

The Department of French & Italian Presents
A PhD Dissertation Defense

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Space of Hesitation, Place of Confrontation: A New Approach to the Fantastic Genre through Contemporary French Novels

Thursday, April 30, 2020

10:00 am via Zoom

This is a closed defense.

Abstract: This dissertation addresses the following question through a new, interdisciplinary approach to fantastic fiction that draws connections between urgent contemporary issues, critical theory, and contemporary fantastic novels written in French: How might the supernatural, which by definition departs from the real, paradoxically shed light on some of the most pressing, real concerns faced by contemporary societies? Marie Darrieussecq, Milan Kundera, Marie NDiaye, and Antoine Volodine use the fantastic to expose the experiential and affective dimensions of these issues, promote ambiguity over rational understanding, and encourage a response of empathy. They thus grant an innovative understanding of particular racial, environmental and political issues, such as climate change and totalitarianism. Moreover, this dissertation nuances the hermeneutical gap dividing current scholarship on the fantastic by considering novels that display a strong intellectual dimension in their exploration of pressing contemporary concerns, yet do so through directly-represented fantastic events.

Dissertation Committee:

- [Oana Panaïté](#), Chair, Ruth N. Halls Professor of French
- [Hall Bjørnstad](#), Associate Professor of French
- [Emmanuel Bouju](#), Professor of General and Comparative Literature at the University of la Sorbonne Nouvelle
- [Margaret Gray](#), Associate Professor of French
- [Herb Marks](#), Professor of Comparative Literature
- [Johannes Türk](#), Associate Professor of Germanic Studies