

# Romance Studies 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium

## Panels, Abstracts and Bios

March 26, 2021

### *Colonialism, Slavery, and Antisemitism in Pre-Modern Spain*

(Moderator: *Elvira Vilches*)

(Respondents: *José María Rodríguez García, Melissa Simmermeyer*)

**Anna Davis &  
Alex Hoffman**

**Cultura y cambio: El colonialismo y la esclavitud / *Culture and Change:  
Colonialism and Slavery***

*Bio:* Anna is a sophomore at Duke University majoring in chemistry with a double minor in economics and Spanish. She is a Duke University SPIRE Fellow, a member of the Becker research lab, and vice president of Duke University Speakers and Stage. She graduated from Grimsley High School in Greensboro, North Carolina as a member of the Spanish Immersion Magnet Program and worked as a Spanish-English translator for ER Law in Greensboro, North Carolina. She plans to pursue a PhD in chemistry with a focus in medicinal development.

*Bio:* Alex is a sophomore at Duke University majoring in Public Policy and minoring in Spanish and History. He is the Vice President of the Alexander Hamilton Society and a research assistant for the Wilson Center for Science and Justice. After graduating high school, he interned for Lasker Consulting in Madrid working as a policy analyst and marketing assistant. This past summer, he drafted policy briefs and educational material as part of a DukeEngage program tasked with researching how Paraguay could leverage its abundant energy supplies to promote sustainable development. He plans to attend law school.

*Abstract:* What is culture? How do we interact with it? In what ways can it be commodified, contained, marginalized? Driven by these questions, our presentation aims to explore the particular dynamics of minority cultural practices within dominant, and often hostile, environments. Focusing specifically on the sub-Saharan legacies of flamenco in Spain, we draw connections between dominant social constructions like colonialism and slavery and the observable evolution of specific cultural practices. The presentation will utilize historical and linguistic research to both sketch a cultural history of flamenco in Spain and provide a model for cultural interactions between asymmetric forces. Often African communities in Spain and indigenous peoples in the Americas are defined by the marginalization and cultural erasure they have suffered. Rather than showing a complete history of oppressed communities, we hope to illustrate one community's cultural adaptation and evolution in the hope that it will serve as a model for future research.

**Sophie Barry &  
Sydney Gavisser**

***Antisemitism and Slavery in Early Modern Spain: An Artistic Analysis***

*Bio:* Sydney and Sophie are both juniors at Duke. Sydney studies Public Policy with minors in history and Spanish. Sophie studies psychology with minors in Spanish and cultural anthropology. Both students hope to use their Spanish language throughout their lives and would love the chance to see the art they studied in person.

*Abstract:* Our presentation deals with the portrayal of Africans and Jews in various art pieces from the early modern period in Spain. We discuss how these particular art pieces had the power to both promote discrimination and create visibility for marginalized groups. Each piece represents a rare look into the worlds of minorities in a highly classist time period with strict divisions between people in different hierarchical classes. In addition to class structure, we also analyze the art through the lens of religious structure. We compare the ways in which the two groups were depicted and discuss how this plays into the politics and society of early modern Spain. Our project has a special focus on blood purity and its role in early modern Spanish culture with respect to Jewish visibility. We complemented our artistic analysis with primary and secondary literature research concerning art and culture of the time period with respect to the various artists we studied. These artists include Juan de Pareja, Andrés Sánchez Gallque and Diego Velasquez.

## **Language and Equity: Case Studies on Mental Health, Asylum, and Obesity**

(Moderator: Joan Clifford)

(Respondents: Luciana Fellin, Liliana Paredes)

**Katie Tsai**

### ***Pour le bien-être psychologique: The Role of U.S. Schools in Improving Refugee Children's Mental Health***

*Bio:* Katie is a sophomore from Andover, MA majoring in English and Visual and Media Studies and minoring in French Studies. Learning about refugee experiences in Professor Reisinger's course, Global Displacement: Voix Francophones, and tutoring refugee youth for World Relief Durham inspired her to research ways to improve the mental health of child refugees in the U.S. In addition to her volunteer work, Katie is a member of Duke Chinese Dance and Embodiment Contemporary Dance. After graduation, she hopes to become either a professor of English and Asian American Studies or a filmmaker.

*Abstract:* Because of the hardships refugee children face in their native country, during migration, and while resettling in their host country (Papazian-Zohrabian et al. "Prendre en compte l'expérience pré-, péri- et post-migratoire des élèves réfugiés afin de favoriser leur accueil et leur expérience socioscolaire." *Alterstice*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2018, pg. 102), they often suffer from mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Fazel and Stein. "The mental health of refugee children." *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, vol. 87, no. 5, 2002, pg. 367). Researchers Ingleby and Watters recommend addressing these mental health problems before they become disruptive or debilitating, and they suggest that schools help their students with this process ("Refugee children at school: good practices in mental health and social care." *Education and Health*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2002, pg. 43). Indeed, a variety of school-based programs from countries around the world have been successful. Primary and secondary schools in the United States need to offer child refugees a program dedicated to improving their mental health. In order to establish such a program, schools should partner with local non-governmental organizations that focus on refugee reintegration.

**Gwyneth Bernier**

### ***Le Cas en Faveur de la Persécution Linguistique Comme Base Internationale de l'Asile: The Case for Language-Based Genocide as an International Basis of Asylum***

*Bio:* Gwyneth Bernier is a sophomore majoring in International Comparative Studies with a specialization in the francophone regions of North and Central Africa. On campus, she works at the Kenan Institute for Ethics doing research, service, and advocacy focused on the refugee population in the Triangle Area.

*Abstract:* This paper uses a case study of the ongoing Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon as evidence of the existence of language-based genocide as its own entity without a corresponding ethnic group. Since Cameroon's independence, the country has been divided into the English-speaking minority (20%) in the Southwest and the French-speaking majority (80%) everywhere else; these regional divisions are a direct result of European colonization, not of differing ethnic groups occupying the same space. In fact, Cameroon is relatively tolerant of different religious and ethnic groups. However, the francophone government's implementation of policies that restrict access to higher education, jobs, and government benefits to French-speakers has resulted in Anglophone strife and protests over the past decade. In response to these protests and anglophone calls for a separatist movement, the francophone government has committed extreme and systematic acts of violence against anglophone villages all over the country in a planned genocide that has displaced 500,000 anglophones. However, because these refugees have no basis of asylum under international law--the five bases being race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion--they have had great difficulty finding asylum and resettlement. While this is one of the most extreme and clear-cut examples of why language should be added as a basis of asylum, other refugee groups would also benefit from this addition, such as the Rohingya in Myanmar and the Uighur Muslims in China.

**Angie Anaeme**

### ***Differences, disparities, and developments in the obesity epidemic among Hispanic and Native American communities in Arizona***

*Bio:* Angie is a third-year undergraduate student from Gilbert, Arizona. She is studying Evolutionary Anthropology and Global Health, and is eager to pursue a career in medicine. As a native of the Southwest, Angie

has borne witness to the importance of cultural competence in the field of medicine, particularly in areas with large Hispanic and Native American communities. Owing to these experiences, Angie aspires to become fluent in Spanish and directly apply the knowledge gained from her research studies as a healthcare provider. Outside of academics, Angie is involved on campus as a resident assistant, a member of the Duke Student Alumni Board, president of You Can Too, and a dancer for the Duke Dancing Devils.

*Abstract:* Obesity rates have risen substantially within the last decade, and these numbers are projected to continue to escalate in the coming years. Although the effects of this health crisis have had devastating impacts across the nation as a whole, some demographics have been inordinately impacted by this chronic disease compared to others. The Hispanic and Native American communities in the state of Arizona demonstrate these disproportionate effects clearly: while the state experiences an overall obesity rate of 29.5%, its resident Hispanic communities and Native American communities have obesity rates of 69.8% and 77.5%, respectively. These drastic inequities are the result of an array of social, cultural, and institutional factors. This research video seeks to explore the factors that have contributed to the high obesity rates among Hispanic and Native American communities in Arizona, which include accessibility, local and federal policies, preventive medicine, and local programs.

### **Broken Promises: Social Cognition, Public Health, and Mental Illness Past and Present**

*(Moderator: Joan Clifford)*

*(Respondents: Deborah, Jensen, Walter Mignolo)*

#### **Alex Raghunandan     *The Comparison of French and English Indo-Caribbean Literary Depictions of Indentured Servitude and its Associated Neurological Implications***

*Bio:* Alex is a senior at Duke University majoring in Neuroscience and French. He was born in Manhattan, raised in New Jersey, and eventually moved to Los Angeles to attend UCLA. As a sophomore, he transferred to Duke. Since being at Duke, he has conducted research on cognitive neuroscience and global reproductive health. This project on the Indo-Caribbean diaspora serves as his senior thesis in both the neuroscience and French departments and is especially meaningful to him because it highlights his Guyanese ancestry. After graduation, Alex will be starting medical school in the fall where he hopes to increase representation in the healthcare profession while continuing to conduct research on the various social determinants of health.

*Abstract:* The Indo-Caribbean diaspora is largely unstudied in current scientific literature. However, millions of people currently make up this demographic as descendants of indentured laborers migrating from India to various English and French colonies, including Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guadeloupe, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, who served as substitutes for slaves when slavery was illegalized in these colonies. Today, there is a high prevalence of neurological disorders, like substance abuse, dementia, anxiety, and depression that affect the Indo-Caribbean population. The potential connection between the harsh and debilitating lifestyle of these indentured laborers and the pathology of these disorders is largely unexamined. To fully understand the experience of the Indo-Caribbean population, this paper used numerous Indo-Caribbean novels, including *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *Butterfly in the Wind*, *Valmiki's Daughter*, *Aurore*, and *Coolie Woman*, to understand the migration process from India to the Caribbean, the daily life as an indentured laborer, and the transition from a laborer to a freed person in the era of decolonization. The characterization of the protagonists from each of these novels were examined through a social cognitive lens to understand how concepts like dehumanization, intergroup bias, and social defeat manifest in the environment. Then, these social cognition concepts were then studied through past research to analyze their possible pathological ties to the aforementioned neurological diseases to demonstrate the connection between indentured labor and the current prevalence of neurological disease. This interdisciplinary study between Indo-Caribbean literature and neuroscience is the first step to understand how indentured labor and coerced migration medically affect the current generation of Indo-Caribbean people.

#### **Alex Johnson     *Hypochondria and Mental Health in Molière's "Le Malade Imaginaire"***

*Bio:* Alex Johnson is a senior majoring in Public Policy and French with a certificate in Ethics. She's originally from Raleigh, and she is training a service dog named Franco.

*Abstract:* Argan, the main character from “Le Malade Imaginaire” is seen today as one of the most famous examples of a hypochondriac, or someone who believes that they have a plethora of illnesses when there is nothing physically wrong with them. This presentation will argue that by mocking Argan’s hypochondria, Molière has shown us how doctors in the 17th century viewed mental illness as a physical problem that could be resolved with various medicines. This play also reveals how the public in the 17th century viewed those with mental illness as disgusting people who poisoned their bodies with tons of medicines and suffered negatively physically and socially as a result. Argan is constantly made a mockery of throughout the play due to his mental illness. A lack of understanding surrounding mental illness is not just a problem that was present in the 17th century. Even today there remains a stigma around those with mental illness, and they are often labeled crazy just as Argan was by society and doctors. Analyzing how Argan’s hypochondria was treated shows us how society and the medical field have and haven’t progressed their views on mental illness.

**Osmay Pardias**

***Promesas Rotas: An Overview of Cuba’s Food Distribution Program “La Libreta” and its Impacts on Health***

*Bio:* Osmay is a senior from Texas majoring in Biology and minoring in Chemistry. After graduating, he hopes to attend medical school and become a physician. He is interested in the intersection of health and nutrition, particularly in the management of chronic illnesses. In his spare time, Osmay enjoys running and painting.

*Abstract:* *La Libreta* is a notebook through which Cuban families obtain subsidized food products in a regulated manner. Since its establishment in July 1963, *La Libreta* has undergone drastic changes. Even so, it remains indispensable in many Cuban households as the price of food bought through *La Libreta* is only 12% of the cost of food in the free market. Today products subsidized by the booklet per month per person include 5 eggs, a quarter pound of chicken, five pounds of rice, half a pound of oil, and 10 ounces of black beans. *La Libreta* also provides additional food to vulnerable individuals, such as pregnant women and children, and to individuals with chronic illnesses such as diabetes and high blood pressure. The resilience of *La Libreta*, despite its many changes over the past five decades, is a testament to the Cuban government’s commitment to nutritional well-being and equality. The problem is that this commitment is not fulfilled in practice. The food provided monthly through *La Libreta* is not enough to feed a family, and in recent years its volume has continued to decrease while the products offered through it lack diversity or a high nutritional value. Additionally, alternatives to *La Libreta* create great inequality regarding who has access to food. The failures of this system have manifested themselves in the health of Cubans throughout the island.

***Diversifying the Classics: Sex, Love, and Global Asymmetries***

*(Moderator: Martin Eisner)*

*(Respondents: Alyssa Granacki, Saskia Ziolkowski)*

**Griffin McDaniel**

***The Evolution of Giovanni Boccaccio’s The Decameron***

*Bio:* Griffin is a current senior majoring in Chemistry and Neuroscience and minoring in Italian Studies. In high school, he studied abroad in Viterbo, Italy for the 2015-2016 academic year, and his Romance Studies coursework at Duke has focused on Italian language, literature, and culture. After graduating from Duke, he intends to enroll in an MD-PhD program.

*Abstract:* Giovanni Boccaccio’s *The Decameron*, first published in the 14th century, is a fictional frame-story of 100 individual tales. It tells an ironic narrative of comedy, happiness, pleasure, story-telling, and sweet-escape as 10 friends flee Florence for the countryside during the Black Death. Due to the erotic content of the stories, particularly ones that reference the Catholic Church, Vatican authorities placed the work on the list of prohibited books during the 16th century Counter-Reformation. As a symbol of Florentine pride, a model for Italian prose, and a popular story, the book was reworked into more “appropriate” forms that the Vatican approved for distribution. Present in Duke’s Rubenstein Library, these editions highlight the book’s complexity as a cultural and linguistic icon through both content and materiality. The changes are frequently criticized as altering the meaning of the book. However, they have been necessary for its survival in future generations, and they mark a Darwinian course that speaks to this book’s significance as a model for literary evolution.

**Courtney Lee**

***The Psychology of the Dolce Serena: The Examination of Dante's Innovative View of Self-Control and Love in Purgatorio***

*Bio:* Courtney is a junior majoring in Psychology with a focus on Decision Sciences, as well as minoring in Italian and Statistics. She is interested in the intersections between social psychology and literature, as well as cross-disciplinary research between Dante studies, psychology, and decision sciences. In psychology, Courtney studies the different approaches across the literature of measuring, interpreting, and applying self-control. She hopes to continue analyzing the Divine Comedy and contributing her psychological perspectives to its formal discussions.

*Abstract:* In the past decade, psychologists have been raising to question the “universal” thought from Plato that inspired the more structured idea of the dual modes of processing (irrational vs. logical forces). Increased studies in the field bring a more nuanced and contemporary view of self-control into play that focuses more on decision science and processes rather than the focus on pure outcomes based on two opposing moral forces. Dante uniquely demonstrates striking representations of modern psychological findings in his Divine Comedy, specifically in the dream of the Dolce Serena in Purgatorio. He demonstrates a unique view of self-control that draws from both classical and Christian ideas but also introduces radical innovations of perceptions surrounding love, self-control, and rationality that is newly supported by recent scientific data. Instead of becoming victim to opposing moral forces and the strength of love over one’s actions, Dante asserts that human beings have the free will to dominate over these forces, stressing self-control as the keeper to moral behavior. Dante’s unique perspective on these themes is still being extensively explored in contemporary psychological research and literature, revealing the deeper intricacies of Dante’s Divine Comedy that make his works relevant to this day.

***Love Stories and Courtly Life in the Francophone World***

*(Moderators: Michèle Longino)*

*(Respondents: Anne-Gaëlle Saliot, Laura Florand)*

**Sydney Wilkerson**

***Origins of the Contemporary Feminist Profile: Exploring the Female Archetype in Colette's Cheri Novels***

*Bio:* Sydney is a senior at Duke University where she is majoring in Economics with a concentration in Finance and minoring in French. On campus she is a member of Dukes and Duchesses, an ambassador program representing the Office of the University President and Duke University at large and is currently a teaching assistant for an upper-level economics elective which examines the psychology behind financial decision making. Her interests in financial markets and the global macroeconomic environment have led her to two Sales and Trading internships, and she will continue to pursue this interest after graduation with plans to work as an Institutional Equity Analyst at Morgan Stanley.

*Abstract:* Realistic depictions of dynamic feminist profiles have been censored and criticized throughout literary history. Colette, a writer whose work remains in the canon of French literature, was not bound to this tradition of omitting profiles of female independence and ambition from her writing. Her novels *Chéri* and *The Last of Chéri*, which tell the story of Léa, an aging courtesan coming to terms with her disappearing youth and turbulent romantic relationship, are defined by a multitude of feminist profiles. The novels are set to the backdrop of the pre- and post-WWI environments, and therefore paint a clear picture of the emergence of the modernized feminist archetype which is the literary antithesis to the standardized highly feminine wife or mother figure. The novels introduced 1920s readers to the archetypes of the tough businesswoman, the sexually confident woman, and the financially stable single mother. This project explores how Colette’s character development across the *Chéri* series offers contextualization for the initial creation of more representative archetypes for women that would be recognizable for a reader today.

**Dan King**

***The French Love Story: A Journey Through the Centuries***

*Bio:* Dan is a sophomore from Houston, Texas. He is studying Public Policy and French with a minor in Economics. Dan is passionate about the French language and culture, and he hopes to take the skills he’s learned at Duke into a career in policy or business.

*Abstract:* This project focuses on how some aspects of the French Love Story have changed, while others have remained consistent across several works dating from 1678 to 1984. For my presentation, I will zero in on numerous key literary themes including: the impact of societal constraints on the characters, the role that age and race play, and the effect on the reader of a non-traditional—and often unsatisfying—ending. In this presentation, I seek to show that these aforementioned themes in works such as de La Fayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*, Proust's *Swann's Way*, Colette's *Chéri* and *The Last of Chéri*, and Duras's *L'amant* all have a profound impact on the characters' behavior and reader's understanding and appreciation of these stories. The authors of the stories apply the themes to their central characters in such a way that makes the French Love Story powerful and engaging, particularly in the eyes of the contemporary American reader. I will show that the intersection of literary themes and the unsatisfying (and sometimes tragic) endings of these stories highlight the dynamic but nonetheless enduring literary masterpiece that is the French Love Story.

**Marie-Line Lochard**

***The Royal Ideology and Aesthetics of Monarchy Under Haitian King Henri Christophe***

*Bio:* Marie-Line is a senior at Duke University. Her studies specialize in political science, English literature, and the study of French language and culture. She was raised in a multi-cultural household with one Haitian father and one Russian mother. She has chosen to write her thesis in English on Anna Akhmatova, the Russian intellectual and dissident. And to honor her Haitian heritage, she has chosen to write on the kingdom of Henri Christophe in Haiti.

*Abstract:* Through a close analysis of poetry, fiction, drama, and the visual arts, this independent study will discover the complexities that existed within Henri Christophe's court in the early 19th century. Henri Christophe was one of the leaders of the Haitian Revolution and ruled as monarch of the Kingdom of Haïti, located in the North of the country. His courtly rituals were inspired by a number of traditions including the French royal court, the kingdom of Prussia, and the English empire. Despite these European inspirations, Henri Christophe and his kingdom remain uniquely Haitian. My readings and research will be informed by the works of Laurent Dubois and Chelsea Stieber, journalistic sources such as the *Gazette Royale d'Hayti*, visual texts such as the *Armorial of Haiti*, and interpretations of postcolonial life in Haiti found in Price-Mars' *La Vocation de élite*.