

PENN HUMANITIES FORUM

UNIVERSITY *of* PENNSYLVANIA



mind the gap!

18TH ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Since 1999, the Penn Humanities Forum has been renewing insights into the human experience, sharing them with a wide community of students, scholars, and Philadelphia neighbors. Our goal is to show how vital the humanities are to the life of the mind and the health of society, and how connected they are with the most innovative research in medicine, law, business, and the sciences.

Our annual theme-based public events and fellowship programs, together with other university and cultural collaborations, invite people of all ages and places to join us in discovering our common stake in the “thinking arts.”

The 2016–2017 Penn Humanities Forum on Translation considers questions of rendition, revision, and rip off. Where does one end and the next begin—and who draws the lines? Is translation inevitably an impertinence, a breach of faith with the original? Or is a translation an original in its own right?

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A Program of the 2016-2017 Penn Humanities Forum on Translation

March 17, 2017

Kislak Center, Van Pelt Library
University of Pennsylvania

2016-2017

Penn Humanities Forum Undergraduate Research Fellows

Alex Anderson

Gabriel Ferrante

Nathan May

Juan Cabrera

Michael Karam

Thomas Myers

Gerardo Cedillo

Ray Lahiri

Chloe Nurik

Mary Lindsay Cerulli

Kyle Tebo

Undergraduate Humanities Forum Faculty Director

Andrea Goulet, Professor of Romance Languages

WELCOME

Thank you for coming to *Mind the Gap!*, the 18th annual undergraduate research conference of the Penn Humanities Forum. This year our research (both collective and individual) delved into the complexities of translation, understood not only as the literal rendering of a text from one language into another, but also as a broader phenomenon. Translation, in our investigations, signifies at once both the production of linguistic equivalence and the inescapable process that fails, gloriously and endlessly, to produce such equivalence.

This conference itself is the final result of a continuous process of translation on the part of the fellows. Our projects entailed many different disciplinary languages and educational histories, even within individual projects. Interdisciplinarity is often a stated goal or a wish for the future. This year, our projects took interdisciplinarity as a precondition, and in our conversations we have celebrated the specific avenues of inquiry taken by each project just as much as we reveled in our common concerns. “Mind the Gap” is not an admonition to be careful of our differences so much as it is an invitation to recognize and explore the sudden juxtaposition of projects that would otherwise be unlikely to stand together.

Our first panel, “Narratives of Identity,” will examine the act of translation as it intervenes between the lived experience of personal identity and the methods of representation that attempt to encapsulate it. Our fellows will discuss the various ways identities manifest themselves within or outside the realm of translation in everyday life. Next, in “Deviant Translations,” we experience translation as seemingly impossible or inherently flawed. Finally, in “Translation Nation,” we explore three different modes of translation as they relate to the concerns and narratives of the nation.

We began the year with a screening and discussion of Sofia Coppola’s *Lost in Translation*; we ended it with an exploration of love and/in translation. Between, we spoke with Teju Cole about his new essay collection, *Known and Strange Things*, examining his writing process and rich and varied concerns. We explored feminist translation with Emily Wilson and her forthcoming translation of the *Odyssey*. We listened to the shapes and contours of poetry across English and Italian with Taije Silverman and her translations of Giovanni Pascoli, and, throughout, we had the tremendous privilege of Andrea Goulet’s expert guidance. Without her, we could not have come this far.

Nor would we come this far without the incredible opportunity to do funded research in the humanities. At a time when the humanities seem both most urgent and most devalued, we are tremendously grateful that we could have these conversations and build a space of collective support for our intellectual inquiries.

Our year of translation has been a celebration of our mutual understanding—and the recognition of our misunderstandings. Today and beyond this conference, we invite you to mind, explore, and embrace “the gap.”

Ray Lahiri
Michael Karam
Chloe Nurik

Steering Committee, 2016–2017 Undergraduate Humanities Forum

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fellows of this year’s UHF would like to thank and acknowledge the following for their time, support, expertise, and advice.

Rebecca Bushnell	Kathy Peiss	Kimberly Trout
Cynthia Damon	Jean-Michel Rabaté	Bethany Wiggan
Andrea Goulet	Donald Ringe	Emily Wilson
Andree Hahmann	Taije Silverman	Chi-ming Yang

Jim English and Jennifer Conway for directing this vital organization, and, in particular, Margie Guy and Sara Varney, whose work makes this forum possible.

mind the gap!

18th Annual Undergraduate Research Conference, Penn Humanities Forum
March 17, 2017 | Kislak Center, Van Pelt Library | University of Pennsylvania

9:00-9:30A | REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST

9:30-9:45A | OPENING REMARKS

Andrea Goulet, Faculty Director, UHF; Professor of Romance Languages

Ray Lahiri, Chair and Research Fellow, UHF

9:45-11:00A | NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY

Moderator: **Kathy Peiss**, Roy F. and Jeannette P. Nichols Professor of American History

Juan Cabrera, CAS 2017; Linguistics

The Language of Reputation and Scandal: Translations of Lived Experiences in Spanish, English, and Spanglish Oral Narratives

Mary Lindsay Cerulli, CAS 2017; Health and Societies

Go Ask the Midwife: Understanding Midwives as Practical Policy Translators in South Africa's Urban Maternal Health Landscape

Michael Karam, CAS 2017; Economics, International Relations

The Lebanese M Community: Identities Lost (or Found) in Translation

Chloe Nurik, CAS 2017; History

Collegiate Masculinity and the Rise of American Youth Culture in the Jazz Age

11:05A-12:20P | DEVIANT TRANSLATIONS

Moderator: **Jean-Michel Rabaté**, Professor of English and Comparative Literature

Alex Anderson, CAS 2018; Comparative Literature

Beckett at the Limits of Language: An Analysis of *Worstward Ho* and its French Translation

Gabriel Ferrante, CAS 2017; Biochemistry, Philosophy

Es mi Shakespeare su Shakespeare? Pronoun Formality in Spanish Translations of *Hamlet*

Nathan May, CAS 2017; English, Classical Studies

Translating Cultural Value: The Politics of the Maxim in English Renaissance Drama

Kyle Tebo, CAS 2017; Philosophy

Transmission of Greek Philosophical Vocabulary into Latin through Cicero

12:30-1:45P | LUNCH

2:00-3:15P | TRANSLATION NATION

Moderator: **Bethany Wiggin**, Associate Professor of German; Director, Penn Program in Environmental Humanities; “Translation” Topic Director, PHF

Gerardo Cedillo, CAS and SEAS 2017; Chemistry, Materials Science & Engineering
The insidious network: Translating the invasive biology of the Cuban marabú tree into a model for radical politics

Ray Lahiri, CAS 2017; Classical Studies, Comparative Literature
Hic interim liber: Commentary and Tacitus’s *Agricola* in 19th Century England

Thomas Myers, CAS 2017; English
Translating the Event: Aesthetics of the Post-9/11 Disaster Genre

3:20-3:35P | CONCLUDING REMARKS

Michael Karam and **Chloe Nurik**, Steering Committee and Research Fellows, UHF

ABSTRACTS

Alex Anderson

CAS, 2018; Comparative Literature

Beckett at the Limits of Language: An Analysis of *Worstward Ho* and its French Translation

Samuel Beckett is perhaps the most important case study for translation studies because of his systematic effort at translating all of his texts from English to French or French to English. He could not, however, translate the 1983 *Worstward Ho*. The prose being denser and sparer than in his other works, he felt he was unable to properly render it in French, and only allowed his close friend Edith Fournier to attempt it after his death. My project will study Fournier's French translation of *Worstward Ho* as *Cap au pire* with the aim of answering what makes something untranslatable. We will see what *Worstward* gains and loses in translation and should then be able to assess the limits of language and representation.

Juan Cabrera

CAS, 2017; Linguistics

The Language of Reputation and Scandal: Translations of Lived Experiences in Spanish, English, and Spanglish Oral Narratives

The aim of this study is to understand a framework for the structure of oral narratives that operate in different languages, cultures, and topics as translations of lived experiences. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, and Spanglish in North and Latin America about gossip and scandal. Oral personal narratives are translations of lived experiences—coded information that negotiate, build, or destroy credibility, relationships, or the self; they manage reputations. This examination is framed under Labovian narrative analysis, and the pragmatic implications on the management of reputation in narratives about gossip and scandal are addressed.

Gerardo Cedillo

CAS and SEAS, 2017; Chemistry, Materials Science & Engineering

The insidious network: Translating the invasive biology of the Cuban marabú tree into a model for radical politics

A species native to Africa, the marabú tree was accidentally transported to Cuba in the form of seeds the transatlantic slave trade. Since then, it has been described as a weed that hinders agricultural development of the island with its dense rhizomatic thickets. Particularly during periods of agricultural stagnation, marabú spread with ease over the colonial legacies of sugarcane monocultures, becoming an insidious threat to the utopic agrarian policies of the Castro regime. Yet this sprawl prevented erosion and extinction of native species, reconfiguring the industrialized agricultural landscape with no regard towards political and colonial paradigms. As a network woven into the landscape, the marabú tree materializes the relationships between issues of migration, environmental decay, state failure, and decolonization. Tracking references in Cuban agronomical reports from the early 19th century and Fidel and Raúl Castro's speeches, this project interprets marabú as a material-

discursive system that imposes itself with a biological drive. How does marabú employ tactics of (in)visibility and insidiousness to reshape the landscape and its social, cultural, and political paradigms? How does marabú operate as an agent of dissent and resistance against totalitarian politics and colonial legacies?

Mary Lindsay Cerulli

CAS, 2017; Health and Societies

Go Ask the Midwife: Understanding Midwives as Practical Policy Translators in South Africa's Urban Maternal Health Landscape

In this study, ML will use interview data to research how midwives experience their role as providers in public health clinics in Cape Town, South Africa. In 1996 South Africa explicitly prioritized maternal health in its constitution and, through efforts to bring care to areas previously excluded from apartheid infrastructure, established midwives as the primary providers for women in low-income urban areas (AIDS Law Group 2007, Pillay 2001). However, South Africa still has poor maternal health outcomes, despite free care and high utilization rates (Republic of South Africa Country Report 2013). Using a medical humanities approach, this study seeks to add to the scant literature that acknowledges midwives as the health system actors responsible for translating governmental promises of reproductive health into health realities for low-income women.

Gabriel Ferrante

CAS, 2017; Biochemistry, Philosophy

Es mi Shakespeare su Shakespeare? Pronoun Formality in Spanish Translations of *Hamlet*

The translation of literary works is a careful balancing act between conveying the words of an author and rendering them intelligible to new audiences, a mandate understood differently by all of its practitioners. The extent to which translation is itself an act of artistic creation is especially clear in reading multiple translations of the same work, which often vary significantly. I will use statistical analysis of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to explore how Spanish translations have approached the distinction between the formal and informal pronouns "you" and "thee," a key nuance in Shakespeare's writing overlooked by modern readers in English, but still essential in Spanish. The goal is to understand how approaches to translation evolve within the broader language and literature of their times.

Michael Karam

CAS, 2017; Economics, International Relations

The Lebanese M Community: Identities Lost (or Found) in Translation

In a country where three languages mix and coexist naturally, where does "queer" language exist? In this study, Michael conducts interviews with "queer" folk from Lebanon and staff of Lebanese NGOs to examine how identities are attached or unattached to certain language and terms. He focuses on the existence and growth of this language within a national and multilingual space by studying recorded personal accounts and advocacy work.

Ray Lahiri

CAS, 2017; Classical Studies, Comparative Literature

Hic interim liber: Commentary and Tacitus's *Agricola* in 19th Century England

Translation was essential in the education of English schoolboys in the 19th century. With Ancient Greek and Latin at their cultural apogee, teaching the history and grammar of the ancients was one of the key tasks of the schoolteacher. Presenting grammatical and historical information essential for understanding the text, the schoolboy commentary was crucial in this. I will analyze schoolboy commentaries on the *Agricola of Tacitus* in order to draw out the conditions under which translation was possible. What relationships with the Romans and Britons do these commentaries presume? How do they understand imperial rule, and how does this relate to English colonial ventures of the period? If, for the English elite of the period, education was education for empire, how do commentaries reflect this?

Nathan May

CAS, 2017; English, Classical Studies

"To Thine Own Self Be True:" Quoting the Shakespearean Maxim from 1600 to the Present

In the early years of the seventeenth-century, professional English plays were printed for the first time with commonplace marks, textual signs that alert the reader to extractable pearls of wisdom. Until then, only works of greater prestige—translations of Euripides, neo-Senecan tragedy, and finally, works of poetry—had merited such a distinction. In applying these marks to vernacular drama, publishers, as well as the few playwrights who played a role in the process, effected a translation of cultural value: a conveyance of "literariness" from one locus (Greek and Latin literature) to another (vernacular drama). In my project, I examine how this process of translation unfolds in the plays themselves, showing how early modern playwrights inherited and morphed an ancient tradition of literary sententiousness.

Thomas Myers

CAS, 2017; English

Translating the Event: Aesthetics of the Post-9/11 Disaster Genre

This project will explore the ways in which the un-constructed signifying networks traumatically introduced in moments of Event (Event as theorized in contemporary philosophy) are assimilated via translation into coherently constructed semiotic systems. My research will focus specifically on the disaster movie genre, examining it as a system of signification engaged in an obsessive translation of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The questions to address are: How does this traumatic Event construct, deconstruct, and ultimately translate the codes, signs, metaphors, symbols, and spaces that constitute the disaster genre? And, then, how is un-constructed, disastrous reality translated into a palatably constructed representational form?

Chloe Nurik

CAS, 2017; History

Collegiate Masculinity and the Rise of American Youth Culture in the Jazz Age

As the field of gender history develops, greater scholarly attention has been paid to masculinity; however, American masculinity during the 1920s has been largely neglected. My project will examine how mass media images both reflected and reinforced prevailing notions of masculinity. Through a range of primary sources (i.e., movies, ads, novels, and college archives about college men), I will explore how representations from popular media translated into daily practices for men and shaped new gender ideals during the Jazz Age. Analyzing masculinity in this time period will foster an appreciation of the dynamic and historically contingent nature of gender roles and will address a gap in the knowledge base of gender history. This project may be linked to the PHF theme of translation as it examines the way that media messages are interpreted and used as part of the cultural context.

Kyle Tebo

CAS, 2017; Philosophy

Transmission of Greek Philosophical Vocabulary into Latin through Cicero

This project involves the study of Cicero's translation into Latin of Epicurean philosophical concepts and terminology. In this analysis I compare Cicero's translations with the same concepts and terms as they originally appeared in Greek Epicurean texts in order to understand what conceptual changes occurred in translation. I consider the extent to which these changes were due to translation, Cicero's pro-stoic tendencies and his political agenda. To accomplish this, I first collate the Epicurean terms and concepts that occur in Cicero. I then move onto the Epicurean texts and survey the surviving Epicurean corpus before finding original Epicurean terms and concepts that correspond to Cicero's translations. I then show how the Epicureans themselves employed the corresponding Greek terms and understood the same concepts.

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