

## Crossing (Intellectual) Frontiers, for the Love of Truth

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The yearly graduate conference, organized by the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Boston College, has become a pivotal moment in the intellectual life of our Master's program. Every year, our graduate students take time off from their busy schedules to organize this event: they gather after class and brainstorm ideas for a central theme, discuss possible keynote speakers, plan every single aspect of the conference's logistics. It is a labor of love and passion, one ultimately motivated by the desire to create a dialogue within our own program, and by the wish to cross the borders of disciplines and national traditions. Every spring, as a result of this effort, students from all over the country gather in Stokes Hall and offer their contribution to an intellectual conversation that would not have been possible otherwise. *Romance eReview*, both in its present incarnation and its previous printed form, has always sought to capture the liveliness of this conversation, immortalizing some of the best essays presented. The current issue of the journal includes a selection of works from two of the most recent conferences, "For the Love of Truth" (spring 2017) and "Crossing Fronteras/Fronières/Frontiere" (spring 2018), with the hope to offer visibility to these young authors and to celebrate their participation in our event.

The first section of this issue centers on the conference "For the Love of Truth," held on the Boston College campus on March 17-18, 2017. The keynote speaker was Walter Stephens, Charles S. Singleton Professor of Italian Studies at Johns Hopkins University, who honored our guests with a presentation entitled "Thou Shalt Lie: Literature, History, and Forgery in the Renaissance." Professor Stephens' lecture embraced an interdisciplinary and transnational view of the Italian Renaissance, kicking off an event that saw the participation of graduate students coming from some of the most prestigious universities in the country, as well as from the most diverse disciplines and backgrounds. Professor Larysa Smirnova wrapped up the event with her closing remarks, describing the intellectual activity that defines our scholarly lives not only as a pursuit of intellectual "truth," but also and especially as an act of love. This issue of our journal includes the works of Jason Collins ("The Simulacrum Precedes the Truth: Padre Onofrio Branda's Linguistic Counterfeit"), who discusses the work of Paolo Onofrio

Branda and his idea of simulacrum, and Felipe Moraga (“Técnicas de integración social y justificación en testimonios de excautivos en los Siglos de Oro”), who outlines the discursive strategies used by ex-captives of North Africa, suspected of conversion to Islam, to convince early modern Spanish authorities of their faithfulness to Catholicism.

The second section of the journal includes a selection of essays presented at the conference “Crossing Fronteras/Frontières/Frontiere: Iterations of Cultural Identity” held at Boston College on March 16-17, 2018. From its multilingual title, the conference examined the idea of the border as an intellectual space of intersection between different cultural traditions and identities, focusing in particular on the effort to cross such a space. Our keynote speaker was Iani Moreno, Associate Professor of World Languages and Cultural Studies at Suffolk University. Her presentation offered a fundamental testimony of one of the most contested areas of cultural intersection today, the US-Mexico border, setting the tone for a variety of presentations across disciplines and national traditions, and tackling the challenges that scholarly research faces in today’s political climate. Ashton Fiucci (“Né l’uno, né l’altro: Igiaba Scego e l’identità ibrida degli immigrati di seconda generazione”) discusses the short story “Salsicce” (Sausages), by contemporary Somali-Italian writer Igiaba Scego, who portrayed her conflicted cultural identity at the intersection of her Italian citizenship and her Somali ancestry. Chiara Barni (“The Spirit of the South” Mediterranean ‘Otherness’ According to the Northerners”) examines the creation of a Southern European identity in opposition to a Northern one. Tito Matias (“When Immigrants Speak: Diasporic Voices in Julia Alvarez’s *How the García Girls Lost their Accents*”), analyzes the notion of otherness in the works of Dominican-American writer Julia Alvarez. Xinyan Liu (“Language of Instruction in Higher Education: South Africa and Spain”) offers a compelling look at the intersection between language and identity by studying the language of instruction used in the multilingual countries South Africa and Spain. Finally, Ouafaa Deleger (“A Dystopia in the Service of Fluctuating Frontiers: Boualem Sansal’s *2084: the End of the World*”), examines the portrayal of the borderland as a space of hybridity in the Algerian novel *2084: La fin du monde* (2008).

These studies cross all manner of borders, contributing to an ongoing conversation among disciplines, national traditions and fields of specialization. They are a testimony to the liveliness of our graduate conferences and their protagonists, and we would like to use this

opportunity to offer our warmest thanks to all those who made these encounters possible. First of all, thanks to the senior and junior colleagues in our department who facilitated or attended our events. Special thanks to Larysa Smirnova, whose role in the organization of “For The Love of Truth” was vital. Most importantly, we would like to thank all the students whose hard work made the conference possible, among them Kirsten Agla, Chiara Barni, Alexandra Brown, Lucile Coneau, Daniel Fitzgerald, Ashton Fiucci, Anna Glassman, Clara González Tosat, Lily Kumi Acheow, Mario Lorenzo, Katherine Manansala, Gloria Pèrez Cejudo, Matteo Venieri, Liv Westphal, Bryant White, and Courtney Zsitek. Finally, a special thanks to the sponsors that supported our efforts: the Institute of the Liberal Arts – with special thanks to Professor Mary Crane, the Heinz Bluhm Memorial Lectures Series fund, the Graduate Student Association and, finally, the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures.