the sheer amount of change that it brought. Change that, of course, also came with challenges. We saw this first hand as we prepared for a semester unlike any other. The pandemic changed the way classes were taught as well as the ways that students learned. It changed how we went about our daily lives, and in many ways, as tragedy hit close to home both in the United States and Italy, it changed how we viewed our own lives and journeys.

However, despite all of this change, there was one thing that stayed constant from the moment that students were unexpectedly sent home last spring to now. The incredible support and dedication of the Italian Studies Department to its students, majors and nonmajors alike, was one of the few things that made this online fall semester seem more “normal”. I think that anyone, myself included, would have assumed that online classes would make it more difficult to teach and take language classes. Yet, the Department not only adapted to new challenges but also went out of its way to ensure that the classroom experience remained both educationally rich and interactive. I felt this personally this semester when I took Dante In Translation and History and Culture of Naples. Professors went out of their ways to not only ensure that students engaged rigorously with the course material, but also took it upon themselves to organize virtual films showings, virtual visits to the Yale University Art Gallery, as well as to host guest lecturers from the New Haven community and from international universities. I was also fortunate enough to take part in the Department’s Undergraduate Research Conference. In fact, if I hadn’t been taking my classes from my dimly lit room in a relatively cold corner of Benjamin Franklin College, all of these events would have made it hard to tell that there was something “different” about this semester.

The work of professors, as well as the engagement of classmates, made it a pleasure to come to class each week. More importantly, it showed how the community that the Italian Studies Department fosters can come together with compassion even in the most difficult of times. Boccaccio’s Proemio to the Decameron, set during the time of the Black Death, begins with the words “Umana cosa è l’aver compassione agli afflitti”, meaning “it is humane to have compassion on the afflicted”. In a time where nearly the entire world faces some sort of struggle related to this pandemic, it is incredible to know that despite everything, the Yale community, and the community within the Italian Studies Department, remains as dedicated and compassionate as ever.

A Year in Between by Jane Tylus

In a sobering and often dark period, there have been some bright lights – for me, from the community that I am grateful to be a part of for now just over two years, and for being able to work with committed, brilliant colleagues and students on building a future together here at Yale. But in the meantime, we have a present, and overshadowed though it has been by the pandemic, the remarkable strides that everyone has made in finding new ways to create community have been extremely heartening. I'm especially moved by our graduate students, who have had to adjust in completely unexpected ways not only to new forms of being taught, but to new ways of teaching – and I'm grateful to our senior language teaching staff, especially Anna Iacovella and Simona Lorenzini, who have done so much to facilitate the transition to online learning. Rather than complaining, everyone with whom I've been in contact over this last semester has shown resilience and creativity, and I am inspired by their examples.

The pandemic found me in Italy when it began, where I was a visiting Robert Lehman Professor at Harvard's Villa I Tatti for spring semester while on sabbatical. I presented a paper on Petrarch and the Sienese painter Sano di Pietro on February 27, in what turned out to be the last public event at the Villa for the year. Two colleagues said they had to miss my talk because they had just been to Cremona, and thought it would be considerate to quarantine – but Cremona felt very far away and Tuscany still was safe; my dear friend Lina Bolzoni came in from Pisa and spent the night, and we went hiking up Monte Ceceri the next day. But barely a week later, as the entire country became a “zona rossa,” I found myself on the phone with Swiss Air asking if it might be a good idea to schedule my departure in advance of my April date. The no-nonsense response was that there was a seat on a flight out of Florence in two days and I should take it. So certain were we all that this would be a temporary affair – I inquired whether I might come back in June to finish out my stay, and left a few things with friends that I didn't feel like dragging back with me for just a couple of months – that I didn't feel particularly upset to be leaving early. But as the days and weeks passed, what we now know all too well became clear.

What the year was “supposed” to have looked like, what it ended up looking like: there's nothing like a pandemic to make us realize what we take for granted in life, and how important it is to be grateful for what we do have. I miss the thrill of the first day in the classroom, serendipitous encounters with students and colleagues in the hallway or over lunch, afternoons looking at rare books in the Beinecke, conferences followed by lively discussions and dinners at Skappo or Roia. But there's the thrill of seeing my students' faces on Zoom and hearing them talk about Virgil and Tasso while they're in Texas or California or Italy or Nigeria. There was the thrill of witnessing the dedication of advanced graduate students and faculty as we taught our first version of a “communal class” on preparing for the comprehensive exams. There was the thrill of watching members of our newly extended community of alumni around the globe gather virtually to hear Ginny Jewiss talk about Pirandello or Sandro-Angelo De Thomasis discuss his dissertation on Dante. And there was the thrill of listening to our intrepid undergraduates deliver papers at the first Undergraduate Research Conference and celebrating Ann DeLauro's award. In the spirit of these many fall ventures, I look forward to an exciting spring of talks, interviews, symposia, and classes, to which we welcome our alums, colleagues, current and future students, and all who are interested in things Italian.

The Inaugural Undergraduate Research Conference in Italian Studies by Simona Lorenzini, Director of Undergraduate Studies



The School of Athens by Raphael via Wikimedia Commons

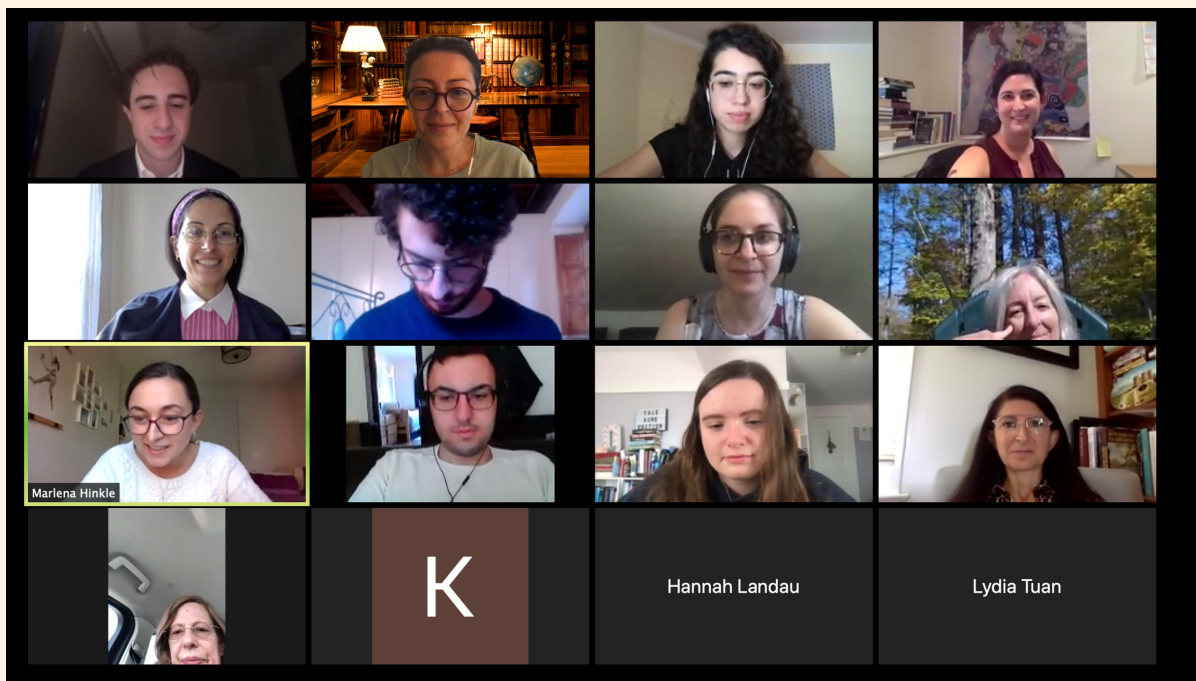
At the end of December 2019, the now Italian Studies Department launched a call for paper for the first-ever annual undergraduate research conference in Italian Studies. The purpose was to bring together students across campus who shared a common interest in Italian Studies. The response was enthusiastic and immediate. We accepted 12 papers ranging from Dante to Cesare Pavese, from music to cinema. The organization proceeded smoothly and fast including the reservation for a nice venue and delicious catering. As the date approached, March 28, COVID-19 came. Events were canceled, students and faculty left the campus, and Yale was on lockdown. Then the Zoom-era came. After months of online training and with newly learned skills, both from students and faculty, we decided to relaunch the conference in an online format to bring our group of Italianisti together. Seven out of the original 12 students were eagerly interested in participating in the conference and in sharing their wonderful works. Students were asked to pre-record their video presentations that were then uploaded to a central repository and made available to the audience ahead of time. That allowed for a lively and interactive discussion among the presenters. The event went online on October 10th, a sunny Fall day that saw stimulating and enjoyable talks on subjects ranging from Neorealism to Giambattista Vico and the humanities, from Torquato Tasso to Cesare Pavese. The presentations were divided into two panels, “Neorealism: Portraying Italy in the Aftermath of WWII “ and “Italy from the Renaissance to the Present: Poetry, Politics, Education and Desire Moderator” chaired respectively by Megan Crognale and Sarah Atkinson (see below for a full list of presenters and titles). The conference, even in an online format, ended up as a wonderful opportunity to bring together our community of faculty, grads, and undergrads despite social distancing, and to discuss in a very thorough and interdisciplinary approach the literature and culture of Italy and how it still appeals students from different backgrounds (philosophy, political science, environmental engineering, computer science, film studies, etc.).

There are many people to thank for this event: Prof. Jane Tylus and Prof. Anna Iacovella who opened and closed the conference with words of togetherness, dialogue, the importance of humanities, and especially of hope for the future; instructors, graduate students, and staff who worked as mentors, moderators, organizers, and tech supporters (Deborah, Megan, Sarah, Roberto, Ann, and Amanda). However, a special thank goes to our amazing students. Without their excellent works and encouraging enthusiasm in Italian Studies, the event would have not been possible. Grazie mille! We are now considering proposing the conference again for this Spring, welcoming contributions on literature, history, politics, art, cinema, language, translation, science, and music. Being in person or online, this is the question but, whichever the format, we are sure that students will bring intellectual commitment and sparkling enthusiasm. Stay tuned for the call for papers!



LIST OF PRESENTERS:

- KOFI ANSONG**, “STYLE AND NARRATIVE COMPLEXITY AS MEANING IN ITALIAN POSTMODERN FILM”
- HANNAH LANDAU**, “THE POSTWAR POWER OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ITALIAN FILM”
- JULIA LEATHAM**, “ITALY GROWS UP: CHILDREN IN ITALIAN CINEMA AS METAPHOR FOR DAMPENED POLITICAL INTEREST”
- ILAYDA ORHAN**, “ITALIANI, BRAVA GENTE: L’INDIFFERENZA E LA COLPEVOLEZZA”
- MARLENA HINKLE**, “TASSO E CASTELLO: I DISEGNI DELLA GERUSALEMME LIBERATA”
- FRANCESCO SPIRLI**, “ON VICO AND THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY”



A trajectory to Linguistic Futures by Anna Iacovella, Language Program Director



Calvi Landscape by John Elk III via Getty Images

The Italian Studies Department is transforming itself into an extensive and inclusive bionetwork. The pandemic has affected us all, and forced our Italian language courses to move to an on-line format as of mid-spring of 2020. However, the spirit of creating a strong community has been persistent. As our courses continue to be tailored to the new teaching platforms, they also included virtual visits to the Yale University Art Gallery, guest speakers from the community in classroom meetings on-line, and virtual culinary workshops.

First semester to advanced language courses participated actively in recording video presentations that varied from students' motivation in learning Italian to authentic Italian food recipes. Our language program community has reached out into global networks through our Italian@Yale Facebook page. Some of our alumni propelled our attention into their professional achievements and practice of the language after studying Italian at Yale. Rather than having traditional film discussions, students of Italian engaged in on-line platform forums and continued to be exposed to cultural views of Italy through cinematic productions fitted to the level of knowledge and content. The cultural experiences included music and meme for guided language discussions.

For my course ITAL159, History and Culture of Naples, students interacted with a Wooster Square historian regarding the diaspora of Italian immigrants from the south of Italy to New Haven, CT. Students also had the opportunity to talk, in Italian, with Judge William J. Nardini of the United States Court Appeals for the Second Circuit, who shared his experience in law specialization in Italy and his work as an Assistant United States Attorney, for which he prosecuted criminal cases in Italy, primarily in Naples and its surroundings.

Additionally, in the fall of 2020 I was privileged to obtain a professional Fellowship from the Center for Language Study at Yale University in order to strengthen the Italian Language Mentoring Program for graduate students in the Italian Studies Department who are beginning their teaching years at Yale. The Italian Methods and Techniques pedagogy program will focus on language-specific issues and it will be offered during the spring semester of graduate students' second year in anticipation of their first teaching assignment. Upon completion of this mentoring program, graduate students should feel more confident in their teaching abilities as well as prepared to seek out others' expertise as well as the resources and professional development opportunities available to support their teaching years at Yale University and in global communities.

A trajectory to Linguistic Futures by Anna Iacovella, Language Program Director (cont.)

Remarkably, the Italian Studies Department moved forward into the trajectory of the Linguistic Futures talk series. The Linguistic Futures series with focus on language pedagogy started last year by an initiative from our Italian Studies Department Chair, Prof. Jane Tylus, and we are delighted to be continuing it for a second year.

In September 2020, Alexia Ferracuti, Associate Director of the Teaching and Learning Center at Northeastern University and a Yale Alumna presented Practicing Intercultural Pedagogy. The Linguistic Futures' talk focused on her work in supporting faculty and graduate students in their teaching. She presented the framework of intercultural pedagogy as a way of furthering inclusive, equitable learning environments and supporting the teaching of cultural differences in the context of global learning. One of her key concepts was to critically reflect on one's own teaching as a way of discussing contemplative practices that deepen learning and inquiry.

In October, Camilla Zamboni, Assistant Professor of the Practice at Wesleyan University and Italian Language Program Coordinator, presented Strategies for Co-Curricular Innovation and Student Involvement: Accessibility, Experimentation, and Community. Prof. Zamboni discussed the interplay of courses, Study Abroad, and co-curricular activities at Wesleyan and how communication at all levels ensures enrollment and student retention. She also explained how the Italian major has been rethought thanks to the creation of a Language Collective, the department's relationship with the Center for Global Studies, and coordination with ResLife and Admissions.

In November, Prof. Giovanna Summerfield, the Associate Dean for Educational Affairs and Director of Languages Across the Curriculum Program at Auburn University presented Multilingualism and Multiculturalism: Demand, Preparedness, and Strategic Connections. Prof. Summerfield described, in detail, the role of Italian Studies, Mediterranean Studies, and International Studies at Auburn University. Additionally, she enlightened us about the process of integrating recent methodologies into teaching, approaches for retaining language students, and the global certificate in BA programs. The key focus of her talk was the creation of interdisciplinary collaborations and career services across higher education institutions as well as businesses and corporations.

Stay tuned for our speakers next spring 2021!

Beyond the Human: Italian Ecologies

by Penny Marcus and Jane Tylus



Barolo Vineyards at Sunset by Marco Bottigelli via Getty Images

In the pre-Covid era, Jane and I envisioned dedicating the academic year 2020-21 to Italian ecologies. We had invited a stellar line-up of speakers for our “Italy: Center/Periphery” series, and we had both decided to offer graduate courses on eco-critical themes. I had long been intrigued by the idea of Environmental Humanities—one of our former students, Taylor Papallo had written a brilliant dissertation entitled “Green Scenes: Shades of Italian Postwar Cultural Ecology” focusing on Calvino’s *Barone rampante*, Antonioni’s *Deserto rosso*, and selected poems by Gisella Passarelli. The idea that eco-criticism could provide an incisive tool for unearthing layers of literary and cinematic meanings, and that these media could, in turn, serve as powerful vehicles for the cultivation of environmental consciousness in readers and viewers, struck me with the force of revelation. In recent years, a couple of students within our program had voiced their interest in the field, and this convinced me to finally take the plunge. The result was a graduate seminar on Italian Film Ecologies, a collaborative venture in which the films themselves took the lead, teaching us, by example, how to decipher the environmental language embedded in the landscapes, seascapes, rock formations, etc. of the films’ settings. In other words, we learned that nature, in films, should never be relegated to mere background status.

The highlight of our semester was a guest visit by Elena Past, author of the book that provided the critical template for our course: *Italian Eco-Cinema: Beyond the Human*. My hope is that in a post-Covid world, she can make a several-day visit, in person, so that we can feast on her knowledge over leisurely meals, and in other schmooze sessions, beyond the bounds of the kind of dazzling talk that she presented in class.

Equally exciting talks were given in Jane’s class on “Early Modern Ecologies” by Eleonora Stoppino (U. Illinois) and Damiano Benvegnù (Dartmouth). Cross-listed with Comparative Literature and English, the graduate seminar focused largely on environmental studies and the genre of pastoral and peasant literature from Theocritus and Virgil through John Berger’s *Pig Earth*, and it was a pleasure welcoming students from the schools of architecture, drama, and art along with colleagues from language and literature departments. The Covid epidemic necessitated virtual visits from our speakers as well. Professor Damiano introduced us to a fascinating digital project currently underway to explore in detail the central Italian landscapes referred to in Pope Gregory I’s influential treatise on holy men and miracles, his *Dialogues*. Professor Stoppino discussed a topic relevant to animal studies and posthumanism, the intersections between animal and human communities in the upbringing of the “*donna guerriera*” in classical and medieval literature. We look forward to welcoming all of our speakers to campus in the near future – plans for a symposium on Environmental Humanities at the Whitney Center in the new Humanities Quad are already underway -- and are grateful in the meantime for their presentations and the stimulating discussions they inspired.

Student Recognition

Sarah Atkinson has been selected by Yale University to attend the 2020 Podcasting the Humanities Winter Institute hosted by the National Humanities Center and the Digital Humanities Center of San Diego State University on January 11-15, 2021. The program focused on translating research content to public narratives - and learning the technical process of creating a podcast.

This five-day training was offered in a virtual format. We were confident that we could deliver the core values of the program in this environment, including forming bonds and interpersonal relationships in support of new humanistic approaches. The approach was centered around emergent strategies, agility, and responsiveness -- qualities that the digital humanities can offer all of us in times of massive upheaval -- as well as attention to self-care/care for others, labor practices, and the like. Work was completed in cross-university, interdisciplinary teams to produce a 30-minute podcast, which was shared in a Listening Party on the last day.



Sarah Atkinson



Megan Crognale

We are thrilled to announce that Dr. Megan Crognale was awarded one of Yale's Alumni Fellowships, designed to provide year-long teaching positions for 2020 graduates who are facing a job market frozen by the pandemic. Megan assisted us with language classes in the fall. This spring she will be teaching an undergraduate seminar based on her dissertation about "Nostalgia," and along with Prof. Mazzotta will be offering a course on the Italian diaspora. We are also grateful for all her assistance this year with our new graduate course on preparing for the comprehensive exams.

Spring Events in Italian Studies (so far!)

**FEBRUARY 10TH, 12:30PM – PIER MATTIA
TOMMASINO, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

**FEBRUARY 26TH, 2:30PM – INTERVISTA
ITALIANA WITH PENNY MARCUS AND ANN
GOLDSTEIN ON ELENA FERRANTE'S NEAPOLITAN
QUARTET"**

**MARCH 5TH, 1:30PM – MARY JO LUBRANO,
CENTER FOR LANGUAGE STUDY, YALE**

**MARCH 16, 2:30PM – SERENA BASSI AND GIULIA
RICCÒ (GRICCO@UMICH.EDU)**

**APRIL 7TH, 1:30PM – TERESA FIORE
(FIORETE@MONTCLAIR.EDU)**

**APRIL 14TH, 1:30PM – RHIANNON WELCH
(R.WELCH@BERKELEY.EDU)**

**APRIL 21ST – ANGELICA PESARINI, NYU
FLORENCE**

**APRIL 30TH, 1:30PM – INTERVISTA ITALIANA
WITH COSTANZA BARCHIESI AND JILL RICHARDS**

Alumni News

Erminia Ardissino (PhD '93)

I am very proud to announce that this year I published, with Brepols, a book on women's contributions to Italy's intellectual and religious history: *Donne interpreti della Bibbia nell'Italia della prima età moderna: Comunità ermeneutiche e riscritture*. Poetry and prayer is a topic I have already explored and to which I intend to dedicate my future research; I published an article in *Lettere italiane* on Giovanni Giudici, and another on the rosary in a collection of essays on forms of domestic devotion in Renaissance Italy. MLN published my paper on the preaching of sermons in Italian around Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. Currently, most of my energy is devoted to the 700th anniversary of Dante's birth. I organized a conference in Turin, *Poesia e filosofia della giustizia*. Dalla "Monarchia" alla "Commedia", which took place 1-2 October, with the participation of two Yale alumni: Alessandro Vettori and Matteo Di Giovanni (Matteo is now Professor of Medieval Philosophy in the same department as me; [you can find the recording here](#)). Mazzotta was invited first, but he was unable to attend. I am organising another event for March 24th 2021: Dante e i Giovani.



Ken Browne (MA '78)

I am happy to share the news that my film *Why Doctors Write: Finding Humanity in Medicine* will be released soon and was just featured in the UNAFF (United Nations Film Festival) 2020 - and I was excited to get [some much-appreciated coverage in the Yale Graduate School newsletter last year](#). That piece reconnected me with my classmate Stephanie Jed who I learned was just beginning to teach a class at UC San Diego called Literature and Aging: What is Healthy Aging? And in another karmic occurrence, I learned that Prof. Teresa Fiore - my research director on the project for which we filmed interviews in Licata, Agrigento, and Palermo "Cibo in Sicilia Durante Lo Sbarco 1943" was Stefanie's doctoral student! So it really is "un piccolo mondo"! Saluti calorosi a tutti!



Alumni News (cont.)

Nicola (Nick) Camerlenghi (BA '98)

I have not been in touch for a while, so my news includes: the publication of my first book through Cambridge University Press. It is called “St. Paul’s Outside the Walls: A Roman Basilica from Antiquity to the Modern Era” and was published back in late 2018. That success was followed by tenure at Dartmouth College, where I teach as Associate Professor in the Department of Art History. My focus in teaching and research remains Italy, in particular the city of Rome, but I teach architectural history broadly across the medieval Mediterranean. This spring I will be a Digital Humanities Fellow at Harvard’s Villa I Tatti in Florence (COVID permettendo). My project there is titled “Towering over Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Rome: 3D Mapping the City’s Network of Surveillance and Power.” It combines scholarly and computational methods to create a 3D map of twelfth-through sixteenth-century Rome’s most prominent vertical features: the towers, bell towers, repurposed ruins, and hills that dominated the skyline. The goal is to explore the interconnectedness of sight and sound, topography and movement in the city by analyzing acoustics, ballistics, and defensive systems. This research is emblematic of the sort of projects I have been hatching most recently: they span from Augmented Reality to Virtual Reality, GIS to 3D modeling and are intended as research and pedagogic tools to enhance our understanding of the history of art and architecture. Most of my output is collected on [my faculty page](#).



Raymond Carlson (BA '11)

I received my Ph.D. this spring from Columbia University with a dissertation on the relationship between Michelangelo’s poetry and art. I am currently the Jane and Morgan Whitney Fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



John C. McLucas (PhD 1983)

McLucas retired in June 2020 after 36 years teaching Italian at all levels at Towson University in Baltimore. One of the great pleasures of his career was serving on many doctoral dissertation panels at nearby Johns Hopkins, and John is pleased that one of the most brilliant of these Hopkins candidates, Francesco Brenna, was chosen as his replacement at Towson. John’s translation of Tullia d’Aragona’s 1560 epic, *Il Meschino, altramente detto il Guerrino*, edited by Julia L. Hairston, is forthcoming in “The Other Voice” series. His debut novel, *Dialogues on the Beach*, a gay romance with subtexts of avese, was published in 2017 by BrickHouse Books in Baltimore; a sequel, *Spirit’s Tether*, came out in November 2020. Its structure, combining a plot moving forward chronologically chapter by chapter with flashbacks progressively further into the past, has been described as “Calvino-esque.” He is currently working on a third novel, *The Boxer’s Mask*. It is set in contemporary Rome and follows a group of American ex-pats who become acquainted, and in some cases perhaps obsessed, with a charismatic young Italian actor launching his career. It is in part an homage to Henry James’ *The Tragic Muse*.”



Alumni News (cont.)

Julia Pucci (PhD 2020)

I am thrilled to report that this past summer marked the second year of Online Italian for Reading, an asynchronous Italian translation course offered through Yale Summer Session. Since its first year, enrollment has tripled. The course is part of a broader effort by YSS to create more flexible language learning opportunities for graduate students seeking to fulfill degree requirements and expand the scope of their research. Online Italian for Reading comprises 23 learning modules that target important grammar topics, daily translations that span the works of Giovanni Boccaccio to Igiaba Scego, weekly discussion forums, and a final project. I was very fortunate to have Giacomo Berchi as a grader this past summer, and I look forward to teaching the course again for Summer Session 2021!



Margaret (Tita) Rosenthal (PhD '85)

Since 2017, I have chaired the Department of French and Italian at the University of Southern California where I have been teaching Italian and Comparative literature since 1985. In the past few years, I have written essays on the popularization of Veronica Franco in different media: one is forthcoming in 2021, "From Hollywood Film to Musical Theater:



Veronica Franco in American Popular Culture." Authorizing Early Modern European Women. From Biography to Biofiction. Eds. James B. Fitzmaurice, Naomi J. Miller, and Sara Jayne Steen. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), the other, which I wrote with one of my former students, was published in 2017: "From Helicon to Hollywood: A Dialogue on Veronica Franco and Dangerous Beauty," Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal, (co-authored with Shannon McHugh), Volume 11, Number 2, Spring 2017, 94-114. I have also most recently published on Italian renaissance fashion in relation to Isabella d'Este: "Isabella d'Este as a Trendsetter," in ACIS Textiles, Trade and Meaning at the time of Isabella d'Este, (digital essay for online Australian collaborative site that combines scholars' work from around the world), forthcoming 2020-21; and a "Featured Book Review" in Renaissance Quarterly, January 2019, on Fashioning the Early Modern: Dress, Textiles, and Innovations in Europe 1500-1800 (Evelyn Welch, editor), Vol. 71, Issue 4 (Winter 2018), 1473-1475. With public health regulations permitting, I will lecture in Venice on "Fashion, Ancient Text, and Image in Illustrated Alba Amicorum of the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," Palazzo Mocenigo, May 24, 2021. I have also spoken at annual national conferences on my current research project (early-modern illustrated alba amicorum). One panel, Saying Goodbye in Early Modern Europe, was organized by Jane Tylus at the MLA Conference in Seattle, 2020, where I gave the paper, "On the Move in Illustrated Alba Amicorum: Carrying Fashion Home in Sixteenth-Century Europe." Before that I delivered another lecture on illustrated albums titled "Dressing Up the Album Amicorum: Fashion and Dress in Illustrated Albums of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," at the Renaissance Society of Southern California, Huntington Library, March 2019. I have organized a panel for the upcoming virtual RSA conference on the "Illustrated Album Amicorum," April 2021 and will speak about "Fashions of Venice in Illustrated Alba Amicorum of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." I will always treasure the wonderful lectures of the Italian faculty with whom I studied during the 1970s!!

Alumni News (cont.)

Sherry Roush (Ph.D. 1999)

I am delighted to report that I am on track to submit for publication this month my English edition of the *Peregrino*, Jacopo Caviceo's 1508 prose romance. This project was awarded a 2020 National Endowment for the Arts grant in Literary Translation and a 2020 National Endowment for the Humanities Individual Faculty Grant.



Massimo Scalabrini (PhD '98)

After four-and-a-half years as chair of the Department of French and Italian at Indiana University, I spent 2020 on leave, finishing up a book titled *Commedia e civiltà: Dinamiche anticonflittuali nella letteratura italiana del primo Cinquecento*.



Alessandro Vettori (PhD '95)

My book *Dante's Prayerful Pilgrimage* (Brill, 2019) came out last year—and it was time (I started thinking about this project during Prof. Mazzotta's class in 1990!). I am researching false documents for a book tentatively entitled *Fake News Through History* and also putting together a collection of essays on Iacopone da Todi with contributions from scholars all around the world. I continue to serve as Graduate Director for the Italian Department at Rutgers and during lockdown I started a virtual coffee with PhD students every Friday; we ended up seeing each other more frequently (although virtually) than we would on campus.

