

department of
romance
languages and
literatures



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After an enjoyable and productive sabbatical spent in England, France, and Italy, I am happy to be back in Ann Arbor in this beautiful season, looking forward to a busy and exciting year. We are pleased to welcome Professor Francesco D'Introno, director of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, as a visiting professor for 2008-2009. Professor D'Introno is a specialist in syntax and phonology, and will teach courses in Spanish linguistics.

Our faculty has received a number of awards and marks of recognition over the past year. We are extremely proud that Ross Chambers, Marvin Felheim Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of French and Comparative Literature, has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. This is one of the highest honors the US bestows on intellectuals, artists, scholars and civic leaders, and we congratulate Ross on this much-deserved recognition. Two associate professors of Spanish, Enrique García Santo-Tomás and Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola, were promoted to the rank of full professor. Associate Professor of Spanish Gareth Williams won a fellowship to the Institute for the Humanities for 2008-2009. You can read other news of the faculty on page five.

We congratulate the seven graduate students who successfully defended their dissertations (see page 8). We say good-bye to those who are leaving Ann Arbor to take up assistant professorships elsewhere and wish them the very best as they begin their careers. Of our current graduate students, Rebecca Wines (French) was awarded a place in the Mellon Dissertation Seminar for her project on sport and nation in modern France. Ashley Rainey won a place in the Bryn Mawr Summer Program in Avignon, France. We also welcome 11 new graduate students, selected from a strong group of over 100 applications.

We continue to enhance the quality of our undergraduate programs. RLL is second only to English among Humanities departments in the University in the number of concentrators we have. Our new concentration in Romance Languages and Literatures was approved by the University and is now up and running. We have also introduced a senior seminar which brings together honors students in all of the concentrations — Spanish, Romance Languages and Literatures, Italian, and French — in preparation for the writing of an honors thesis. The enrollments in our undergraduate courses continue to be strong, and so it is of special concern to us that the College Board has announced the cancellation of the Advanced Placement programs in Italian, French literature, and Latin literature. On behalf of one of the largest Romance languages departments in the country, I wrote a letter to the College Board and have been working with the Modern Language Association to ensure that these subjects continue to be made available to students. If you wish to write to the College Board about the importance of maintaining AP programs in these fields, please send a message to Trevor Packer, Vice-President for AP Programs, The College Board, 45 Columbus Avenue, New York, New York 10023-6917, or email him at TPacker@collegeboard.org.

The department sponsored a number of lectures and colloquia in 2007-2008, including the 27th annual Keniston Lecture delivered by Gil Anidjar from the Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia University. We have a number of events planned for the coming year, including the annual Fraker conference with featured speakers Alain Badiou, Eduardo Cadava, and Bruno Bosteels. If you are in the area, please join us for any of these events. You will find a full schedule on our website.

As we develop our programs, we are grateful to the support of our alumni and friends. Increasing our support for graduate students is a priority, as we seek to provide more fellowships (we have only six or seven per year to spread over three languages) and more opportunities for research abroad. We have benefited from the tremendous generosity of alumna Ronni Lacroute (see profile on page 10) who has recently been funding an annual graduate fellowship. The University President Mary Sue Coleman has announced a "President's Donor Challenge" devoted to financial aid for graduate students: for every \$1 pledged until December 31, 2008 President Coleman will contribute an extra 50 cents. You can read more about this campaign at http://www.rackham.umich.edu/giving/article/presidents_challenge/ or feel free to call the Department. Alumnus Donald Maxwell (Ph.D. 1998) has established the Donald Maxwell Research fund for graduate student support in French, and two other UM alumni have created funds for graduate support in French. At the undergraduate level, the Chiara Maria Levin fund, endowed in 2007 in memory of alumna Chiara Maria Levin (UM 2006) to honor a graduating senior for breadth and excellence in the Romance Languages, has been expanded to include awards for undergraduate study abroad. As always, we are grateful to those of you who have contributed to our strategic fund or made special donations in the past, and we hope that you will feel able to keep up your support for these important programs.

Wishing you all a good year, and do keep in touch,

Michèle Hannoosh

Michèle Hannoosh
Chair

Department Chair: Michèle Hannoosh
Associate Chair: Jarrod Hayes

Graduate Chair:
Editor/Designer:

Catherine Brown
April Caldwell

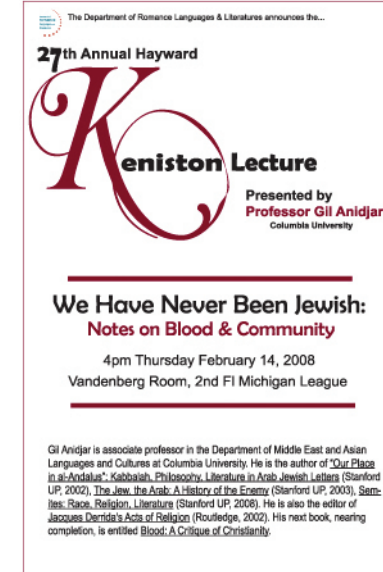
Cover photo: "The Road of the Death," by Chris Bridenstine and Alex Davis. It was shown during the 2007 "Un Museo de la Región Andina" exhibit curated by Spanish 232 students.

Check us out on the web: www.lsa.umich.edu/rll

27th Hayward Keniston Lecture:

We Have Never Been Jewish: Notes on Blood and Community

by Professor Jarrod Hayes



Poster from the 2008 Keniston Lecture

On February 14, 2008, Gil Anidjar delivered the 27th Annual Hayward Keniston Lecture, entitled "We Have Never Been Jewish: Notes on Blood and Community." Anidjar, associate professor of Religion and Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia University, is the author of "Our Place in al-Andalus": *Kabbalah, Philosophy, Literature in Arab Jewish Letters* (2002), *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy* (2003), and *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (2008). He is also the editor of *Jacques Derrida's Acts of Religion* (2002). His next book, nearing completion, is entitled *Blood: A Critique of Christianity*, and was the basis of his lecture.

Anidjar's current research explores kinship and commonalities between Jews and Arabs, and between Judaism and Islam. He explores this not just in strictly religious terms, but also in broader cultural ones, challenging definitions of these terms that rely on their mutual exclusion. As the title of his upcoming book suggests, Anidjar turns the critical eye that defines his previous work towards the third of the Abrahamic religions, Christianity, which he considers not only as a religion in the strictest sense, but also as a political system, a philosophy, and a system of thought. Anidjar uses Christianity as a term capable of encompassing other concepts, systems, discourses, and structures such as Europe, the West, Enlightenment, secularism, colonialism, and Orientalism, which have already been subjected to rigorous analyses and critiques. Within this wider critique, Anidjar focuses particular attention on blood as a metaphor for race and as a racializing metaphor.

Anidjar argues that Christians have often projected onto Judaism an obsession with blood, not only in the extreme example of anti-Semitic accounts of blood libel, but also in the persistent definition of Jewish identity as passed through bloodlines. In a wide-ranging and carefully historicized talk, Anidjar pointed to the importance of blood in Christianity, particularly medieval Christianity, and the relative unimportance of blood as a marker of lineage in early Judaism, through which Christian thinkers identified cultural otherness and all the exclusions such otherness entails.

Post-Literature in Latin America

A Colloquium to explore the meaning of "post-literature"

by Professor Kate Jenckes

On March 14-15, 2008 the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures co-hosted, with the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, a colloquium entitled *Post-Literature in Latin America*. The colloquium addressed the question of literature's status and function in Latin America. It sought to explore the meanings and uses of the critically popular term *post-literature*, which appears to signify both the death of the institution of literature and an ongoing literary production that is substantially different from traditional conceptions of literature: post-literature designates forms of representation that perform a crisis and transformation in the practice, purpose, or possibilities of literary and artistic representation. The organizers resisted the strictly chronological sense of the prefix "post," preferring to understand the term not as a chronological category or as a literary period, but instead as the index of a limit or a caesura *within* literary and artistic history—one, however, that may be especially prevalent in contemporary works. Although the majority of the papers focused on literary texts (prominent contemporary writers such as César Aira, Diamela Eltit, Carmen Boullosa, and Mario Bellatin were analyzed alongside more established writers such as Andrés Bello and Jorge Luis Borges), photography and film were also considered. Since literature has traditionally been tied to nationalism in Latin America, post-literary interrogations of the national paradigm were pivotal for the discussion. Responding to recent issues in Latin American studies, the genre of *testimonio* as a fundamental manifestation of post-literature was also questioned. By pushing at the limits of the two primary poles of traditional conceptions of politics, the subject and the nation, (post)-literature gets at the very heart of what politics is, opening up new possibilities for political and ethical practice. Although they enthusiastically contributed to the association of post-literature and a re-thinking of politics, the colloquium's three eminent discussants, Gareth Williams, Brett Levinson, and Alberto Moreiras, also had words of caution for the use of the term post-literature. The participants of the colloquium are currently working to develop the presentations and the ensuing discussion into a volume of essays.



Poster from the colloquium

Focus

Città nomadi: Esodo e autonomia nella metropoli contemporanea

Professor Vincenzo Binetti discusses representations of urban space and its use in defining national identity in Italy



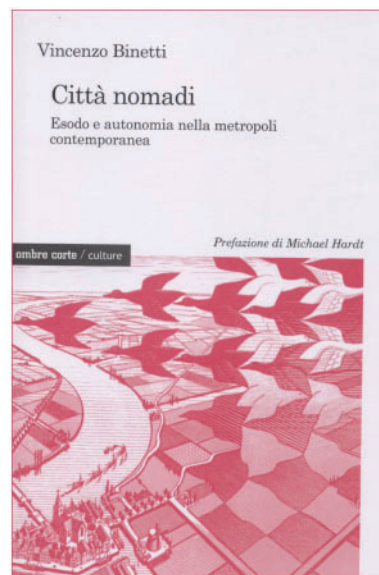
Professor Vincenzo Binetti

“My book will allow for a radical rethinking of globalization...”

My book makes use of the concepts of “autonomy” and “nomadism” in order to generate a provocative re-reading of the representation of urban space in key texts of Italian literature, which in turn enables a radical rethinking of the city as a strategic symbol of modernity and its crisis. *Città nomadi* explores the relationship between the representation of urban space in twentieth century Italian culture and the developing definition of national identity through a number of critical moments before and after Italian reunification—that is to say, from the early 1910s, through the “Reconstruction” period of the 1950s until the so-called Second Republic of the 1990s. I address the peculiarity of Italian national history at these critical moments in order to demonstrate how the representation of urban space, and of the city as a “positive” symbol of modernity, served to generate a certain image of national identity within which an Italian “people” could be identified. These were emblematic historical periods in which the prevailing intention was, in fact, to project in the audience’s collective imaginary an idea of the “Italian people” tenaciously and enthusiastically engaged in the construction of a new national identity in which urbanization was a central component. The book also uncovers a series of marginalized texts produced by various contemporary sub-cultures that were opposed to the prevailing nationalistic culture. I argue that these cultural products questioned the political and ideological hegemonic discourses of the time, and thus

led to a crisis of modernity and its myths. My book, therefore, examines—by means of its exploration of representations of the symbolic space of the city and the alienated condition of those who inhabit it—the problematic political-cultural reality of a nation in crisis. The writers and intellectuals whose texts I explore explicitly present in their work the profound conflicts of a modernity that, through the violent process of self-celebration and a concomitant urgent desire to reconstruct a new, “strong,” productive and homogenous national identity, ended up ignoring the signs of discontent and of anger that specific marginalized and would-be autonomous areas and communities were constantly trying to express.

The urban space presented in some of these novels appears therefore diversified into a series of interesting “grey areas” and of stimulating territorial destabilizations; in this respect the city becomes the specific historical location through which the crisis of the myths of the “Risorgimento” and of the “Resistance,” and the vain ambition implicit in the process of reconstructing a new *patria* (homeland) and a more credible national identity, could be narrated. My elaboration of the notions of “autonomy” and “nomadism” has implications for the way in which we usually interpret and visualize the city, both as a literary imaginary and as a strategic space where notions of “centrality” and “marginality” can be renegotiated; furthermore, by addressing the inevitable crisis of the traditional notion of nation-state and through the identification of sub-national and transnational categories, my book allows for a radical rethinking of globalization, which the “global” city in itself problematically embodies.



Città nomadi: Esodo e autonomia nella metropoli contemporanea

Focus on Faculty

Department Chair Michèle Hannoosh presented papers at Brown University, at the Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art, Paris, at the International Association of Word and Image Studies, Paris, and gave a keynote lecture at the Société des dix-neuviémistes annual conference in Manchester (UK). She published “Peinture, caricature, maquillage: Baudelaire et l'art moderne,” in *Charles Baudelaire: Dichter und Kunstkritiker*, ed. K. West-erwelle (Würzburg, 2007), and “Between Ingres, Delacroix and the Pre-Raphaelites: A (No Longer) Anonymous French painter in Italy,” *Burlington Magazine*, May 2008.

Italian Elementary Program Director Romana Habekovic is a coauthor of *A vicenda* (McGraw-Hill, 2008), a comprehensive Italian language program for intermediate-level students. It is a two-volume program.

Italian Elementary Program Director Romana Habekovic and Italian Coordinator Sandra Palaich published a textbook for third-year culture and conversation courses entitled *Parola a te!* (Heinle Cengage Learning, 2009). The textbook has a companion web site, and an audio and video component. It is already being used in Italian 275 courses.

Professor of French David Caron's new book *My Father and I: The Marais and the Queerness of Community* will be coming out in February 2009 from Cornell University Press. He gave a guest lecture at the University of Sydney in June 2008 and will give another guest lecture at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in November 2008.

Professor of Spanish Teresa Satterfield received a Spring/Summer Rackham faculty grant to continue work on her computer model of bilingual first language acquisition, ‘Babycat’. Her commentary on Christiansen & Chater’s article “Language as Shaped by the Brain,” is to appear in the journal *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.

Professor of Italian Giorgio Bertellini was a contributor and co-editor of *The National/Nation and Early Cinema* (John Libbey, 2008). He also contributed audio commentary to “The Italian” (DVD) and an interview for “The World Beyond Wiseguys: Italian Americans & the Movies” (2008) broadcast by PBS. Currently, he is editing *Italian Silent Cinema: A Reader*.

Lecturer of French Rachael Criso directed the French Internship Program which completed its 6th successful summer, sending 12 French concentrators to work in several French cities including: Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Agde and Digoon.

Professor of Spanish Gustavo Verdesio published three new articles: “From the Erasure to the Rewriting of Indigenous Pasts: The Troubled Life of Archaeology in Uruguay” in *Handbook of South American Archaeology* Eds. Helaine Silverman and William H. Isbell (Berlin: Springer, 2008); “Mapping the Geopolitics of Contact: Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and Western Knowledge” in *A Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture*, ed. Sara Castro-Klarén (London: Blackwell, 2008); and in the same volume, “Cultural Modalities and Cross Cultural Connections: Rock Across Class and Ethnic Identities.”

Insight

RLL Affiliates

by Professor David Caron

RLL has almost two dozen faculty affiliates. Affiliates are scholars from a wide range of departments and programs across the University whose interests, specialties and concerns often go beyond literature and culture but connect closely with those of our department. They are historians and anthropologists, musicologists and political scientists, linguists and classicists; their primary homes are the Program in American Culture, the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies, the Departments of Women’s Studies, History of Art, Theater and Drama, Screen Arts, English, and so on. What they all have in common is their interest in matters related to countries and cultures that are RLL’s objects of study. For example, the latest scholar to join the ranks of our affiliates, Mark Padilla of the School of Public Health and the Department of Anthropology, studies the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Mexico. His unique expertise is a precious addition to our faculty’s research on Latin America, gender, and sexuality.

These scholars’ affiliation with RLL is a way to facilitate their contributions to many of our endeavors (and ours to theirs), such as participation in conferences, invitations of guest speakers, and other avenues of intellectual exchange and collaboration between our units. The affiliates’ availability to sit on dissertation committees and to offer courses of interest to our graduate students is another crucial dimension of the program. Given our students’ propensity increasingly to pursue research projects that cut across established disciplinary boundaries, affiliates offer them unique possibilities to develop as multifaceted scholars themselves and acquire the sort of expertise that will be extremely valuable when they embark on their own careers.

RLL’s affiliate program is an opportunity for our department to match the geographical, historical and cultural diversity that, by definition, characterizes Romance Studies with the vibrant life of the University and of the world beyond, and continues to produce groundbreaking research. Our affiliates’ names and home units appear on our webpage. Check them out: www.lsa.umich.edu/rll/deptdir/affiliates.html.

The New Romance Languages and Literatures Concentration

Professor Jarrod Hayes discusses the new concentration and its benefits to students



Professor Jarrod Hayes

The Department is proud to announce that, after several years of hard work, its new concentration in Romance Languages and Literatures has been approved by the University. We have long collected anecdotal evidence that a significant number of our students desired a concentration which would include more than one Romance language. In response to this student demand, we have developed a comparative concentration that will not only ensure maximum language proficiency in both languages, but also create a “bridge” between the two languages to encourage students both to discover and to make connections between them. Nonetheless, while the RLL concentration is heavier than most humanities concentrations, we have kept the credits required for the concentration lower than might otherwise be the case, by counting fewer lower-level courses than in other language-based concentrations. This encourages students to begin upper-level coursework after the minimum prerequisites. We have also created a concentration with enough flexibility to give students the choice between treating the languages somewhat equally or having “primary” and “secondary” languages.



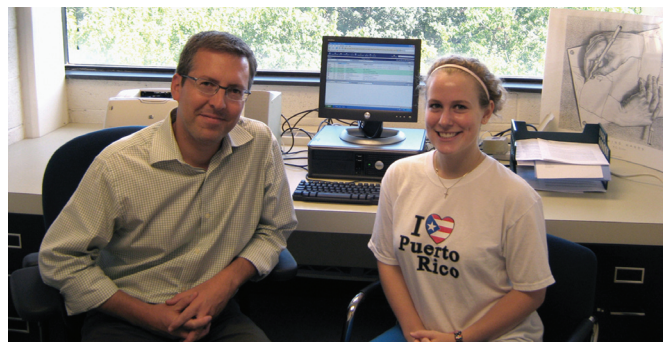
Professor Jarrod Hayes (center) with his Senior Seminar in Romance Languages & Literatures class (RomLang #498).

The requirements for the concentration consist of 42 credits divided into two general groups. Part I consists of courses taken in the target languages and corresponds to courses students would take if they were concentrating in a single language. Part II is designed as a “bridge” between the two languages fostering both practical/linguistic and intellectual components. It is this part of the requirements that is the most distinctive aspect of the concentration and makes it unique in the country. The requirement is one course in Romance philology or linguistics grounds the concentration in a basic understanding of the linguistic “kinship” between Romance languages. Students also must take an elective, which encourages them to explore the intellectual connections between the fields of French and Francophone studies, Hispanic studies, and Italian studies. It will also foster both a comparative

and interdisciplinary understanding of Romance studies. All RLL concentrators will be enrolled in a senior seminar during the Fall semester of their senior year. The seminar builds on students’ prior coursework to reinforce connections between courses in French, Italian, and Spanish, offer an introduction to the methods of Romance Studies, and explore potential topics for which crossing boundaries between languages might provide productive avenues of inquiry (e.g. the pan-Romance Caribbean, pre- and early-modern studies, Mediterranean studies, comparative fascism). A major component of the senior seminar is the individual research project tailored to each student’s linguistic competence. For students opting to write an honors thesis in RLL, the senior seminar constitutes the fall semester of work on the thesis. This seminar is being offered for the first time in fall 2008.

The RLL concentration offers a challenging concentration for advanced students. Students who come to Michigan with training in more than one Romance language are especially urged to consider an RLL concentration. Those with AP credits in French, Italian, or Spanish, are also invited to do so, for early planning can make it possible to concentrate in RLL even if starting the second language from scratch. With some additional coursework in each language, students may also use the RLL concentration for a major in one language and a minor in the other for the purposes of a teaching certification in both languages.

For more information, students should contact the RLL main office of the Department to make an appointment with the RLL advisor.



Professor Enrique García Santo-Tomás with Spanish concentrator Lisa Stibitz.

Spanish 232: Special Topics

by Lecturer Carlos de los Santos

Topic courses in Spanish at the University of Michigan were first introduced in the mid 90’s as a way to involve professors in the teaching of language courses. By means of these special topic courses they were able to combine their own field of study and research interests with the teaching of language. More recently lecturers have taken the lead in proposing and offering these courses.

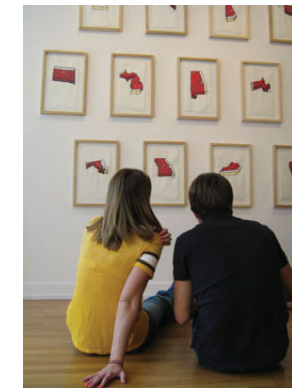
A great variety of topic courses have been taught in our department: courses on history (*Historia de España contemporánea, Historia contemporánea de España a través de la música, Las tres Culturas en la España Medieval*), on literature (*Representing Lorca, Magic Realism in Southern Cone Literature*), on economics and commerce (*Business Spanish*), and on many other aspects of culture (*Cataluña, Spanish Cinema and Mass Media, Spanish Cuisine, Andalucía ...etc*).



Lecturer Cristina Reina-Nieto (on the right in red) instructs her students in the art of flamenco.



Lecturer Cristina Reina-Nieto demonstrates flamenco.



Students Caryn Kosteva (L) and Mike Walle (R) take a closer look at a display in the “edibles” exhibit at the Work Gallery.

In the Fall 2008 semester we are offering three interesting and very different topic courses: *Andalucía y el Flamenco*, designed and taught by Cristina Reina-Nieto, focuses on the development of the students’ understanding and appreciation of Andalusian history, culture and society through the discovery and discussion of its valuable past, dynamic present and challenging future, with a special emphasis on Flamenco music. Cristina is bringing her personal experience and background as an Andalusian and professional flamenco dancer.

Tatiana Calixto is teaching *Un Museo de la Region Andina*. The course is a collection of topics focusing on Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. The topics recognize and explore the geographic, cultural, and historical similarities and differences of the societies that have come to be known as the Andean Region. The course examines and analyzes how these topics interconnect and differ from one another. Another important part of the course is to relate these Andean cultural manifestations to one’s own culture and experience. In Winter Term 2008, students in Tati’s class held an exhibit exploring various topics of the Andean Region. Visitors were able to get a taste of the traditions and customs of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. The exhibit consisted of student-made presentations through dance, photography, video and more.

This fall 2008 semester, Tati has just returned from Peru where she has been doing research for her class thanks to grants from the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and the LSA Dean’s Office.

Finally, Raquel Gonzalez is teaching *Readings from Argentina, Chile and Peru*. This new course incorporates written and visual texts to explore the culture of these countries. Raquel brings into the classroom her experience as a language instructor and her previous experience as a Spanish 232 topic course instructor on Southern Cone literature.



Students Lauren Kaprick (L) and Adam Lieberman (R) at the “edibles” exhibit at the Work Gallery.



Rachel Sullivan takes notes at the “Out of the Ordinary/Extraordinary Japanese Contemporary Photography” exhibit at University of Michigan Museum of Art Offsite.



Lecturer Tati Calixto discussing the images at the “Out of the Ordinary/Extraordinary Japanese Contemporary Photography” exhibit at University of Michigan Museum of Art Offsite.

The RLL Graduate Program

Every year the graduate program fills out with new faces and new imaginations. This year we have a large and vital cohort of new graduate students, whose interests range through medieval French, to colonial Latin America, to the African novel, to contemporary poetry and politics in Spanish. Two have been among us already as lecturers; the rest are newly arrived. They bring us, in addition to their formidable academic creativity, many other talents, from musical theater to poetry and even baking, among, of course, many other things.

The graduate students as a community continue to create things together. In April 2008, the graduate-student-organized e-journal *Tiresias* published its second issue, "We're Still Lying and Other Truths," with scholarly and creative contributions from faculty and graduate students from our own and other universities. Issue 3, "Politicizing Sexuality" will appear later this year.

Graduate students are also organizing the 16th Annual Charles Fraker Conference, to be held this year on November 7th and 8th. Celebrated philosopher Alain Badiou—author of *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (1999) and *Being & Event* (2005)—will be the keynote speaker, along with Eduardo Cadava and Bruno Bosteels. That the graduate-student organizers secured such a celebrated and exciting keynote speaker shows clearly the seriousness and professionalism of their approach to organizing the conference, and the papers of all the participants will give us reason to celebrate the graduate community as well as its guests.

Our students Sharon Marquart, Michelle Miller, Ana Ros, Anne McGee, Leslie Marsh, Patricia Keller, and Jon Snyder have received their doctorates and made their advisors, professors, and friends very proud.



Catherine Brown
Graduate Chair

The President's Challenge

UM-Ann Arbor has over 17,000 graduate and professional students but fewer than 1,500 endowed accounts to support them. A full graduate or professional fellowship can cost upwards of \$50,000 a year. With the success of the Michigan Difference Campaign, the President's Challenge: Phase II was created to address one of the most pressing ongoing needs for every school and college across the University campus. It will allow donors the opportunity to use their gifts to support graduate and professional students, realizing that financial support is an important part of UM's ability to attract top students from around the world to the University. These students often go on to become professors, leading researchers, doctors, lawyers, outstanding teachers, and other professionals. Having top graduate and professional students also helps UM attract and retain talented faculty who want to teach them. The scholarships that donors create through the Phase II Challenge will directly help UM maintain its prestige and international leadership, by helping the University attract the best graduate and professional students.

The Phase II Challenge is a 1 for 2 match for endowment and expendable gifts, up to \$1 million per donor (ex. a \$200,000 contribution would generate a \$100,000 match). The Phase II Challenge began on September 1, 2007 and will continue until \$40 million is committed in gifts to graduate and professional student support, triggering \$20 million in Presidential matching money, or until the Michigan Difference Campaign ends on December 31, 2008, whichever comes first. The challenge allows donors to direct their graduate support gift to the department of their choice and welcomes expendable gifts of any amount, while an individual endowment can be opened for \$50,000. For more information on how you can help support the graduate and professional students of UM visit www.giving.umich.edu/where/presidents_challenge.htm. You can also contact the LSA Development office directly at (734) 615-6333.

Meet the *New* Graduate Students

We offer our best wishes to this year's Ph.Ds who are taking up positions at other universities:

Patricia Keller (Spanish)
Cornell University

Sharon Marquart (French)
University of Houston

Leslie Marsh (Spanish)
Georgia State University

Ana Ros (Spanish)
State University of New York-
Binghamton

Jon Snyder (Spanish)
Syracuse University Program
in Madrid

We are also pleased to have **Anne McGee** and **Michelle Miller** continue in RLL with post-doctoral appointments.



Maria Canal
(French)
M.A., University of
Geneva

Interests: medieval
French



David Collinge
(Spanish)
B.A., Boise State
University

Interests:
contemporary Spain



**Diógenes Costa
Currás**
(Spanish)
B.A., Universidad de
Santiago

Interests:
contemporary
Spanish literature,
film, trauma



Laura Herbert
(Spanish)
B.A., Ohio State
University

Interests: testimonio
& subaltern studies



Gabriel Horowitz
(Spanish)
B.A., State University
of New York, Buffalo
(SUNY)

Interests:
20th-century Latin
America, especially
Borges



Tapha Ly
(French)
M.A., Kansas State
University

Interests: African
novel, focusing on
Francophone and
English



Monica Renta
(Spanish)
B.A., Harvard
University

Interests: early
20th-century Latin
America



Angelica Serna
(Italian)
M.A., Johns Hopkins
University

Interests: Italian
poetic form in
20th-century Latin
America



Chad Simpson
(French)
B.A., Vanderbilt
University

Interests: medieval
French



Martin Vega
(Spanish)
B.A., University of
California, Irvine

Interests: Latin
American literature
and politics



Brian Whitener
(Spanish)
M.A., University of
Chicago

Interests:
neoliberalism & Latin
American studies;
poetry & translation

A Talk With Ronni Lacroute

by Professor Michèle Hannoosh

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UM alumna and philanthropist

The Department owes an enormous debt of gratitude to RLL alumna Ronni Lacroute (M.A. French, 1967), who, over the past several years, has funded full-year graduate fellowships in the Romance languages. "I am grateful for the graduate student support I received at UM," she said recently in an interview with RLL Chair Michèle Hannoosh, "and I would like to give the same opportunity to the current generation. With more and more students coming out of their undergraduate degree burdened with loans, graduate school is not always an option for even the most talented students. I would like to enable the Department to attract the best students, regardless of their financial situation."

Ronni Lacroute had what she considers an ordinary suburban-American childhood in Montgomery County, Maryland, until her family moved to Poland while she was in high school. "My father worked for the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission, which was charged with settling the claims of US citizens originally from other countries, whose lands had been confiscated by foreign governments. My family lived in Warsaw and I was sent to the International School in Geneva." There she was introduced to French. Her high-school Latin gave her a good basis for learning. "I am a great proponent of learning Latin first," she says. "It makes learning the other Romance languages so much easier." At the International School she had classes in a variety of languages and had schoolmates from around the world, from the son of Charlie Chaplin to the daughter of the Aga Khan. "I took a wide range of courses and was introduced to many different ways of thinking," she recalls. The experience would prove to be decisive.



Ronni Lacroute
courtesy of Ronni Lacroute

Lacroute returned to the US to enter Cornell University, where she kept up her French while exploring other subjects, notably the social sciences. "I was interested in so many things and I availed myself of what was there," she says. She developed a strong interest in international development and considered majoring in Economics, but encountered her first gender barrier: "We don't recommend that for women," she was advised. French would provide the means for her to realize her interest in, and commitment to, international relations. She spent her junior year at the Institut d'Études Politiques in Paris ("Sciences Po"), where she studied International Development. She remembers having to take part in staged debates on issues of international development: "Once I was assigned to take the position of Fidel Castro. Another time, in a mock-UN assembly, I was given the role of China. I probably couldn't run for office now, with that background," she jokes. Yet the experience opened her mind to other perspectives: "Everyone came from different countries, including those of the Middle East and North Africa," she recalls. Her new friendships led to an extended trip to North Africa as a 20-year-old undergraduate, deepening her understanding of the challenges facing developing countries.

Lacroute entered UM with a graduate fellowship and has fond memories of her time here. "UM didn't seem a huge institution because of the small-team approach to everything," she says. "It was almost like going to a small college, with lots of personal attention." She remembers taking part in a pilot project run by Professor Michel Benamou, on new methods of teaching French, including the "immersion" method which is now standard practice in most foreign-language programs. "It was so impressive," she remembers. "I had to write the curriculum. It was very exciting." In her subsequent teaching career, first at Suffolk University in Boston and then in high schools in the Boston area, she continued to seek out innovative and unorthodox ways of teaching French to capture the interest of students, from making films to adapting the "Dating Game" to a French context! In one of her appointments she was asked to teach Spanish, which she had never studied: "I dove into it," she says, "teaching myself Spanish by watching films and listening to tapes." Now she is fluent in Spanish; she has travelled extensively through Mexico by bike and taught music to disadvantaged children in Costa Rica.

Five years ago Lacroute established a donor-advised fund at the Cornell University Foundation, donating money mostly to education, neurosciences research, and the arts. Why her interest in neuroscience? At age 50, she had a cerebral hemorrhage and grand mal seizure caused by a previously undetected congenital malformation of the blood vessels in her brain. After undergoing surgery at Stanford University Hospital for seven and a half hours, she went on to a complete recovery. Since then, she has taken a great interest in brain research and has funded a chair in neuroscience at Stanford.

With her former husband, pioneer computer engineer Bernard Lacroute (UM MSE, 1967), she now runs the Willakenzie Estate vineyard and winery in Oregon's Willamette Valley, over one hundred acres of mostly pinot grapes which have produced fine wines for some of the world's best restaurants. While looking forward to building the business, she remains involved in education and the arts; she is a trustee of Linfield College, a liberal arts institution in McMinnville, Oregon, and she is on the Board of Directors of Chamber Music Northwest, which holds a highly regarded summer festival annually at Reed College in Portland.

What is Lacroute's advice for today's students? "Study broadly, go outside your own field and learn as much as you can. It will all be useful some day. Learn to think outside the box. That will help you solve problems which you don't even know about yet. Read widely and don't be afraid to discuss." She also hopes that humanists and scientists will work to understand each other more. From French literature to neuroscience to the science — and art — of wine-production, Lacroute herself bears out this last ideal especially well.

Alumni News

If you are not a member of the U-M Alumni Association, it is easy to join. Simply visit the website mentioned below, or call the Association directly at (734) 764-0384 or (800) 847-4764.

Nancy Daines (Dorsey) (M.A. Spanish 1955)
"I'm teaching Spanish in a private school; Bill, my husband, teaches in the UM Dental School part-time. We have 13 grandchildren."

John J. Janc (M.A. French 1968)
"I was elected vice president of the North Central Region of Pi Delta Phi, the national French honor society."
Email: john.janc@mnsu.edu

Ronni Lacroute (M.A. French 1967)
"I spent my first career as a professor and high school teacher of French and now own a winery in Oregon, where I still speak French and produce Pinot Noir. Please come visit Willakenzie Estate!"
Email: rlacroute@willakenzie.com

Margaret (Goldin) Lincoln (AB French 1970)
taught French in Australia, returning to Ann Arbor for an AMS in library science. Since 1973 she has worked as a high school library media specialist in Battle Creek, Michigan and earned a Ph.D. in information science from the University of North Texas in 2006. She now enjoys teaching online for San José State University.
Email: mlincoln@lakeviewspartans.org

We want to hear from YOU!!

Send an e-mail to rll.editor@umich.edu or mail in this reply.

Name: _____ Graduation year: _____

Degree/Language: _____ E-mail address: _____

(Your e-mail will be included in your Alumni Note, unless you note otherwise)

Your news for Alumni Notes (please limit to 2-3 sentences):

Contact us:

Attn: Editor
Romance Languages and Literatures
The University of Michigan
4108 Modern Languages Building
812 East Washington Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1275

The Chiara Maria Levin Award for Breadth and Excellence in the Romance Languages

Chiara Maria Levin (1984-2007) graduated with honors from the University of Michigan in May 2006, with a concentration in French and Francophone Studies. She was fluent not just in French but also in Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Unfortunately, Levin had barely begun her adult life when she was killed by a stray bullet in a gang-land shoot-out. In remembrance, family and friends have joined together to endow a fund in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures for outstanding students who share Levin's love of language.

This endowment funds two awards, granted by the faculty of RLL. One award is an annual prize to a graduating senior who, like Levin, has demonstrated exceptional achievement in the study of the Romance languages and literatures. Levin's life and academic work were greatly enriched by a semester spent in Montpellier, France. For that reason, the second award is a travel grant given to an undergraduate planning to study abroad.

Additional contributions to this endowment fund are welcome. Please make checks payable to "The University of Michigan" and note the name of this fund on the check. Mail to: David Cave, Ph.D., LSA Development, Suite 5000, 500 S. State Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

To read more on this fund and others relating to the department, visit us on the web:
www.lsa.umich.edu/rll/alumni/giving.html.

The Regents of the University of Michigan: David A. Brandon, Laurence B. Deitch, Olivia O. Maynard, Rebecca McGowan, Andrea Fischer Newman, Andrew C. Richner, S. Martin Taylor, Katherine E. White, Mary Sue Coleman (ex-officio)

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