

The Department of English invites you to join us for our

2020 Honors Thesis Presentations

Thursday, April 16, 2020

12:30 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.

Zoom Link: <https://usc.zoom.us/j/9305949062>

Meeting ID: 930 594 9062

A More Perfect Union? Liberty Versus Equality in American Construction and Reconstruction

This thesis explores the inherent conflict between liberty and equality—the twin pillars on which the United States and its Constitution are predicated—and the materialization of this conflict in storm center texts, whose subjects relate to the sentiments of the zeitgeist during the construction of America versus its Reconstruction.

Presented by: Michael Neely

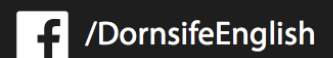
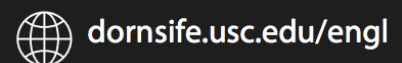
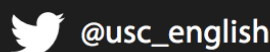
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Death Becomes Her: Melancholia, Secrets and Substitution in the Governess Narrative

What does mourning look like? How do we process loss? Can we ever really experience our mourning correctly, whatever this may mean? This thesis uses Freud's seminal work, "Mourning and Melancholia," along with a range of other psychoanalytical texts, as a prism through which to examine how the nineteenth-century figure of the governess — a figure whose place in the household marks her as a figure of substitution— makes visible the mourning mechanism as described by Freud. The primary works used in the study are Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, Freud's *Dora — A Case of Hysteria*, and Anne Serre's *The Governesses*.

Presented by: Kanak Kapur

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Rewriting Fate: Turn of the Century Black Female Authors and The Fight Against a Racialized, Gendered Destiny

Despite the prolific writing of African American women at the turn of the century (1890–1910), much of their work has gone unrecognized, leading some scholars to posit that it was an inevitable fate for Black women’s voices to be silenced. Rather than accept that fate, African American female authors resisted it, sharing their voices and creating a space for themselves where none had existed before. They forged their own fate through the act of authorship.

While fate can be a more abstract or cerebral idea, I will argue that Black female authors write about fate as a deliberate conceptual framework to address and resist the effects of race and gender on the supposedly predetermined path laid out for their lives in American society. They establish their own discourse on fate, drawing on a multitude of ideologies to ultimately give voice to their unique position in America. Using Pauline Hopkins’s 1900 novel, *Contending Forces*, and its various spiritual and secular methodologies as a focal point, I will evaluate the presence of fate as influenced by race and gender in turn of the century African American female work. Drawing upon the work of Hopkins’s predecessors, contemporaries, and successors, my thesis will analyze the sometimes paradoxical but always powerful use of fate as a discourse to resist determinism, uplift voices, and forge one’s own path

Presented by: Danielle Collins

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Ovidian Heroines Dismantling the Virgilian State in Early Modern Drama

Many heroines of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Jonson's dramatic works take on the transgressive voices of women found in Ovid's *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*. The content of Ovid is laden with highly erotic and problematically stylized depictions of sexual violence. Thus, its reception by Early Modern writers and translators is frequently allegorized and moralized, such is the case in Arthur Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses*. Despite both the attempts of censorship and moralizing, Ovid's strong-willed women such as Medea, Helen, and Dido commonly appear in the plays and poems of Early Modern England as the female leads like Shakespeare's Juliette, Jonson's Julia and Chloe, and Marlowe's Dido. However, these transgressive classical women, transposed into the heroines of Renaissance dramatists, are at odds with societal standards and, frequently, the stability of the state. Early Modern dramatists position erotic elegy and Ovidian ideals through the female voice against the stability and morals of empire and state through the transmission and translation of Virgil. The *Aeneid* and Virgil's other works for Renaissance writers epitomizes empire building, centralized power, and the joining of art and state. However, in a time of censorship with the Bishop's Ban of 1599, state power and empire created tension between writers and authority. Thus, the placement of transgressive Ovidian heroines, who use moving rhetoric and cite erotic elegy, attempt to dismantle the machinated Virgilian state in drama. The heroine becomes an ersatz poet, at times embodying their own author, at odds with censorship and the state.

Presented by: Jane Clark

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Fictions of Female Autonomy & Culpability in Romantic Literature of the Middle Ages

This thesis investigates recurring patterns in representations of gender in literary romantic encounters of the high and late Middle Ages, including works over a broad period such as *Cliges*, *The Art of Courtly Love*, *The Romance of the Rose*, and *Book of the Courtier*. I look to romance literature's cherry-picking of behavioral standards for women to argue that literary expectations of female propriety are manipulated to privilege male desire over female choice. The essay begins with a consideration of patristic misogyny's influence on literary constructions of female sexuality, and proceeds to analyze how representations of male accountability, female culpability, and sexual autonomy are systemized in portrayals of romance of the later Middle Ages. In deconstructing recurring patterns, this thesis aims to reveal the ways in which contemporary literature simultaneously normalized the regulating of female sexuality and the blaming of women in romantic encounters.

Presented by: Lorea Mendiguren

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Between Rational and Fanciful: Religion and Spirituality in the Late Victorian Bildungsroman

The nineteenth century in Europe was characterized by unprecedented advancements in natural science and technology. In Britain, such discoveries as Charles Darwin's, which suggested a concrete alternative to intelligent creation, made religious faith an increasingly challenging and complex proposition. Religion and religious faith as such became marginalized in the mainstream of Victorian intellectual activity. However, in the late Victorian bildungsroman, religion reappears as a narrative and aesthetic device. Authors use it to insist on the value of both historical tradition and of modes of thinking that are not strictly empirical, but transcendental and imaginative. They condemn blindly superstitious religious thought at the same time as they defend the importance of religion to the life of the modern subject. Through the analysis of three novels—George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*—I explore the implications of this phenomenon for Victorian intellectual and political history.

Presented by: Jason Collins


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A Castle and a Con: Strawberry Hill and the Complexities of Authorship and Ownership

Much of contemporary literary criticism has been devoted to the role of paratexts in the development of the novel; almost as much has been devoted to Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, and its physical correspondent, Strawberry Hill. And yet the conversations regarding Strawberry Hill and *Otranto*'s paratexts have been largely kept exclusive. This thesis seeks to delineate the relationship between these two entities and frame Strawberry Hill as a plagiaristic endeavor which moves readers toward the modern conception of the novel as an unstable, reader-constructed object.

Presented by: Megan Ritchie


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