

# frit



Soumbédioune Bay, Dakar, Senegal

## Letter from the Chair

OANA PANAITÉ

The year we are leaving behind has tested our skills and determination in countless ways while reaffirming our dedication to our research and teaching missions. More than ever, our courses on French and Italian languages and Francophone and Italian literatures, media, and cultures have offered multifaceted windows on the world thanks to innovative and exciting topics such as “Black Paris,” “Race, Immigration and the Pandemic: French Perspectives,” “Tales in a Time of Plague,” “The Good Mothers: Women in the Mafia and Antimafia,” “Cloak and Dagger,” “Humour and Wit in the Italian Renaissance,” and “New Italian Identities,” to name a few.

In August 2020, we had the pleasure of welcoming Jeffrey Lamontagne (PhD, McGill 2020), who joined our faculty as an Assistant Professor of French Sociolinguistics. The fall semester also offered us the opportunity to organize a special event in collaboration with the College’s Walter Center for Career Achievement to spotlight our department and showcase some of our recent alumni who shared their experience with current and prospective students.

Unfortunately, our students were unable to study abroad in 2020-21, but we have been heartened by the recent news that they should be able to resume deeply formative sojourns in our Aix-en-Provence and Bologna programs in Fall 2021.

The extraordinary history and current prestige of our French programs were recognized by the French Embassy in the US by being awarded the title of *Centre d’Excellence de l’Ambassade de France aux États-Unis*, a rare distinction only bestowed upon 24 universities in the country.

Social distancing, virtual and hybrid learning, travel restrictions, and increased personal burdens did not dampen our commitment to teaching nor hinder our ambitious scholarly agendas, as was also evidenced by the rich discussions and significant decisions regarding the post-pandemic future of our department which occurred during a faculty retreat held in March 2021. During the spring semester, IU launched its online Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in French, a program spearheaded by our department which enables French high-school teachers in Indiana and beyond to complete and enhance their professional training.

The acme of the events hosted by our depart-

ment in virtual format was undoubtedly our bi-annual Graduate Student Colloquium. Organized around the topic of “Closeness in Distance,” it gathered an impressive roster of talks by MA and PhD students from US and international universities in Francophone and Italian Studies and French Linguistics, while featuring a memorable keynote lecture delivered by the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg, as well as talks by scholars Carla Calargé and Amanda Dalola.

It must be underscored that, throughout this entire year, our graduate students, particularly those who have been serving in teaching and service positions, have demonstrated a highly inspiring combination of resilience, creativity, and professionalism. Last but not least, our department has been able not only to meet but also exceed all the challenges raised during this entire period thanks to the expertise and steadfastness of our department administrator, Isabel Piedmont-Smith, who recently celebrated 25 years in the Department. Thanks to her as well as the rest of our staff, faculty and students, FRIT is able to emerge stronger and passionately reassert its vocation for the languages, humanities, and a meaningful 21<sup>st</sup>-century college education.

**S**trange. That's how Jeffrey Lamontagne described what it was like to move to Bloomington and begin his position as Assistant Professor of French Linguistics during the pandemic. Never having taught nor taken a course online before, the young scholar from McGill University in Montreal not only had to learn how to teach via Zoom but also dealt with quarantine requirements in his multi-step move from Montreal to Bloomington. Plus, one of his Fall courses was on phonetics and pronunciation, which is very tricky with the sound and timing distortions that come with videoconferencing.

"We started using spectrograms more often," said Lamontagne of the F315 class. A spectrogram is a visual depiction of frequencies of sound over time, and F315 students could use software to convert their French language practice into spectrograms as part of their pronunciation assessment for the class. Luckily, Lamontagne's teaching assistant, **Arielle Roadman** (MA '21, French Linguistics and Linguistics) did have socially-distanced in-class meetings with students twice a week, so she could model and assess the students' pronunciation in person, albeit with masks (hers was see-through).

Due to traveling back and forth from Montreal to deal with the details of a long-term move, Lamontagne spent a total of 8 weeks of the Fall Semester, so about half the time, in quarantine. In addition to F315, he also taught "Introduction to French Linguistics" (F402). "My students were my primary social contact," says the bilingual native of Ottawa.

Lamontagne was attracted to apply to the position in the Department of French and Italian due to good word of mouth, including from his dissertation co-director Heather Goad and a colleague at the Université de Québec à Montréal, **Michael Dow** (PhD '14, French Linguistics). He visited campus in February 2020 to interview as

a finalist, and he was impressed by the relationships between the academic programs related to linguistics: those housed in language-specific departments like FRIT as well as the different fields in Linguistics and Second Language Studies. Since he was using computational linguistic tools in his dissertation research, IUB's strength in computational linguistics was especially important in leading him to accept the job offer that came a few weeks after his visit.

Lamontagne's dissertation, which he successfully defended at McGill in September 2020, described three studies he undertook on phonological variation, or differences in sound produced among speakers of a language. The first study was of French speakers in Saguenay, Quebec, and how emphasis on certain words in phrases is affected by the sounds of words in the phrases. This was initially to be an in-depth study to comprise the whole of his dissertation, but due to the pandemic Lamontagne was unable to complete the in-person research required, so he shifted to an "article-based thesis" of three different studies.

In the second study, Lamontagne used a large database, or corpus, of Laurentian French (also known as Quebec French) and a computer program to investigate laxing, the process of a tense vowel becoming lax in everyday speech. Finally, in the third study Lamontagne used a Spanish language corpus developed by his dissertation co-chair Francisco Torreira to explore the deletion of vowel sounds between words when the first word ends in a vowel and the second word starts with a vowel.

After successfully completing the herculean intellectual task of defending his dissertation while moving to a new country and teaching two new courses online, Lamontagne was able to settle in a bit more to the scholarly community at IUB during the Spring 2021 semester. Two additional new courses were on his schedule, as well as diving into a phonetics reading group, where he connected with colleagues and advanced



graduate students who had similar interests. He taught his first graduate course, "Introduction to French Morphology," which he found very rewarding. A few of his students are continuing work on the presentations they gave in his course and plan to present their research at upcoming conferences.

As to his own research, Lamontagne is both continuing what he began as a doctoral student in Quebec and branching out into new fields of inquiry. He hopes to be able to conduct the in-person research in Saguenay to complete the bigger research project he initially planned for his PhD dissertation before the pandemic got in the way. In his ongoing study of laxing in Laurentian French, he intends to next look at individual speakers and whether they develop rules for when a vowel sound is changed. Meanwhile, with the assistance of two native Mandarin speakers from the Department of Linguistics, he is exploring tone changes in Mandarin that are dependent on subsequent tones in the phrase or sentence.

*"Lamontagne" continued on page 6*

*frit* is published by the Department of French and Italian of Indiana University-Bloomington to encourage alumni interest in and support for Indiana University. The newsletter is paid for by the Department. For information about our programs, or to donate, please call (812) 855-1952 or visit [frit.indiana.edu](http://frit.indiana.edu).

#### Department of French and Italian

Chair .....Oana Panaité  
Editor.....Isabel Piedmont-Smith  
Designer.....Isabel Piedmont-Smith

#### College of Arts and Sciences

Executive Dean ..... Rick Van Kooten  
Executive Director of  
Advancement .....Travis Paulin  
Director of Alumni Relations .....Vanessa Cloe



## In Memoriam: Edoardo A. Lèbano

**P**rofessor Emeritus of Italian **Edoardo A. Lèbano**, an established scholar and beloved teacher of Italian language, literature, and culture, passed away in Bloomington on November 28, 2020. He was one of the most energetic and impactful advocates of Italian culture in North America of his generation.

Lèbano grew up in Italy, where he studied law in Naples and then literature back in Florence, where he grew up. There he met and married American exchange student Mary Vangeli, and they moved to the United States in 1957. He soon became a naturalized US citizen, and after working in the US Foreign Service Institute as an Italian instructor, he began graduate studies at the Catholic University of America, earning a PhD in Romance Languages and Literatures in 1966.

After teaching at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville and the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Lèbano arrived at IU in the fall of 1971 as an Associate Professor with tenure.

Soon after his arrival at IU and with the support of his Italian colleagues, Lèbano advocated for the creation of a Center for Italian Studies, which was approved in 1974, with Lèbano as its first director. He was also very active in study abroad programs, creating the IU Bologna summer program for which he served as director for two years, and directing both the Bologna academic year program and the Florence summer program twice.







As Americans' attention was focused in 2020-21 on voting, **Guillaume Ansart** published an article entitled "Rousseau and Condorcet: Will, Reason and the Mathematics of Voting" in the British journal *History of Political Thought*. The work considers how Rousseau and Condorcet defined the social conditions and voting procedures necessary to make voting a mechanism of rational collective decision-making.

**Alison Calhoun** traveled virtually to Vancouver, Dublin, and London to present her research on Descartes and on early modern opera. As Director of Graduate Studies in French and Francophone Studies, she was particularly uplifted by the courage of the incoming cohort of graduate students, especially those who battled pandemic restrictions to join the program from abroad.

Along with his research team, **Laurent Dekydspotter** recently published in the *Journal of Neurolinguistics* on the topic of nonnative French, addressing the neurocognitive bases of nonnative language processing in the language network. In ongoing work, Dekydspotter and colleagues, including Charlene Gilbert (MA '16 and current PhD candidate in French Linguistics) and Kate Miller (PhD '11, French Linguistics), argue that this network of the brain modifies its activity during nonnative language processing to counteract the weaker activation of the stored information for the words and grammar of the nonnative language. This action of the language network is argued to be automatic and to reveal fundamental aspects of the language system.

**Margot Gray** hopes to have put teaching via Zoom behind her, after various mishaps - including an effort to help a student get into a breakout room that resulted in putting herself in the room instead, then not being able to get out, despite helpful coaching from the breakout group. (She did enjoy her unplanned discussion of the breakout topic, though.) Her book *Stolen Limelight: Gender, Display and Displacement in Modern Fiction in French* has been accepted for publication. She was glad to return to Proust with another forthcoming piece, and is con-

tributing a chapter on political and corporeal suffocation in a collection with Oxford UP on Albert Camus's *The Plague* and COVID-19.

**Elizabeth Hebbard**, along with colleague Patricia Ingham (IU English), created the IU Book Lab in Fall 2020, which focuses on the book as a physical, historical, technical, artistic, and cultural object (see page 5 in this newsletter). She also continued work on her CLIR grant-funded project, *The Peripheral Manuscripts Project: Digitizing Medieval Manuscripts in the Midwest* (<https://peripheralms.org/>), with Michelle Dalmau (IU Libraries) and colleagues at nearly two dozen collections in the Midwest, to digitize and catalog hundreds of medieval manuscripts.

2021 is a year full of Dante events to commemorate the 7th centenary of the poet's death. For **Akash Kumar**, the most interesting activity so far was appearing on the BBC 4 radio program "Beyond Belief" (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000vh5t>) to discuss the continued relevance of Dante's *Inferno* in the here and now.

In March, **Jeffrey Lamontagne** was invited to the University of Texas at Austin to present his collaborative work with Gretchen McCulloch on dialectal differences in French tweets. During this virtual visit, he showed that we can learn about subtle properties of a dialect's pronunciation from which letters tweeters repeat for stylistic effect (e.g. "aiiime" vs. "aimeeee" for "aime").

As president of the Conseil International d'Études Francophones, **Oana Panaïté** was in charge of the first virtual congress of this international association dedicated to interdisciplinary studies, research, publications, and artistic expression from all countries and regions of French expression. The 2021 CIÉF laureate was the writer Marie Darrieussecq whose lecture and interaction with the audience was characterized by her usual cheerfulness, wit, and passion for literature and the connections it makes possible. FRIT was well represented both by alumni and current students: Cristina Robu (MA'17 and current PhD candidate, French/Francophone Studies) and Amanda Vredenburg (PhD '20, French/Francophone Studies)

moderated panels and delivered papers while Renata Uzzell (PhD '21, French Linguistics) and Victoria Lagrange (PhD candidate, French/Francophone Studies) provided invaluable assistance before and during the event.

**Colleen Ryan** received the university-level Distinguished Service Award from the American Association of Teachers of Italian this summer in recognition of her leadership in Italian pedagogy. Ryan reports that teaching "Women in the Mafia and Antimafia" and "Masterpieces of Italian Literature" in Spring 2021 was a great experience despite the online learning imposed by the pandemic. Students had a good sense of how to engage and learn remotely, she says, and they contributed with great energy all the way through. In addition, she recently took film director Fred Kuwornu's "Teaching Black Italy" course for faculty, which was extremely informative, encouraging and energizing!

During the 2020-21 academic year, **Massimo Scalabrini** completed a book manuscript titled *Commedia e civiltà: Dinamiche anticonflittuali nella letteratura italiana del primo Cinquecento*, and he is currently in the process of finding a publisher. He also became a member of "Cinquecento plurale," an international network of scholars working on the Italian Renaissance.

Appropriately for Dante's 7th centenary, the first 2021 issue of *Romanic Review* was published in May under the guest editorship of **Wayne Storey** with the title: *The Pleasure of Dante's text/Il piacere del testo dantesco*. The eleven essays, in English and Italian, included Storey's introduction to the volume and his own "Painting (and Writing) over Dante." His study "Michele Barbi curatore di testi danteschi" appeared in the commemorative issue for the 100-year anniversary of Michele Barbi's founding of *Studi Danteschi* 85 (2020), and his "Legacy of Petrarch's Chartae" was published in *Petrarch and His Legacies*, edited by Ernesto Livorni and Jelena Todorović (MA '06, PhD '09, Italian).

Lèbano's research achievements, teaching excellence, and prodigious service were recognized through promotion to the rank of Professor in 1983. His scholarship focused on three different fields: Renaissance epic and chivalric poetry, with an emphasis on the works of Luigi Pulci; nineteenth century and Modernism; and language instruction. Perhaps his most influential scholarly work is the first English edition, translated in verse by the Italian American poet Joseph Tusiani, of Luigi Pulci's epic poem *Morgante*. He was also the co-author, with Pier Raimondo Baldini, of one of the major Italian textbooks in the United States for decades, *Buongiorno a tutti!*.

A beloved teacher, Lèbano garnered student praise such as "Brilliant, very animated with a

colorful imagination" and "Sometimes too enthusiastic, if that is possible." He spread Italian outside the classroom too, cooking dinner for students in the campus Food Services Building in the 1970s,

**"Brilliant, very animated with a colorful imagination" wrote a student about Prof. Lèbano in 1980.**

leading a 13-day "epicurean experience" through northern and central Italy in the summer of 1983, and contributing his famous lasagna to the Department's annual holiday party for years into his retirement.

An influential figure in the teaching of Italian

language and culture in the US, Lèbano served the American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI), first as secretary-treasurer (1980-1983) and later as president (1984-1987). He taught for many summers at the Middlebury College Italian School, arguably the best full-immersion program in North America, where he served as director from 1987 to 1995. It was under his direction that the Middlebury Italian School acquired the international reach and prestige it still has today.

Edoardo Lèbano's service and leadership have been recognized by significant accolades including the AATI Distinguished Service Award and the title of *Cavaliere dell'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana* bestowed by the President of the Italian Republic.

# Students Explore Career Options, Learn from Alumni

ISABEL PIEDMONT-SMITH

**“Lean into people and relationships,” advised Vianna Newman Dennis (BA ’15, Italian and Individualized Major) when asked how to look for jobs after graduation.**

Newman Dennis was one of four BA alumni who spoke at a French and Italian career night November 10, 2020 to over 130 students interested in the Department’s programs. The event, hosted in collaboration with the Walter Center for Career Achievement via Zoom, was moderated by College of Arts and Sciences advisor Peter Giordano.

Newman Dennis herself held curatorial internships at Cooper Hewitt, the Smithsonian museum of design in New York City, and at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC before starting a PhD program in art history at the University of Maryland, College Park, where she is currently a student. She was joined on the alumni panel by **Halley Rose Meslin** (BA ’18, French and Environmental & Sustainability Studies), who is currently a public relations and communications specialist at Fetzer Vineyard in the San Francisco Bay area; **Devynn Barnes** (BA ’17, French and Journalism), who works as an Assistant Account Executive at Momentum Communications in New York City; and **Freddie Cheng Shi** (BA ’16, Italian and Math), a Quantitative Strategist at Guardian Life, also in New York City.

Professor Colleen Ryan, Director of Undergraduate Studies in Italian, gave introductory remarks reflecting on her own life path in studying first French and then Italian, and then building a

career in Italian Studies. In addition to the “hard skills” of learning a new language, she reminded the students that studying French or Italian leads to “ever-more effective communication, from grammar and syntax and awareness of formal and informal situations and registers, to the ability to negotiate meaning.” The “soft skills” she mentioned, such as communication, self-confidence, and problem-solving, were emphasized in the subsequent discussion with the alumni panelists.

“You’re spending all this time, really, analyzing grammar and sentences, but also how to get a message across,” said Meslin when asked how her French studies prepared her for her current job in public relations. Even analyzing poetry, she said, helps build communication skills that are useful in the business world. She added that knowing French is very useful for work in the wine industry.

Shi and Newman Dennis both spoke about their experiences giving presentations in their advanced Italian classes at IU, and how this prepared them well for future jobs and graduate study. Shi, who also holds a masters degree in Computational Finance from Carnegie Mellon, said the experience helped give him the confidence to deliver analytical results in his profession. He said a lot of traders have a background in foreign languages.

When asked about how she decided what to do after graduation, Barnes recalled coming across a Peace Corps information session while working at an internship with the French Embassy in DC the summer before her senior year. She went to the session and decided right there she wanted to be a Peace Corps volunteer. After two years in

Togo (West Africa), she came back to the States and started looking for jobs online. But online jobboards were “like throwing darts,” so she agreed  
*“Careers” continued on page 6*



Halley Rose Meslin, Vianna Newman Dennis, and Freddie Cheng Shi discussed their career paths with students via Zoom in November.

## In Memoriam: Mona Tobin Houston

**Associate Professor Emerita Mona Tobin Houston passed away in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, on January 15, 2021.**

She was a faculty member in French from 1962 until her retirement in 1999, specializing in 17<sup>th</sup>-century theater, which she taught “always regarding the printed text only as a design, however brilliant and rich, for the total dramatic phenomenon” (according to the late Professor Samuel Rosenberg).

Professor Houston was born and raised in New York City and graduated from Barnard College with a BA in French and Italian. She went on to



earn a PhD from Yale, where she met her future husband John Porter Houston. After marrying in Paris, they both came to our department at IU-Bloomington. As early as her first semester at IU, before completing her PhD dissertation,

Houston taught the graduate course “Thème et Version,” foreshadowing her interest and considerable skill in translation. In her second year at IU, then-chair Samuel F. Will wrote to the Dean: “Mrs. Houston is the only American on our staff whose French will be accepted by native French people as completely authentic French.”

Houston’s wide range of scholarly interests and expertise showed in her collaborations with her husband and other colleagues, as well as her translations of theatrical works. With John Houston, she published a teaching version of François Mauriac’s novel *Génitrix* (1966) and the anthology *French Symbolist Poetry* (1980). With Samuel N. Rosenberg, she co-authored the seminal reference work *Harper’s Grammar of French* (1983). She taught French grammar countless times, and students were happily infected by her enthusiasm for what is often considered a dull subject. “I wanted to write and let you know how much I enjoyed being one of your students,” says a student note in Houston’s file from 1996. “Teachers that inspire are unfortunately all too rare, so I feel lucky to have had you as a professor not once, but twice.”

Houston’s work for the stage included translations of Molière (*The Flying Doctor*, *The Painter Named Love*, *Mr. Porkingham Goes to Paris*) from

the French and of Antonio Tabucchi from the Italian. She also served as dramaturg for a production of *The Illusion* by Corneille (freely adapted by Tony Kushner) at the Round House Theater in Silver Spring, Md. in 1991 and was on site for a semi-staged reading at the Théâtre de l’Odéon-Théâtre de l’Europe (Paris) of her translation into French of *Beast on the Moon* by Richard Kalinoski.

In Bloomington, she was active in the Town Theatre as director, actor, and producer, and she translated and produced two French plays for the John Waldron Arts Center. For many years, Houston coached up-and-coming opera singers at IUB in correct French pronunciation, an invaluable service. Houston was also active in the Elm Heights Neighborhood Association and involved in foreign language enrichment programs in our local school district.

Houston served as resident director of IU’s academic year program in Strasbourg, France, during its last year in 1996-97. After that transitional year, Director of Overseas Study Richard Stryker praised her handling of the administrative complexities and advising of students “with good humor and aplomb,” which is how she will also be remembered by many students and colleagues.



**Dan Golembeski** (MA '91 and PhD '99, French Linguistics), Associate Professor of French at Grand Valley State University (Allendale, Mich.), was honored as a *Chevalier des Palmes académiques* by the French government in April. The *Ordre des Palmes académiques* was originally established by Napoleon in 1808 and honors educators and scientists for outstanding service at the university level.

Golembeski has been busy the last few years translating a three-volume travelogue from French to English. "It's a wonderful story," he writes, "(about) a 62 year old retired journalist who decides to walk the Silk Road from Turkey to China by himself." He received an NEA translation grant to complete the work, and there was an unanticipated fourth volume, which he is working on now.

**Jana (Mowrey) Lonberger** (BA '77, French), of Snellville, Ga., retired as a librarian in 2018. She worked at Emory University in Atlanta, and Lanier Technical College in Gainesville, Ga., during her career.

**Carl L. Shutoff** (MA '79, PhD '80, French Literature) writes: "I was honored by East African Community Services of Seattle for my volunteer work teaching citizenship classes, preparing immigrants and refugees for their naturalization interviews." He now lives in Seattle and adds, "I was also recognized by the King County Association of Historical Organizations for my work at the Holocaust Center for Humanity. [I am] a docent in the museum, driving Holocaust survivors to speaking engagements, and representing the Center at education conferences. My band, the Kesselgarden Klezmer Duo, continues to entertain audiences in the Pacific Northwest at fundraisers, folk festivals, and Jewish life cycle events."

**Jolene Vos-Camy** (MA '94 and PhD '00, French Literature) was also awarded the honor of *Chevalier des Palmes académiques* at the same ceremony as Golembeski in April. Vos-Camy is Professor of French and former chair of the French Department at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Send us your news! We welcome alumni updates, either directly to [fritdept@iu.edu](mailto:fritdept@iu.edu), or via the IU Alumni Association (<http://alumni.iu.edu>).

## The Book Lab

In August 2020, French medievalist Elizabeth Hebbard and Patricia Ingham (IU English and Director, Institute for Advanced Study) received a Public Arts and Humanities grant from the Vice Provost for Research to establish the IU Book Lab. The Book Lab, housed in the new Cook Center for Public Arts & Humanities in Maxwell Hall, is a research and maker space dedicated to the History of the Book and to pursuing current innovations in Book Arts and Book Design. The Book Lab focuses on the book as a physical art object, cultural object, and historical technology for writing, teaching, learning, and reading. Our experiments and presentations engage books of different kinds: chapbooks and chapter books; miniature books and giant books; picture books and comic books. We aim to complement archival research with experimentation and collaboration in all aspects of the book arts, from the cultivation of plants for paper fibers and inks, to the creation of digital fonts based on historic typefaces. The Book Lab planted an ink garden at the Hilltop Garden and Nature Center in spring 2021. The garden space is being used to cultivate several different plants used for medieval and modern ink making, which will feature in Book Lab teaching and workshop activities in the 2021-22 academic year. Liz Hebbard will teach a first course related to the Book Lab through the Intensive Freshman Seminar program in August 2021. -- Liz Hebbard



Professor Elizabeth Hebbard

## Annual Awards

On April 16, the Department hosted its annual awards ceremony via Zoom for the first time. Although we missed the warmth of being in person (as well as the food!), we were delighted to celebrate the accomplishments of our students, Associate Instructors, and faculty. The Department was especially pleased to be able to present the first annual Edoardo A. Lèbano Memorial Award in honor of our dear colleague who made ongoing donations for student awards in his lifetime (see *In Memoriam*, pg. 2).

### Undergraduate student awards:

- **Mary Kate Shearer** (BS' 21, Ballet) – Charlotte F. Gerrard Memorial Prize
- **Andrew Brown** (BA '21, French & Geography) – Grace P. Young Award
- **Daniel Creech** (BA '21, French & Int'l Studies) – Grace P. Young Award
- **Frankie Siracusano** (BA '21, Italian & Psychology) – Edoardo A. Lèbano Memorial Award
- **Katherine Tilghman** (BA '21, Spanish) – John K. Hyde Award
- **John Hines** – Albert & Agnes Kuersteiner Memorial Prize
- **Murray McCormack** – Albert & Agnes Kuersteiner Memorial Prize
- **Ashton Murray** (BS '21, Informatics) – Quentin M. Hope Memorial Award
- **Isabella Castillo** (BA '21, Italian & Int'l Studies) – Eneria Ruggeri Award
- **Payton Romans** – Carol Ann Brush Hofstadter Scholarship (for study in Bologna)

### Graduate student awards:

- **Vincenzo Dimaggio** (MA '20, Italian) – Olga Ragusa Graduate Award
- **Evie Munier** (MA '18, French/Francophone Studies) – Lander MacClintock Memorial Award
- **Erin Stigers** – Lander MacClintock Memorial Award & Peter Cannings Memorial Prize
- **Giorgio Losi** (MA '19, Italian) – Graduate Student Service Award & Eneria Ruggeri Award
- **Elke Defever** (MA '20, French/Francophone Studies) – Graduate Student Service Award & Grace P. Young Award
- **Jonathan Hall** (MA '21, French/Francophone Studies) – Graduate Student Service Award
- **Lee Killey** (MA '21, French Linguistics) – Graduate Student Service Award
- **Claire Fouchereaux** (MA '20, French/Francophone Studies) – Grace P. Young Award
- **Scott Evans** (MA '17, French Linguistics) – Grace P. Young Award

### Teaching Awards:

- **Elke Defever** – Associate Instructor award for French
- **Chase Tiffany** (MA '19, French Linguistics) – Associate Instructor award for French
- **Vincenzo Dimaggio** – Associate Instructor award for Italian
- **Karolina Serafin** – Trustees Teaching Award
- **Marco Arnaudo** – Trustees Teaching Award

Thank you to all our donors who make these awards possible!

## Publication Highlight

This summer Brill published *Interpretation and Visual Poetics in Medieval and Early Modern Texts*, (Boston–Leiden) in honor of Professor Emeritus **Wayne Storey**. Edited by Beatrice Arduini (PhD '08), Isabella Magni (PhD '17) and Jelena Todorović (PhD '09), the volume contains 18 essays by the three editors and Michelangelo Zaccarello, Daniel E. O'Sullivan, Valerio Capozzo (PhD '12), Christopher Kleinhenz (PhD '69), Mirko Tavoni, Francesco Marco Aresu (MA '09), Dario Del Puppo, Giovanni Spani (PhD '07), Furio Brugnolo, Teodolinda Barolini, Alessandro Vettori, Marcello Ciccuto, Marco Veglia, Michael Papio, and Anthony Nussmeier (PhD '12) on topics dear to Storey's heart, including visual poetics, Dante, Boccaccio, medieval manuscripts and early printed books, pre-Dantean lyric poetry, medieval philology and poetics, textual criticism and Old Occitan *chansonniers*. For a complete table of contents, see <https://brill.com/view/title/58363>.

# Complimenti and félicitations! Graduates Persevere in Pandemic

BEN REED & ISABEL PIEDMONT-SMITH

**T**his year, we celebrate ten MA students finishing their degrees, and five students completing the doctorate. In the Italian MA program, **Lucia Casiraghi**, **Nicolò Salmaso**, and **Alvise Stefani** have all completed their degrees, and will all continue in the PhD program. **Jonathan Hall** received the MA degree in French/Francophone Studies and will continue doctoral studies in the Department as well. **Shane O'Bannon** completed the MA degree in French Instruction as well as an Area Certificate in College Pedagogy this summer. Five students have completed their MA degrees in French Linguistics: **Arielle Roadman** and **Scott Kunkel** (both Dual Masters students in the Linguistics Department), **Lee Killey**, **Clara Miller-Broomfield**, and **Jenica Jones**. Roadman, Killey, and Miller-Broomfield will all continue their doctoral studies at IU-Bloomington, while Kunkel and Jones will pursue further graduate studies elsewhere.

When asked about their memories from the program, this year's MA graduates reflected on the compelling content of coursework, the tight knit cohort of graduate students, and the learning experience and support they received as Associate Instructors, especially from the Directors of Language Instruction and the Course Coordinators. Through an intensive two year program made all the more challenging by the pandemic environment, our M.A. cohort has overcome the adversities of the moment and is moving onward with an enriched sense of purpose.

Our PhD graduates also stayed focused despite the additional distractions and isolation of the pandemic.

**Carlotta Vacchelli**, Italian Studies

Vacchelli defended her dissertation, *La funzione-Pazienza. L'influenza di Andrea Pazienza nel graphic novel italiano*, in September 2020, under the direction of Professor Marco Arnaudo. Her work focused on the influence of comic book auteur Andrea Pazienza on contemporary Italian culture. After a year as a post-doc at the Center for Italian Modern Art in New York City, she will

start a new post-doc position at the Bibliotheca Hertziana of Rome for 2021-22. Vacchelli is also Associate Editor of *Simultanea*, a journal of Italian pop culture founded in 2019 by Professors Andrea Ciccarelli and Marco Arnaudo.

**Luisa Garrido Baez**, Italian Studies

In her thesis, *La gamificazione come risorsa educativa: Motivazione, acquisizione e differenziazione nei corsi universitari online di lingua straniera*, Garrido Baez explored the use of aspects of video gaming in online foreign language classes. She successfully defended her thesis, with the support of her dissertation chair, Professor Colleen Ryan, in September 2020. After several years at the University of Southern Mississippi, she is now a Lecturer in Italian at the University of Michigan.

**Francesco Samarini**, Italian Studies

Samarini defended his dissertation entitled *Philip Roth e l'Italia* in March 2021, and received his degree in May. He is grateful for the dedicated support of his dissertation director, Provost Professor Andrea Ciccarelli, as well as the department faculty and staff during his time at IU. Francesco is beginning his summer embarking on new research in Geneva, Switzerland, studying a collection of early modern books with the generous support of a Fondation Barbier-Mueller research fellowship. In Fall 2021, Francesco will begin a new appointment as a Lecturer in Italian at Dickinson College.

**Marzia Bagnasco**, Italian Studies

Bagnasco defended her dissertation, *A Disputed Country: Italy, Migrants, and National Identity in Contemporary Films and Documentaries*, in May 2021, under the direction of Professor Colleen Ryan. She is proud to have completed the doctorate, overcoming the challenges of the pandemic, after four years of unforgettable teaching and learning experiences in Bloomington. In keeping with the central themes of the dissertation, Marzia now happily teaches Italian to immigrants in Turin, and plans to further develop a career as an intercultural educator and translator for Italian film festivals.

**Laura Demsey**, French Linguistics

Demsey plans to defend her dissertation this summer. She is working with Associate Professor Kevin Rottet as her dissertation chair on a thesis titled *Changes in the Definite Determiner System of New England French*.

"When I came to IU, I expected to receive an education in French Linguistics to become prepared for my career later on," writes Demsey. "I knew that I would take classes, and that I would teach, but what I didn't necessarily expect was to actually begin my career—a very dynamic one, with many different facets." Reflecting on her experiences designing curricula, working for the Global Village residential center, making scholarly connections across campus, organizing a teaching colloquium, and presenting at international conferences, she says "The opportunities I've been able to take advantage of while at IU are more than I ever hoped for." She will begin a position as Teaching Associate Professor of French at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill this fall.



Marzia Bagnasco (top) at the conclusion of her Zoom dissertation defense in May with her advisor, Professor Colleen Ryan in May.

**"Careers" continued from page 4**

with Newman Dennis that a personal approach is better. In her case, a direct email inquiry landed her an interview, and then a job, with a communications company that works with nonprofit agencies.

Although she did find her first job after IU via an online jobs board, Meslin agreed that human connections are key. "If you are being authentic about your interests, other people are going to recognize that and give you opportunities," she said. Shi agreed, saying that an Italian degree "is kind of like a shiny point for you to find a job if your job is not related to Italian." The person who interviewed him at Guardian Life noted that his résumé gained attention because of the Italian BA in addition to Shi's qualifications in finance.

At the end of the event, Giordano asked the panelists what advice they would give to undergraduate students today. Shi encouraged students to respect their own decisions. Meslin and Barnes both spoke about being open to a variety of opportunities. Follow what you are interested in, advised Meslin, and you'll find a job that resonates with you. Dennis Newman added that it's important to be patient with yourself, noting that students don't have to figure everything out right away. She also came full circle back to Ryan's introduction emphasizing the many skills gained through the study of French or Italian: "You end up with skills you would not have anticipated."

**"Lamontagne" continued from page 2**

Twitter has also been a topic in Lamontagne's research recently. He has partnered with Gretchen McCulloch to analyze repetition of letters in

Tweets in Laurentian French and the French of both northern and southern France. For example, "tropppppp loooongueuuuhhhh" instead of "trop longue."

When asked how he liked Bloomington so far, it was understandably difficult for Lamontagne to give an answer, since so much of his time here has been in pandemic circumstances. He enjoys cooking and cocktails, so he is looking forward to more socializing when he returns from a trip home to Canada this summer, and he is a Dungeons & Dragons gamer, which activity he continued online with his family and friends during the COVID shut-downs.

The Department plans to reinstate its annual fall welcome party in early September so that we can give Lamontagne and our new graduate students from Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 a hearty, in-person welcome soon.



## Top new books in Italian

- ▶ The most recent book by veteran writer **Edith Bruck**, *Il pane perduto* (*The Lost Bread*, 2020), is a captivating narrative that brings the protagonist down memory lane and, like all Bruck's works, is a delicate mix of autobiography and fiction, of personal and collective suffering, bringing us back, once again, to the tragedy of genocide, of prejudice, of intolerance created by our innate fear of the other. Bruck, who turned 90 this year, draws on a lifetime of experience. Born in Hungary, she survived Auschwitz and moved to Italy in 1954, where she has published poetry, fiction, screenplays and theatrical works.
- ▶ **Borgo Sud**, by **Donatella Di Pietrantonio** (2020), is a wonderful addition to the rich "on the road" literary tradition. It is a very particular one, though, as the protagonist, who lived a quiet life, travels during the night to join the much more adventurous sister whom she has not seen in a long time, and while traveling through space she travels through memory as well, re-examining their relationship and their lives together and apart. This journey has a precise arrival point, Borgo Sud, an area of the large southern sea-town where everything began, and which is really a village within the city, a world of its own, where birth and death

dialogue with the protagonist. Di Pietrantonio's book reminds us that to belong, actually to feel wanted and therefore to feel at home, even for an instant, is an incessant arbitration between our achievements and our roots.

- ▶ **Emanuele Trevi's** *Due vite* (*Two Lives*, 2020) is a novel and also a dual biography and a critical essay, as it is a personal and literary homage to two other writers, both Trevi's friends, Pia Pera (1956-2016) and Rocco Carbone (1962-2008), who died prematurely. The idea of this book may seem strange, but Trevi, who has dealt with memory and loss, as well as with writing as a psychoanalytic tool in his previous books, explicates for the reader the reasons, the personal connections, the professional familiarity that brought the two departed authors together with the narrator. Trevi has the gift of transforming very personal memories, discussions and episodes into universal events, thanks to his choice of topics, and, above all, his affable, and yet lyrical style.
- ▶ **Andrea Bajani's** *Il libro delle case* (*The Book of Homes*, 2021) distinguishes itself by reversing the usual trope: the homes occupied by the protagonist set the pace for his personal evolution, not the other way

around. The narrator recognizes his various emotional stages through the homes that he has inhabited, and that have witnessed and therefore facilitated his specific actions in life. Each home represents a moment of his life, but each moment is explained by the home itself. Bajani writes this book almost as if it were a detective novel, with each chapter (home) opening up some truth about the mystery of life.

- ▶ **L'acqua del lago non è mai dolce** (*The Water of the Lake is Never Clear and Pure*, 2021), the latest novel by **Giulia Caminito**, takes place in Anguillara, on beautiful Lake Bracciano, just outside Rome. The two main protagonists are Gaia, who is finishing high school and is exposed to life through her relationships and friendships with her schoolmates, and her mother, Antonia, a working class warrior with several children, the father of her oldest in prison for homicide, and her husband, Gaia's father, an invalid. The title renders, without any doubt, the lack of sweetness (*mai dolce*) in this emotionally and socially complicated story, which has betrayal and violence as a background canvas, and whose plot is somewhere between a realistic novel and detective fiction.

-- Andrea Ciccarelli

## Top new books in French

- ▶ In **David Diop's** violent and searingly anti-war novel *Frère d'âme* (2018), the Senegalese infantryman Alfa, fighting for France during World War I, is haunted by the death of his closest comrade and, maddened by grief and guilt, he proceeds to cut off one hand of each German soldier he kills, frightening his fellow soldiers through his obsessive revenge. In the novel's rewarding and lyrical second half, Alfa turns to recollecting his childhood in a small African village: a contrast pointing up the senseless butchery of war. Winner of the International Booker Prize (2021) for the English translation *Night All Blood is Black*.
- ▶ *L'enfant céleste* (2020), the debut novel from **Maud Simonnot**, provides an utter escape from the hectic, post-industrialized world. The protagonist Mary and her dreamy, sensitive young son Célian travel to a legendary island in the Baltic Sea after suffering emotional wounds. There, they explore the island's timeless forests and shores and are enfolded within a wild yet hospitable world that progressively heals them. Written in a delicate, lyrical and sensuous tenor, this novel returns us to the beauty of nature and the cosmos in a context of

unconditional maternal love.

- ▶ **Le bal des folles** by **Victoria Mas** (2019) combines historical fiction with gothic and thriller genres in its evocation of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hôpital Salpêtrière in Paris, where women viewed as insane, hysterical, debauched or otherwise unconventional were confined and subjected to study. We follow the lives of Eugénie, whose gift for communing with the dead has resulted in her being committed to the asylum; Geneviève, a devoted nurse; Thérèse, a prostitute; and Louise, abused by her uncle. This novel offers a dramatic period tableau of the treatment of women who were either unable or refused to obey the strict social codes of late nineteenth-century France.
- ▶ **Djaïli Amadou Amal's** novel *Les impatientes* (2020) was first published in the author's native Cameroon as *Munyal ou les larmes de la patience* and provides a chilling account of female victimization by traditions for which the only advice is the "tears of patience." Two sisters are married off against their wills at age seventeen, and we hear their stories as well as the perspective of the other wife of one of the men. Each recounts the experience of enforced marriage, polygamy and

conjugal violence, as well as jealousy and mistrust within family circles. The novel is inspired by Amal's own experiences, which ultimately led her to found the organization "Femmes du Sahel" to educate women of the Sahel region and combat violence against them.

- ▶ A trip to Auschwitz is the focus of **Yasmina Reza's** new novel *Serge* (2021). With both parents now dead, three middle-aged Jewish siblings of Hungarian descent, Serge, Jean and Anne ("Nana"), decide to visit the historic site to re-connect with their ancestral past. This place of unspeakable horror - now treated by tourists as a "selfie" destination - brings out bittersweet familial tensions and conflicts, often recounted with biting humor, yet leavened by the implicit love and memories that bind the siblings in spite of themselves.

--- Margot Gray

Top books and films photos:

Page 7: Bosco Verticale apartment building, Milan (top), lavender field, Provence (bottom)

Page 8: Château Frontenac, Quebec City (top), Amalfi coast, Italy (bottom). All photos public domain or stock images.



## Top new films + TV in French

- ▶ **Mignonnes** (Maïmouna Doucouré, France, 2020) is a rare French film directed and written by a woman of color. Released as *Cuties* in English, it is also exceptional in its engagement with the complex intersection of race, class, gender, and Islam in shaping identity. Based on Doucouré's own life experience, the film argues for the value of hybridity and warns against the dangers of forcing young women to choose between antagonistic, binary models of identity and culture. Netflix.
- ▶ **Le jeune Ahmed** (Luc et Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Belgium, 2019) addresses the volatile issue of Islamic radicalization, focusing on its social and psychological dimensions. Contrary to most other films on the topic, the film neither denounces nor apologizes for its titular protagonist, but rather attempts to elicit empathy for him and those who surround him, as well as a deeper understanding of the circumstances in which radical-

ization occurs. Known for their minimalist, "philosophical" realism and engagement with contemporary social issues, the Dardenne brothers won the Best Director award at Cannes for the film in 2019. Amazon Prime.

- ▶ A student favorite, **Dix pour cent** (created by Fanny Herrero, 2015-2020) is a four-season comedy series that follows a talent management agency and the four agents as they deal with various celebrities of French film. This is great material for people who want to practice their French and learn about the cinema industry in France. Even though the plot lines are fictional, the actors and actresses manged by the agents play themselves. Netflix (English title: *Call My Agent*).
- ▶ **Lupin** (created by George Kay and Francois Uzan, 2021) is a Netflix series starring Omar Sy, whom America discovered via the film *Intouchables* in 2011. The show displays the versatility of the César-winning actor and

is inspired by the French book series about Arsène Lupin, an infamous "gentleman thief." Sy plays a modern Lupin as he investigates his father's death through scams and tricks. Even though casting a Black man as a thief is problematic in a lot of ways, the series offers an interesting take on racial issues in France through the lens of French literature. We recommend you read the novels by Maurice Leblanc as well!

- ▶ **Je ne suis pas un homme facile** (Éléonore Pourriat, France, 2018) is a light romantic comedy in which the main character, a misogynist named Damien, wakes up in a world dominated by women. This film directed and written by a woman completely reverses gender roles and expectations as Damien pursues the powerful author Alexandra. Netflix (English title: *I am not an easy man*).

-- Brett Bowles, Evie Munier, and Victoria Lagrange



## Top new films in Italian

- ▶ **Favolacce** (D'Innocenzo Brothers, 2020) offers a somewhat degraded and dystopic view of contemporary family life in the outskirts of Rome, where the adults are imprisoned by petty bourgeois dreams and children are further trapped by adult frustrations and negativity. This Italy-Switzerland co-production won the Jury Prize at the 2020 Brussels International Film Festival and the Best Screenplay category at the Berlin Film Festival. English title: *Bad Tales*. Amazon Prime.
- ▶ The marital drama **Lacci** (Daniele Lucchetti, 2020), based on Domenico Starnone's eponymous novel, is set in the 1980s and masterfully mixes the early and late phases of Aldo and Vanda's marriage and the short and long-term effects it has on their two children. The "shoelaces" or ties that bind thus lend themselves to many interpretations. *Lacci*

(English title *Ties*) was selected to open the 77th Venice Film Festival.

- ▶ **Miss Marx** (Susanna Nicchiarelli, 2020) is a biopic costume drama that recounts the short life and deep passions of social activist Eleanor Marx, departing from her father Karl Marx's death. Linking feminism and socialism, Nicchiarelli anachronistically interweaves music, history and emotions to capture and express one woman's trajectory of change. The strong conscience of the director combined with heavy subject matter recalls, to some extent, Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* (2006).
- ▶ For **Hammamet** (Gianni Amelio, 2020), Master Amelio collaborates with Alberto Taraglio to recount the last decade of life of Bettino Craxi, one of the most important and con-

troversial Italian leaders of the 1980s. In this unique biopic-style perspective on his life of exile and luxury in Tunisia, the focus is on the politician's relationships with family, friends, and other questionable figures.

- ▶ Taking place once again in the outskirts of Rome, this semi-autobiographical film **Maledetta primavera** (Elisa Amoroso, 2020) recounts the events of a summer in the life of 14-year-old Nina and her dysfunctional family, as her father comes and goes between gambling wins. Nina is both challenged by and attracted to a new girl at school, Sirley (also the English title of the film), who hails from French Guinea and speaks only French. Is their bond real and legitimate or is it just a figment of Nina's imagination?

-- Colleen Ryan