



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Anna Mendelssohn, *Avant-Garde Poetess Maudite***

Soulet Ali, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, Philosophy & English, Creative Writing

Mentor(s): Professor Sara Crangle, English, University of Sussex

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From the late seventies, British-born Anna Mendelssohn (1948-2009) authored fifteen poetry collections and a dozen short fictions and dramas, often publishing under the name Grace Lake. Mendelssohn's passion for international vanguardism was lifelong, and her writing emerged in journals receptive to experimentalism, among them, *Parataxis*, *Jacket 2*, *Critical Quarterly*, and *Comparative Criticism*. Her most readily available text remains *Implacable Art* (Salt 2000). In 1990, Mendelssohn was anthologised in collections released by Virago, Macmillan, and Reality Street. Iain Sinclair included Mendelssohn in his era-defining *Conductors of Chaos* (1996); in 2004, she was featured in Rod Mengham and John Kinsella's *Vanishing Points* alongside John Ashbery and Susan Howe. During the eighties and nineties, Mendelssohn was invited to read at the University of Cambridge, London's Southbank Centre, and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. Between 1980 and 1985, Mendelssohn had three longed-for children. She enrolled at Cambridge University in 1984, determined to raise her family and succeed academically. Poverty and ill health exerted their daily grind, as did the stigma of single parenthood. In 1988, Mendelssohn reluctantly gave permission to have her children temporarily fostered. They were never returned to her care. After her death, Mendelssohn's children generously donated her vast archive to the University of Sussex. My research experience as an International Junior Research Associate (IJRA) at the University of Sussex consisted of fact-checking, proof-reading, and further editorial apparatus of the Mendelssohn archive.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **A Cartesian Charybdis: Vortex Theory and the Circulation of Knowledge**

Annabella **Archacki**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, History and Philosophy of Science

Mentor(s): Professor Chris Kennedy, Linguistics

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Hydrodynamic metaphors about the “stream of consciousness” or “circulation of knowledge” determine expectations about what information is and does. I argue that René Descartes laid the groundwork for such analogies. Unlike William Harvey, Descartes did not think that will flowed into knowledge; rather, knowledge flowed and became will. In his account of the circulation of the blood, Harvey relied on the paradigm of will flowing from divinity or royalty as if from a fountain. However, the fractious politics of the early seventeenth century confused this metaphor. It became increasingly difficult to decide whose will to follow. Social factions led people through cycles of hope and decline, consuming them in the process. Descartes’ vortex theory of matter mirrored this emergence of circulation as an emblem of materialism. People lived cyclical lives ruled by obscure forces, like automata powered by royal fountains. Imbuing the symbol of the vortex with structure and design, the Cartesian fountain metaphor reclaimed the passivity produced by such paralysis. Rather than viewing himself as an automaton, a mechanical marionette, Descartes cast himself as the puppeteer, whose movements — though subtle — resounded through the rest of the fountain.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Materiality in Art: Planning a Student Symposium at the Smart**

Rafaela **Brosnan**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, Art History & Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Mentor(s): Issa Lampe, Smart Museum of Art, Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry

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As an Undergraduate Research Associate for the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry, my research has focused on the role of university museums in encouraging academic engagement with art. I have found that university museums are excellent resources for object-based research, but students often do not understand how to access the museum or how it can contribute to their education. In an effort to increase student engagement with the Smart, I am working with the Feitler Center and museum curators to organize a student symposium. My presentation will focus on the process of planning the symposium, which is based on the themes explored in the Smart's "The Allure of Matter" exhibition, and I will analyze the successes of the event and suggest areas for improvement in future endeavors. The symposium, tentatively titled "Materiality in Art," will be the first of its kind at the Smart Museum, including undergraduate and graduate students. The symposium will be comprised of both formal presentations and non-traditional gallery talks and creative responses in an effort to make the symposium inclusive and accessible to a wide variety of students. I will collect presenter and audience feedback to evaluate the symposium's overall impact, examining what components are constructive and successful, but I will also make recommendations for what can be changed for similar events in the future. In addition to helping students develop presentation skills, it will allow students at many stages in their academic careers to gain a better understanding of the role art historical inquiry can play in a museum setting. Ultimately, it will establish a place for student research in the Smart Museum and strengthen the link between the museum and the student body.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Security, Resilience, and Crisis: Forms of the City in the Age of Climate Change**

Sam Clark, 3<sup>rd</sup>-Year, Urban Studies

Mentor(s): Professor Chris Kennedy, Linguistics

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What does it mean for a “smart” city to think? What should our cities “think” in an age of crisis? The meteoric rise to prominence by the “smart city” concept over the past two decades urgently necessitates a critical-analytic response. Using a theoretical foundation drawn from the work of Bruno Latour and Friedrich Kittler, I examine historiographically and epistemologically two case studies which prefigure the contemporary smart city: The events of 9/11 and the War on Terror, and the move in the late 2000s towards a “post-theory” data economy concretized architecturally in the Hudson Yards development in New York City. I here attempt to situate and respond to the nature and foundations of current conceptions of the smart city as a “thinking and seeing object,” by tracking the series of cross-pollinations between discourses of virtuality and artificial intelligence, urban planning and neoliberal experimentation, city-based combat and military mission control, and corporate action and disaster capitalism. The specific discussion proposed here marries the theoretical foundation detailed above with research performed in partnership with the psychology and sociology departments investigating both individual and collective resilience. The final product will look to the visions of a thinking city in the age of climate change which is both supported by cutting edge sociological research and adequately theorized in terms of avoiding reification of neoliberal and posthuman ideologies.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **“After it Happened, President Bush Told Us All to Go Shopping:” Immigrant Subjectivity and Capitalist Crisis in Ling Ma’s *Severance* (2018)**

Paola **Del Toro**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, English Language and Literature

Mentor(s): Professor Adrienne Brown, English

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My project studies the ways that subjects use affective attachments and routine activities to produce and sustain normalcy under conditions of capitalist crisis. To this end, the central object of my project is Ling Ma’s *Severance* (2018). Most reviews of the novel understand its themes of capitalism and immigrant experience as existing separate from one another. For example, on the one hand, characters in the novel lament the proliferation of late capitalist hallmarks like Starbucks and gentrified neighborhoods. On the other hand, the protagonist Candace recounts her family’s immigrant history and genealogical connections at frequent points in the novel. Yet, the novel does not treat the two themes as distinctly as it seems, and in fact, by using mixed genres and tones, insists on meshing genealogical memory with scenes of consumerism. Even the titular word “severance” stages the double meaning between severance pay as a feature of capitalist labor relations, and the severance, or cutting off, of the protagonist Candace from China and her family. This double meaning is representative of a dynamic, theorized by Lauren Berlant and others, in which subjects develop affective attachments to forms of capital in order to cope with the instability of living under capitalism. By using *Severance* as my object of study, I demonstrate how these coping practices are also modulated by diasporic and immigrant experience. In sum, my project—participating in literary conversations on postmodern aesthetics, affect theory, and globalization—analyzes *Severance*’s aesthetic and literary features including mixed genres, tones, and fragmented narrative style. Equipped with this evidence, I argue that the novel’s immigrant characters cope with both apocalyptic and everyday crisis by ambivalently forming affective attachments to spaces of consumerism and capitalism.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Art in the Anthropocene**

Amelia **Frank**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities, Visual Arts

Mentor(s): Professor Benjamin Morgan, English

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How can we justify living and creating in a world starved of resources and perhaps approaching apocalypse? Environmental degradation may be the defining crisis of our time, and an increasing number of thinkers across disciplines have turned their attention toward ecological concerns. As such, many academics, artists, and activists have assembled around specific terms as key concepts in the conversation around climate change. “Entanglement” is one such term. I am interested in the way entanglement relates to other methods of responding to and representing crisis, particularly looking at absurdist philosophy, magical realism, and specific works of visual art. I approach these related modes of thought using interdisciplinary forms of analysis. My critical methods include comparative analyses of the non-teleological arguments of Albert Camus’ “Myth of Sisyphus” and Anna Tsing’s *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, close readings of the apocalyptic and nostalgic language used in Gabriel Garcia-Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, and visual and conceptual analyses of installation artist Mark Dion’s *Neukom Vivarium* and painter/sculptor Anselm Kiefer’s oeuvre. Through engaging with these sources, I conclude that artmaking must be seen as a form of imaginative worldbuilding which reconciles philosophies of human impulses with allowances for empathy and quietude.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Politeness in British Public Smoking Signage**

Eleanor **Frank**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, English

Mentor(s): Professor Lynne Murphy, Linguistics, University of Sussex

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This project was conducted through collection and examination of public signs regulating smoking behavior around Southern England and through analysis of their language and prohibitions. A survey was sent out via social media and email to have UK citizens react and comment on their perceptions of politeness in the signage. The initial hypothesis supposed a correlation between the indirectness of the sign and the perception of politeness, but there was no statistically significant connection found. Through background research, literary analysis, and the nonnumeric data collected in the survey, the project then used aesthetic theories of disgust to define the bodily self. By relating the self-defined through disgust theories to linguistic theories of self, the project then considered the question of the biopolitics of regulating action through public signage. By thoroughly understanding the relation of language to self, the actions of the public's selves can be better regulated through language.



## The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract

### Etymology and Expression: Vergil in Translation

Donald (Don) **Harmon**, 2<sup>nd</sup>-Year, Classics

Mentor(s): Professor Sarah Nooter, Classics; Anne Janusch, Creative Writing

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Vergil's *Aeneid* is a seminal text in the Western canon and the field of Classics, read in Latin and in English by interested students across disciplines. As part of the University's Beginning Translation Workshop (CRWR 10606) in Spring 2019, and before then on my own, I have translated 75 lines of the epic poem's first book into English blank verse, paying particular attention to preserving the rich and diverse connotations of each individual Latin word, exploring the interrelatedness of meaning among words stemming from similar roots, and expressing for a modern audience the feelings and associations the poem might have produced for a contemporary Augustan audience. In pursuit of these aims, I chose to ground my method of translating in an etymological analysis of each Latin word, under the hypothesis that etymological connections would be more present in the minds of Latin speakers in Rome than they are for English speakers today, and that investigating this would reveal a wealth of meanings and connections outside those which could be gleaned by a modern reading. Through a definitional and etymological treatment of each word, I arrived at translations and interpretations of some lines that are novel, to my knowledge, and that I believe are simultaneously evocative for a non-specialist reader. I hope, by reading my work and presenting my findings, to demonstrate the value of an etymological and expressionistic approach to translating Classical texts, both as a tool for scholarship and as a means of crafting the reader's experience of the text as literature. Relatedly, I hope to engage with the field of translation studies, specifically Venuti's paradigm of domesticating and foreignizing approaches, and to illustrate what role that I believe a foreignizing approach to translation can have in making a text more, rather than less, accessible to a reader. A translation project fixes itself at a crossroads of disciplines, among them language, literature, education, reception, and the study of translation itself. My attempt, though unfinished, represents an engagement with questions from each of these various fields, which I believe offers a constructive contribution to interdisciplinary discourse.





## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **The Gothic Corpse: Womanhood, Personhood, and Society in Elizabeth Bowen's "Look at All Those Roses"**

Claire **Holland**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, English Language and Literature & Political Science

Mentor(s): Professor Rachel Galvin; English, Comparative Literature, Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture

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Elizabeth Bowen's 1941 short story "Look at All Those Roses" is a masterwork of terror: in the middle of wartime Britain's modern(ist) malaise, a tired couple enters the Mather home, a rose-enshrouded cottage with an unspoken secret. It is here where Lou will remain while Edward, her partner, seeks a car mechanic, biding her time by interacting with the disturbing mother-daughter pair living in the home's depths. As she detaches from her relationship with Edward, Lou begins a psychic spiral inwards that leads her to renounce life itself—until, of course, Edward returns to "rescue" her. While the plot of "Look at All Those Roses" is steeped in Gothic tradition and horror film tropes, what frightens the reader is something more fundamental: neither the world of adult romantic relations nor the family unit of childhood can give Lou a stable, affirming way to construct her identity. Incapable of becoming either half of the archetypal "wife-mother," Lou tries on different psycho-social roles in the Mather home—lover, child, and even father—in an ever-increasing anxiety that crescendos into a final death wish. The chilling fundamental critique of femininity put forth by "Look at All Those Roses" is that whether in society or out of it, a woman can never be a whole, independent person; she can be either dependent on men, or undead and separated from society, but never fully alive. By first situating the world of "Look at All Those Roses" within the trajectory of British literature and Gothic tropes, then delving into the psychic layers of repression, alienation, and codependence with which Lou constructs her inner and outer life, this paper attempts to explain the source of indefinite dread suffusing Bowen's work: womanhood itself. Along the way, we will stop to analyze the monstrosity, or lack thereof, of Mrs. Mather and her daughter Josephine, and the particular light they shed upon the horror of femininity. In analyzing this understudied work by Elizabeth Bowen, the existential, modernist identity crisis facing 1940s British society becomes rooted in the concept of womanhood itself.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Impacts of the Rising Female *Amchi* Population on Tibetan Medicine in Nepal**

Hannah **Kupferschmid**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, Global Studies

Mentor(s): Professor Sean Dowdy, Anthropology

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Over the past 40 years, populations in and around the Himalayan region have witnessed a growing number of female Tibetan medicine practitioners, or *amchi*. While a 2012 study conducted by the University of Oslo examined this trend's impact in Tibet, Bhutan, and the Tibetan exile communities of India, the sizeable *amchi* population of Nepal has yet to be considered. This important omission prompts the question of whether female *amchi* in Nepal have influenced how the practice of *Sowa Rigpa*, known interchangeably as Tibetan medicine, interacts with women's health, as was found to be the case in the areas examined by the University of Oslo. Because prior research indicates that national cultures and social structures greatly impact how Tibetan medicine is practiced in the Himalayan region, this thesis attempts to answer this query with an ethnography of Tibetan medicine practitioners in Kathmandu. In the summer of 2019, the researcher interviewed female *amchi* practicing in the city and explored ideas of gender and medicine in Nepali society. A key insight culled from this research is that the overall legal and economic status of women in Nepal is distinctly lower than that of Tibetan women; whereas women in Nepal have consistently been marginalized socially and professionally, in Tibet, women have historically been much more active in society. This thesis thus proposes that although Tibetan medicine's relationship with women's health has advanced in areas of Tibet, Bhutan, and the Tibetan exile community of India, the more rigid gender constructs and ideologies present in Nepal have stunted the existing impact that female practitioners of Tibetan medicine have had on women's health in the country, in spite of their increasing population.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Cybernetic Flux: Hélio Oiticica's Parangolé Capes and the Construction of Reality**

Jonathan **Mandel**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, Art History & Philosophy and Allied Fields

Mentor(s): Professor Megan Sullivan, Art History; Hanne Graversen, Art History

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The importance of cybernetics to Brazil's artistic avant-garde from the 1950s through the 1970s has been widely acknowledged. Up to this point, however, no scholars have explored the potential of cybernetics to illuminate the artwork of Hélio Oiticica—now regarded as one of Brazil's most important artists during this period—though his writings articulate many terms and concepts developed by cybernetic theory. This paper begins by detailing the more explicit relationship between the “first wave” of cybernetics and the Concrete art movement in Brazil, against which backdrop Oiticica began producing art in the 1950s. By 1959, however, scientists working in the United States and Oiticica's artistic peers in Brazil both began to push back on the assumptions undergirding first-wave cybernetics—namely, its understanding of information as a “disembodied flow that can move between different substrates,” in the words of scholar Katherine Hayles. As the 1960s progressed, scientists investigated the importance of embodiment to the construction of experience. Oiticica carried out similar investigations through his artwork, creating artistic propositions that were activated by the viewer. But they diverged on the issue of matter: whereas the role played by the material world in subjective experience remained ambiguous for scientists leading the nascent “second wave” of cybernetics, Oiticica arrived at a unique understanding of matter as an animate partner to human subjects in the co-creation of reality as we know it. Such a view prefigures more contemporary theories of matter, like physicist-*cum*-philosopher Karen Barad's theory of agential realism. This paper thus seeks to recover more fully the rich theoretical insights offered by Oiticica. It does so not only by attending to the photographs that remain of his artworks—particularly his famous *Parangolé* capes—but also by taking his sophisticated (and often opaque) writings as an integral part of his theoretical project. Through Oiticica's experimental artworks and texts, the social and political potential of his proposed approach to matter emerges: the potential to freely reconstitute social and subjective worlds.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Cell Theory, Evolution, and the Secret of Sex, 1865-1945**

Laura **Needham**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, Neuroscience & Art History

Mentor(s): Dr. Natalia Cecire, English, University of Sussex

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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was a wave of literature regarding psychoanalytic theory that had its roots in cellular biology. These emerging theories treated the body as a model for psychic effects, particularly focusing on cellular biology and its use as an analogy for both the individual mind and the representation of gender and sexuality. We investigated the biological studies upon which these theories were modeled to better understand both their contemporary interpretation by psychoanalytical thinkers as well as the way in which this information was extrapolated into the psychological and sociological realms. I first investigated the theoretical work published in the twentieth century, particularly focusing on Freud's death drive as described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and its later adaptation in works of queer theory by Eve Sedgwick and Lee Edelman. I then turned to the scientific resources that Freud used as models to investigate the way in which he interpreted and extrapolated those scientific findings to his own theory of the mind. While Freud makes multiple disclaimers about the tentative connections between cellular biology and its use as an analogy for the psyche, he nevertheless uses these biological experiments as a form of support for psychological events. In researching Freud's use and interpretation of August Weismann's germ plasm theory, I found certain complications that generate a tension between Freud's application of the theory to the death drive and its later extrapolation into sociology. Some of these nuances are found in Freud's interpretation of the work itself, while others retroactively consider the way in which a more modern understanding of germ plasm theory might be translated into Freudian theory of the life and death drives. Research for this project will continue, involving contemporary literature reviews to understand the way in which the body and psyche were engaged by authors and the dynamics of the scientific community surrounding these developments in biology.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Expertise Without Experience: Can Computers Be Artists?**

Nicholas (Nick) **Ornstein**, 3<sup>rd</sup>-Year, Neuroscience, Media Arts and Design

Mentor(s): Professor Chris Kennedy, Linguistics

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As advances are made in artificial intelligence technology, the definition of ‘artist’ demands reevaluation. At first glance, artistic creativity would seem to be impossible to endow in a computer, given artistry’s apparent reliance on the use of metaphor, analogy, and composition—abilities that today’s computers do not have. While computers have previously been used as tools for creative artists, what sort of capability would a machine have to demonstrate to be considered an artist in its own right? To address this question, I consider the Ability Hypothesis from Lewis and Nemirow, which postulates a difference between knowledge that is propositional (knowledge-that) and experiential (knowledge-how). I show that the distinction between propositional and experiential types of knowledge finds a physical foothold in the evolved architecture of the human nervous system, but is not similarly enforced in the designed architecture of today’s computers. Human art-makers must hone their artistic knowledge through experience to become expert artists, because the nervous system cannot be directly programmed. Computers, on the other hand, may exhibit instant expertise and ability through access to new propositional knowledge alone. Therefore, the requirement of vast experiential knowledge that we hold for human artists should not apply to computers. I apply this analysis to the key case study of Harold Cohen’s AARON painting machine, arguing that AARON counts as an expert, artistic system. I conclude with a comparison to machine learning algorithms that emulate neural architecture. This research broaches new ground in the philosophies of artificial intelligence and neuroscience by synthesizing a new framework of learned vs. downloaded expert ability through which developments in AI may be critically examined.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **From Clay to Computer: Digitizing the Oriental Institute's Cuneiform Tablet Collection**

Madeline **Ouimet**, 2<sup>nd</sup>-Year, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (Archaeology Track) Mentor(s):  
Professor Susanne Paulus, Assyriology, Oriental Institute

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Turn back time over five thousand years. It's 3200 BC, a critical moment in history—the invention of writing in Mesopotamia. This region, today's Iraq, produced clay tablets inscribed with “cuneiform” or “wedge-like” writing for the next three thousand years, from astronomical and medical treatises to literature like the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. UChicago's Oriental Institute (OI) houses thousands of these spectacular artifacts in the Tablet Collection. However, a roadblock plaguing the field of archaeology is publication. For many tablets, information like translations or provenance has been published through the OI's Integrated Database. Yet, most tablets have long lacked high-quality photographs, thus limiting their utility for scholarship. My research strives to answer the question of how to most effectively visually convey the copious epigraphic and artifactual data in the Tablet Collection to a global network of scholars and general public. In order to achieve this goal, I develop digital preservation methods for these tablets via scanning and photography. I then use photo-editing applications to create a composite image simultaneously displaying all faces of a tablet and enhancing visibility of material characteristics. I upload these images to the open source Integrated Database. This allows comprehensive presentation of materiality—form, composition, surface treatment, impressions, color, inscription content, script and handwriting, organization, state of preservation, and therefore data reliability. Each unique object requires its own methodology for effective presentation. These physical aspects of the text can only be conveyed through photography and *must* be conveyed if we are to understand the active relationship between written word and material medium.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Inheriting Infidelity: A Psychoanalytic Examination of Post-WWII American Literature**

Nicole **Romeu**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, English

Mentor(s) Professor Deborah Nelson, English

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The following essay will consider fiction about adultery, written by female authors in the wake of the American sexual revolution, to connect the categories of intergenerational trauma and childhood friendships. The male-dominated trinity of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) established a paradigm in this literature moving forward: adulteress protagonists must be faced with tragedy as a punitive means of resolving the issues in the novel. However, with the appearance of Grace Metalious's *Peyton Place* (1956) and Toni Morrison's *Sula* (1973), such literary punishments were exchanged for alternative endings that lent themselves beyond the realm of the masculine. I specifically refer to the emergence of complex matrices between women, in both heritable and nonheritable ways. The intergenerational trauma that is attached to adultery is passed down from mother to daughter, and the daughter, through her friendships in childhood, contaminates others secondarily and influences them to broach a similar family history in their own lives. The construction of female homosociality and its subsequent "transmission" of adultery in American literature between 1950 to 1980 can be explained through Kleinian and Lacanian analyses that prioritize the psychogenetic process of self-identification with the mother and as a result, women, in childhood. Simultaneously, this trickling down of adultery and its plague-like effect in girlhood touches on Sedgwickian performativity, that will be useful in parsing out the intersection between queer theory and cultural studies. This study hopes to signal how the American concept of the nuclear family in post-World War II society necessitated adultery and therefore, predestined the discursive structures of womanhood and marriage we know of today.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **How to Do Kings with Words: Bodies Politic and Performer in Shakespeare's *Richard II***

Emily **Stevens**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, English, Theatre and Performing Studies

Mentor(s) Professor Noémie Ndiaye, English; Sophia Sherry, English

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Shakespeare's *Richard II* presents meeting points between thinking about embodied performance and thinking about politics. Characters' dialogues on perception and the utility of pretending deal with the same questions of authenticity and performativity that Stanislavski and Brecht proposed answers to. Richard's later monologues provide insights into an actor's relationship to arguments and the audience. The ideas offered by Shakespeare's play are in striking agreement with these later theater makers indicating that the play is an early collation of paradigms of performance that would later be codified. These explorations are set off by the sense that the play is unusually focused on its political and theoretical subject matter, and at times highly ritualistic and demonstrative. Shakespeare's *Richard II* engages with contradictions in their complexity. The relative clarity of focus on its political subject matter, despite the self-absorbed artistry of its protagonist, allows the play to be produced as a piece of political commentary. At moments, such as the Pomfret castle speech, "I have been studying how I may compare/ This prison where I live unto the world" (5.1.1-2), the tension between political structures and emotions of performance produces an unstable, generative, "still-breeding" state. I am interested in this effect, and how the brittle mirror of *Richard II* might somehow also be what Brecht describes as "the element of terror necessary to all recognition."





## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Metaphors of Communication in Martin Luther's Postils**

Serena **Strecker**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities, Germanic Studies Mentor(s):  
Professor Christopher Wild, Germanic Studies

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As print entered and coexisted with oral cultures of communication in early modern Europe, theologians like Martin Luther sought to convey their messages through a combination of rhetorical figures and medial strategies. To examine these overlapping techniques, I analyzed Luther's Advent, Christmas, and Lenten Postils both as media of communication and for their use of metaphor. Postils epitomize the entanglement of oral and print cultures as printed collections of model sermons written by experienced preachers and theologians to be read aloud by their less-educated counterparts. They serve as practical handbooks on preaching intended to shape how the reader interprets and communicates Scripture. Postils both taught and exemplified theories and practices of communication in response to the dynamic media environment of a print revolution within a predominantly oral culture. Through archival work at the Reformationsgeschichtliche Forschungsbibliothek Wittenberg, I identified and analyzed rhetorical figures of metaphor, allegory, and allegorical interpretation that conveyed both doctrine itself and how that doctrine should be communicated. I found that many rhetorical figures self-reflexively attempt to thematize and explain the communication in which they are engaged. As Luther wrote the postil to teach preachers how to preach, he employed rhetorical figures to make abstract doctrine and communication theory concrete, tangible, and relatable to his contemporaries. Through rhetorical figures, Luther not only conveyed doctrine but also developed a media theory in which the intertwining of written and oral media of Scripture and preaching anticipated the intermedial life of the postil. My research suggests that the postil as a genre offers a valuable area for continued interdisciplinary research combining rhetorical analysis and media theory to understand the popular communication of Reformation theologies.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Narrating Economic Crises: *Gone Girl* as a Commentary on Economic Behavior**

Melanie **Wang**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, English

Mentor(s): Professor Elaine Hadley, English

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This research focuses on economic theories embedded and embodied in a popular thriller novel, Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*, and how the novel reveals the behavioral impacts that the 2008 financial crisis had on middle-class citizens. It uses an economic lens to examine how this novel works as a commentary on a specific financial crisis in time and how people responded to such economic trauma. It tries to answer the question "How can a fictional novel reveal how people in the world enact economic theories in their own behaviors?" The novel shows how people post-crash tried to game one another—by approaching interactions like prisoner's dilemma scenarios—while partaking in performative consumerism. Both the novel and a subsequent blockbuster film were mainstream hits, but few connections have been made between the novel and the economic crisis—and no research has utilized the novel as a gateway to understanding people's behaviors post-crash. This presentation can be broken down into three parts: an explanation of the most important economic ideas in *Gone Girl*—game theory's idea of the prisoner's dilemma, Veblen's idea of conspicuous consumption, as well as their interrelation—followed by a breakdown of the novel's economic commentary and references, and ending with how the novel reflects the emotions and actions of real people living in the wake of the financial crisis.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Flowing Past the Feminine: Molecular Becoming and Secrets in *Finnegans Wake***

Renee **Wehrle**, 3<sup>rd</sup>-Year, English Language & Literature, Creative Writing

Mentor(s): Professor Maud Ellmann, English Language and Literature

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Many analyses of ALP, the feminine archetype in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, suggest that her fluidity makes her semiotically empty. Authors such as Melissa Dinsman and Sheldon Brivic argue that this indefiniteness is a direct result of ALP's femininity. In my research, I aim to challenge this reading of ALP and femininity at large, as it occludes both the possibility of generating meanings from imperceptibility and of understanding femininity outside of the desire for stability. By reading ALP as a model of Deleuze and Guattari's framework for relational ontology, and specifically, the concept of molecular becoming, I suggest that both ALP's subject position and testimony generate meaning through molecular resonances, rather than through the production of stable signification. Such a reading is possible because, whether "passing out" as she does at the end of *Finnegans Wake* or "riverrunn[ing] past" in its beginning, ALP's presence in the novel is perhaps best understood through the motion of passage. In this way, ALP flows in the spaces between stable points of signification and embodies the movement of semiotic fluidity within an assemblage. In performing this reading, I have two objectives. The first is to use the concepts of becoming to offer a reconfiguration of the existing analyses of micropolitical subject relations within *Finnegans Wake*. Such a reconfiguration will reconsider the oppositional relation between masculinity and femininity that is frequently presumed within analyses of the politics of *The Wake*. I also offer a new way to consider the feminine testimony and discourse in the novel through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of secrets. This proposes that ALP's apparent absence is a productive result of her becoming, rather than a narrative gap. Second, the project attempts to contribute to a current debate about the challenges of theorizing fluidity and change within grid-based models of socially coded identity by reading ALP's presence in the novel as a collection of passages between stable points of signification and meaning. If successful, this project will therefore offer a new perspective for thinking about *Finnegans Wake* by generating a model for reading the work through its molecular resonances.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **Language, Community, and Authority: Bilingual Signage in Hegewisch**

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Mentor(s): Professor Amy Dahlstrom, Linguistics

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The study of linguistic landscapes allows researchers to ascertain facts about the political or cultural landscape of an area as it is reflected through signage and the language used on that signage. Additionally, the specifics of the linguistic landscape teach us about the dynamic of the community; the selection and placement of a language correspond to the intended message and audience. For the purposes of this research, we will be viewing the signage of the “Avenues” neighborhood of the Hegewisch Community Area in Chicago. Data was collected by photos taken during several weekend trips throughout the neighborhood in November and December of 2019, and these photos will be directly referenced in analysis. Given Chicago’s history of segregation, the demographics of this community might suggest conflict or division: census data show that the community is exactly as Hispanic as it is English-speaking. Instead of conflict, what we find is that bilingualism flourishes in this neighborhood in the form of handwritten messages and the signs of locally owned businesses. Reading into the parallelisms and contrasts of content and form, bilingual signage in Hegewisch tells the story of a community that remains close-knit and familial even across languages. On the other hand, signage created institutionally by the City of Chicago fails to capture or facilitate Hegewisch’s bilingualism and instead focuses on building a false image of cosmopolitanism. Our results and analysis showcase the strength of linguistic landscape studies in exploring sociolinguistic dynamics, even within the context of racialized and political power dynamics.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **As Eve, So All Women: Patriarchal Biases in Interpretations of Genesis 2-3**

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Mentor(s): Professor Simeon Chavel, Hebrew Bible, Divinity School

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Since the earliest commentaries on the text of Genesis 2-3, interpreters of dissimilar historical and religious contexts have explained and exploited the story's ambiguities to condemn the character of Eve, and through her, women's worth as a group. Women today still experience the effects of these interpretations in both religious and secular spheres, and so the misogynistic ideas utilized in these interpretations, but not necessarily found in the original text, should be explored. This project first explores the ambiguities in the language and story of Genesis 2-3 in the original Hebrew. This is followed by an outline of the ways that various Jewish and Christian texts have corresponded and differed in their negative interpretation of the character of Eve and their parallel negative views of the character and worth of women. The texts explored range from Second Temple and Christian New Testament texts such as 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, through the Rabbinic texts of *Eruvin* and *Bereishit Rabbah*, writings from early Christian interpreters including Tertullian and Augustine, and the sermons and *Tischreden* of Protestant Reformation-era theologian Martin Luther. Aspects of these interpretations (and their consequent legal regulations on women) are read closely in comparison to the actual text to illustrate the misogynistic ideas of these interpretations which are not warranted by the biblical text. This research specifically emphasizes the shared, preconceived notions about women that these interpretations bring to their reading of the biblical text. The writings of Italian humanist Isotta Nogarola, the English poet Aemelia Lanyer, and the Italian nun Arcangela Tarabotti will then be explored as part of the tradition of early modern women who condemn the above male interpreters' sweeping and frequently paradoxical indictments of women. These women's works also offer alternative interpretations of the Genesis creation story in their examinations and rebuttals of the male-written works in a similar way to this author.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **The Beauty of Co-Curation: Contemporary Art in the Field Museum's New Native American Hall**

Chin Ying **Wu**, 3<sup>rd</sup>-Year, Art History & Chemistry

Mentor(s): Dr. Alaka Wali, North American Anthropology, Field Museum

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The Field Museum is renovating their Native North American Hall, slated to open in 2021. As part of this renovation, the team will collaborate with several contemporary Native American artists. I will assist with the research surrounding this process, from learning about each artist's life and artistic practice, as well as how they are able to draw resonances in their work between the culture and traditions of their peoples, to the complex colonial histories of the objects that are already in the Field Museum's collection. In doing so, I hope to use the new Native American Hall as an exemplary case study to explore the value of co-curation as a general approach, as well as the conceptual and practical challenges that it inevitably poses. I hope to make the case that sustained collaboration with contemporary indigenous artists, particularly in ethnographic or natural history museums, is both relevant and necessary as a curatorial strategy.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **The Performing Gender in Nabokov's *Lolita***

Mingxin (Ming) Xu, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, English, Theater and Performance Studies

Mentor(s): Professor Malynne Sternstein, Fundamentals

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“Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.” The fancy prose style of the novel, *Lolita*, has mesmerized generations of English readers. Arguably, the novel single-handedly led to the fame—or notoriety—of its author, Vladimir Nabokov. The story has commonly been interpreted as a pedophilic, middle-aged man’s brazen confession of love towards a teenage girl. This paper challenges the heteronormative view by proposing a queer reading of the novel. It examines how the first-person narrator, Humbert Humbert, performs gender with his language. Following philosopher J. L. Austin’s notion that all language is performative, I will argue that Humbert’s christening of the teenager as “Lolita” is a violation of the girl on many levels. For example, by skipping over Lolita’s real name, Dolores Haze, and calling her by her nick name with which her mother calls her, Humbert is potentially exposing his veneer as a fatherly figure to approach the girl without causing suspicion. Moreover, the morphology of the girl’s name allows Humbert to further abuse her through his manipulation of language later in his narration. In addition, Humbert devises the notion of “nymphets,” who are teenage girls between the ages of nine to fourteen with a special kind of attraction toward middle-aged men. I will investigate how his notion of “nymphets” creates a third sex that lies outside the binary of masculinity and femininity. Humbert the narrator performs various genders in this novel, such as his own masculinity, adult women’s femininity, “nymphetsy,” and homosexuality. For instance, he titles his story the “Confession of a White Widowed Male.” I will argue that Humbert’s narration constitutes a speech act, rather than a mere confession. I believe having the availability of this performative lens can help us think critically about what the narrator does with language without falling into the spell of his construct. This kind of language research might be applied to first-person narratives in general, not only those of fiction.



## **The 2020 University of Chicago Undergraduate Research Symposium Proceedings: Abstract**

### **May the Gods Curse Him—A Comparative Analysis of Illocutionary Acts in Greek and Luwian Curses**

Huaxi **Zhou**, 4<sup>th</sup>-Year, Classics

Mentor(s): Professor Sofía Torallas-Tovar, Classics

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Curses can be analyzed as a specific type of speech act in which the instigator of the curse calls upon divine power or other supernatural agents to bring consequences on an intended object. A curse has many components that can be treated separately with different linguistic approaches, whether it be a study of the morphology of lexical items and turn of phrases, the syntactic structure (“if... then...” conditional clauses), the illocutionary force of the sentence, which is how the sentence constitutes a command, a curse, a threat, etc., and finally the performance of physical rituals interacting with language itself. In this paper, I will focus on curses in the magical texts of two different Ancient Mediterranean societies, Luwian-speaking Anatolia and Greece in the first millennia BC. I will study the semantic content of a number of important illocutionary expressions in curse formulae, for example main verbs in the imperative mood with directive illocutionary force and first person verbs that serve as overt indicators of types of illocutionary acts, and analyze how they can offer us insight into the way that the ancient Neo-Hittites and Greeks conceive of their cursing acts and how curses were supposed to work. I will be adapting analytical tools provided by Speech Act Theory, but I will also draw on its application to linguistic analysis of different types of imperative sentences in functional grammar. I will attempt to demonstrate how illocutionary acts engage with the instigator, the divine, the object of cursing, and the physical world on multiple linguistic levels.