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#### EDUCATION

PhD, Department of Italian Language and Literature, Yale University, 2001

BA, Yale University, *Summa cum Laude*, double major in French (with Distinction) and Italian (with Exceptional Distinction), 1991

#### ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Associate Professor of French and Italian, Department of French and Italian, Stanford University (8/2012-present)

Assistant Professor of French and Italian (tenure track), Department of French and Italian, Stanford University (8/2004-8/2012)

Assistant Professor of Italian (tenure track), Department of French and Italian, Department of Comparative Literature, affiliated with the Department of Film Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara (7/2000-6/2004)

#### EXTRAMURAL AWARDS AND HONORS

NEH Fellowship, National Endowment for the Humanities (September 2014-August 2015)

Charles S. Ryskamp Fellowship, American Council of Learned Societies (September 2014-May 2015)

Penn Neuroscience Boot Camp, University of Pennsylvania (July 30-August 8 2012)

Summer Research Fellowship, American Academy in Rome (July-August 2008)

NEH Summer Research Stipend (summer 2002)

Rome Prize Fellowship, American Academy in Rome (Post-Classical Humanistic Studies) (1997-98)

Charlotte W. Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship, Woodrow Wilson Foundation (1996-97)

Fulbright Scholar (University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy) (1991-92)

#### INTRAMURAL AWARDS AND HONORS (RECENT)

Stanford Humanities Center Fellowship, Stanford University (2025-26 academic year)

**Enhanced Sabbatical Grant**, Stanford University (2022-23 academic year)

**“Cultivating Humanities and Arts” Grant**, Stanford University (2022-24)

**Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education**, Stanford University, Course Development Grant (summer and fall 2012, research assistant and web site development funding)

**Language, Literature, and Mysticism Research Unit**, Stanford University (2010-14, Conference, Course Development, and research funding)

**California Interdisciplinary Consortium for Italian Studies Annual Meeting 2009**, Stanford University (2009, Conference and research funding)

## BOOKS

### IN PRINT:

*The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Modern Mourning, and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.

This book explores the creation and reception of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier – an Italian, French, and British invention at the end of the First World War – as an emblem for modern mourning, from a cultural, historical, and literary perspective. It draws on literary and filmic evocations of the Unknown Soldier to interpret this memorial’s longstanding popularity and politically subversive meanings.

*Winner of the 2012 Marraro Award from the Society for Italian Historical Studies, American History Association.*

*Reviewed in* The Journal of Modern Italian Studies, January 2013; The Journal of Modern History, September 2013; The University of Toronto Quarterly, 2013; Italian Culture, March 2014; The Los Angeles Review of Books, 13 November 2014.

*Il Milite Ignoto: Storia e Mito.* Trans. Andrea Capra and Silvia Pontarollo. Gorizia, Italy: LEG, 2021.

Revised edition and Italian translation of *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*.

*Reviewed in* the Corriere della Sera by Lorenzo Cremonesi, 10 December 2021.

### IN PROGRESS:

*Faith in the Age of Irony, or Reimagining the Good Death.*

This book examines rewritings of the Biblical story of the resurrection of Lazarus in the modern European context, in plays, novels, and fictionalized memoirs about near-death experiences. It interrogates authors from the last 150 years, such as Leonid Andreyev, Maurice Barrès, M. de Unamuno, Luigi Pirandello, D.H. Lawrence, J.L. Borges, Graham Greene, and André Malraux, ending with the birth of the modern hospice movement, in order to explore what replaces traditional forms of faith in a culture dominated by ironic deconstruction. Tracing an evolution from prewar to interwar to postwar Europe, the book shows how we have increasingly framed death as the unnatural antithesis of life, drastically silencing its voice in our culture. At the same time, authors of modern Lazarus stories articulate a new imagination of death and dying connected to confronting despair authentically, crafting collective secular myths, and healing from trauma by witnessing each other’s life stories. A constellation of literary materials are put in their cultural context in order to reveal a sustained, if often countercultural, effort to rethink the “good death” for

the modern era.

***Death on TV: Unconventional Experiments with Grief and Mortality.***

This book is about contemporary TV series worldwide that counter our modern alienation from death and grief by exploring subversive, often shocking images that reveal our collective obsession with the mortality we have both repressed and commercialized. In these shows, the dead return – as ghosts, zombies, demigods, obsessive memories, or hallucinations – to speak the failure of institutions to frame death meaningfully. At the same time these series create cultural building blocs for a new public engagement with death and dying that confronts directly the issues of the present, such as cross-cultural conflicts around religion and death, assisted death and the authority of Western biomedicine, and economic inequality in end-of-life care. At the intersection of cultural history, media studies, and medical humanities, this work addresses individuals who seek to explore cultural expectations around death and grief in order to craft their own path, and medical humanities practitioners who seek to shape meaningful death and dying plans and narratives with their patients.

**EDITED VOLUMES**

***The Sacred in Italian Culture.*** Vol. 5 of California Italian Studies (CIS). Co-Edited with Simonetta Falasca Zamponi and Jon Snyder. July 2015.

***Futurism: An Anthology,*** ed. Christine Poggi (Visual Arts), Lawrence Rainey (Manifestos), and Laura Wittman (Literary Works) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Includes Laura Wittman, "Introduction to Part III: Stars-in-Freedom and the Dark Night of Futurism."

***Italy and France: Imagined Geographies,*** ed. Laura Wittman. Special double issue of the *Romanic Review*, May-November 2006. Includes Laura Wittman, "Introduction: Imagined Geographies."

**ARTICLES IN PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS**

**"How to negotiate a plurality of myths about grief and death: *Les Revenants* as a case study."** Asian J. Med. Humanit. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1515/ajmedh-2025-0032>

**"Divine Women and the Poetry of Alda Merini."** *The Sacred in Italian Culture.* Vol. 5 of California Italian Studies (CIS) (July 2015).

**"'Cuore-proiettile' [projectile-heart]: From Marinetti's *Mafarka* to World War One and Ungaretti."** *L'anello che non tiene* 22 (Spring-Fall 2010).

**"Mystical Insight and Psychoanalysis in the Fin-de-Siècle Novel: Huysmans, Bourget, d'Annunzio."** *Forum Italicum* 32:1 (Spring 2008): 30-51.

**"A proposito di un dialogo post-francescano." [A propos of a post-Franciscan dialogue]** *Yale Italian Poetry*, vol. VII, Fall 2003: 257-67.

**"Vittorio Sereni o l'istinto della gioia." [Vittorio Sereni or the instinct for joy]** *Forum Italicum*, Fall 2001: 403-31.

**"Introduction and Notes to the Selections from the Unpublished Diaries of F. T. Marinetti."** (with Lawrence Rainey) *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 3 (September 1994): 1-25.

## CHAPTERS IN PEER-REVIEWED BOOKS

**“Religion and Mysticism in d’Annunzio.”** In Luca Somigli and Guylian Nemegeer, *D’Annunzio in Context*. Under contract with Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

**“Pirandello, Svevo, Gadda.”** In *The Oxford Handbook of Italian Literature*. Forthcoming in 2025.

**“Battlefields and Killed in Action: The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and Commemoration.”** In Roberto Parra et. al., eds., *Anthropology of Violent Death: Theoretical Foundations for Forensic Humanitarian Action* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2021).

**“Pirandello and Religion.” With Robert Harrison.** In *Pirandello in Context*, ed. Patricia Gaborik and Gabriele Pedullà (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

**“Italian Futurism and the Explosive ‘Now.’”** In *Futures*, ed. Sandra Kemp and Jenny Andersson (Oxford University Press, 2020).

**“Embodiment and Unconventional Mourning.”** In *The Edinburgh Companion to the First World War and the Arts*. Fall 2017.

**“Mimetic Desire in Otherworldly Narratives.”** In *Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, ed. Heather Webb and Pierpaolo Antonello (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2015).

**“Undefended Communication.”** In *Discourse, Boundary, Creation*, ed. Peter Carravetta. New York: Bordighera Press, 2013.

**“The Visible, Unexposed: Francesco Rosi’s *Salvatore Giuliano* (1961).”** In *Mafia Movies*, ed. Dana Renga (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011)

**“Fogazzaro tra Occultismo e Modernismo” [Fogazzaro between Occultism and Modernism].** In *Fogazzaro nel mondo*, ed. Adriana Chemello and Fabio Finotti (Vicenza, Italy: Accademia Olimpica, 2013).

**“*Omnes velut aqua dilabimur: Antonio Fogazzaro, The Saint, and Catholic Modernism.*”** In *Italian Modernism*, ed. Mario Moroni and Luca Somigli (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

## SELECTED PIECES FOR BROADER AUDIENCES

**“The Embodied Mind and Time (on A. R. Ammons).”** *Mantis*, Spring 2020.

**“Eugenio Montale: *Cuttlefish Bones, The Occasions, and The Storm, Etc.*”** In *World Literature and Its Times, vol. 7: Italian Literature and Its Times*, ed. Joyce Moss (Santa Monica, CA: Thomson Gale, 2006). On Encyclopedia.com: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/poetry-eugenio-montale>

**“Giuseppe Ungaretti: *Life of a Man.*”** In *World Literature and Its Times, vol. 7: Italian Literature and Its Times*, ed. Joyce Moss (Santa Monica, CA: Thomson Gale, 2006). On Encyclopedia.com: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/life-man>

## INVITED LECTURES (RECENT)

**"Death on TV: Cultures and Clashes of Care."** CHARM Summer School, Gent University, Belgium. 27-29 August, 2025.

**"The Face of Death in Contemporary TV and Media: A Case Study on *The Leftovers* (Lindelof and Perrotta, 2014-17)."** Colloque International Multiculturalisme Médical, Sorbonne, Paris, 9-10 December 2024.

**"Lazarus' Silence Between Literature and Medical Humanities."** Stanford Humanities Center, Medical Humanities Workshop, 1 May 2024.

**"Albert Giraud's *Pierrot Lunaire* and Decadent Culture."** A conversation with Alexander Nemerov and Erik Ullman. Part of the production and recital of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire Op. 21*, presented by Jonathan Min Pak, March 17, 2024, Stanford University.

**"Lazarus' Silence Between Literature and Medical Humanities."** Stanford Humanities Center, Medical Humanities Workshop, 1 May 2024.

**"Albert Giraud's *Pierrot Lunaire* and Decadent Culture."** A conversation with Alexander Nemerov and Erik Ullman. Part of the production and recital of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire Op. 21*, presented by Jonathan Min Pak, March 17, 2024, Stanford University.

**"Solidarity, Pandemics, and the Narratives of Others: *Les Revenants/The Returned* (Gobert, Mermoud, Goupil, 2012-15)"** Conference on "Art, Grief, and Social Justice in the Wake of Covid-19." Stanford University Medical School, May 18-19, 2023.

**Series of talks and lectures at the Sorbonne, Paris: "Foundations of Medical Humanities," "Narrative Medicine" and "Narrative Medicine and Art during Covid-19"** March 6-10, 2022.

**Series of talks and lectures at the Sorbonne, Paris: "Medical Humanities in the USA," "Art and Covid," and "Near-Death Experiences from a Health Humanities Perspective."** October 25-29, 2021.

**"History, Identity, and Reciprocity."** Keynote for "Porosity and Reciprocity" Graduate Student Conference, UCLA, 24-25 October 2019.

**"Values and Functions of Emotions."** Chaired panel with introduction and commentary on papers. "Emotions in the Therapeutic Relationship" Health Humanities Conference, Sorbonne University, 4-5 September 2019.

**"Pirandello's Legacy."** Panel discussion with Michael Subialka. Italian Cultural Institute, San Francisco, 25 October 2017.

**"Modernism and Fascism: Response Paper"** Modernist Studies Association Annual Conference, Pasadena, California, 17-10 November 2016.

**"Can Death be Re-Enchanted?"** Distinguished Careers Institute, Stanford University, April 20, 2016.

**"The Return of the Unknown Soldier."** FrIt50. Conference celebrating the 50 years of the French and Italian Department at the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, October 29-31, 2015.

**"Consciousness and the Visionary Mind in Near-Death Experiences."** Interdisciplinary Approaches to Consciousness Series, Stanford University, 9 May 2013.

**"Memory, Vision, and the Unmaking of the Self."** Narrative Medicine in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conference. The Ohio State University, 5-6 April 2013.

## MEDIA APPEARANCES

**"A Conversation with Robert Harrison on K. G. Jung."** *Entitled Opinions (about Life and Literature)*, with Robert Harrison, on KZSU - 90.1 Stanford University Radio Station. 12 February 2025.

**"Near-Death Experiences and their relevance to Health Humanities."** *High Theory Podcast*, 2022.  
<http://hightheory.net/2023/01/23/near-death-experience/>

**"Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed* and the plague."** *Philosophy Talk*, 2020.  
<https://soundcloud.com/philosophytalk/laura-wittman-extended-2020>.

**"The Unknown Warrior Podcast."** *Squeaky Pedal*, [www.skueakypedal.co.uk](http://www.skueakypedal.co.uk) Dec. 2020.

**"1890s Counterculture."** Launch party for the new journal, *The New Modality*.  
<http://thenewmodality.com>. 18 May 2019.

**"Stanford University's Teagle Humanities Courses Promote Faculty Graduate Teaching."** Ruth Starkman, Huffington Post Blog Post, 3/27/13. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ruth-starkman/stanford-universitys-teag\\_b\\_2918005.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ruth-starkman/stanford-universitys-teag_b_2918005.html)

**"What Fiction Can Tell Us About NDEs."** Laura Wittman, Huffington Post Blog Post, 11/28/2012.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/laura-wittman/nde-near-death-experiences-fiction\\_b\\_2204774.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/laura-wittman/nde-near-death-experiences-fiction_b_2204774.html)

**"From the Bible to the lab: Stanford scholar decodes the near-death experience."** By Camille Brown, *Stanford Report*, 10/30/2012. <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2012/october/near-death-experience-103012.html>

**"A Conversation with Robert Harrison on Georges Bataille."** *Entitled Opinions (about Life and Literature)*, with Robert Harrison, on KZSU - 90.1 Stanford University Radio Station. 5 May 2010.

**"A Conversation with Robert Harrison on the Poetry of A. R. Ammons."** *Entitled Opinions (about Life and Literature)*, with Robert Harrison, on KZSU - 90.1 Stanford University Radio Station. February 2008.

**"A Conversation with Robert Harrison on Michel Tournier's *Friday*."** *Entitled Opinions (about Life and Literature)*, with Robert Harrison, on KZSU - 90.1 Stanford University Radio Station. 14 September 2005.

## CONFERENCES AND LECTURES ORGANIZED (RECENT)

**"Conference to Celebrate the Retirement and Career of Robert Pogue Harrison."** Co-organized with Prof. Marisa Galvez. Stanford Humanities Center, 19 April 2024.

**"AI and Humanities Round Table."** An afternoon of papers and discussions, Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages, 8 March 2024.

**"Art, Grief, and Social Justice in the Wake of Covid-19."** Health Humanities Conference held at Stanford University Medical School, May 18-19, 2023.

**California Interdisciplinary Consortium for Italian Studies, 2019 Annual Meeting.** Stanford Humanities Center, Stanford, CA. 8-9 March 2019.

**War and the Arts.** Organizer. International conference. Stanford Humanities Center, Stanford, CA. 9-10 November 2019.

**Franco Baldasso on Curzio Malaparte.** Organized visit. 19 April 2018.

**Ruth Ben-Ghiat on Empire's Cinema.** Organized visit. 3 October 2017.

**Costanza Dopfel: "Fertilissima Firenze."** Organized visit. 10 February 2017.

**Stephanie Malia Hom: "The Village in Theory, or The Aftermath of the Camp in Postcolonial Italy."** Organized visit. May 4, 2016.

## ACADEMIC AND UNIVERSITY SERVICE AT STANFORD (RECENT)

### UNDERGRADUATE ADVISING AND PROGRAM:

**Chair of Undergraduate Studies, Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages (2023-2025)**

**Co-Chair, Interdisciplinary Minor in Medical Humanities (with Tanya Luhrmann) (2023-present)**

### GRADUATE ADVISING AND PROGRAM:

**Chair of the Graduate Affairs Committee, DLCL (2015-2022)**

**Head of the Collaborative Teaching Project, DLCL (2017-2022)**

**DLCL 311 Professionalization course, instructor.**

**Job Market Workshop, instructor.**

**Graduate Advisor, Italian PhD, Department of French and Italian (2015-2022)**

**Graduate Advisor, Joint French and Italian PhD, Department of French and Italian (2006-2022)**

**Italian Modernities Lecture Series (now Italian Lecture Series or ILS), faculty advisor,**  
Department of French and Italian (2018-present, with some quarters off)

**DIVISION OF LITERATURES, CULTURES, AND LANGUAGES:**

**Chair and Graduate Advisor,** Department of French and Italian (2019-2022)

**Italian Search Committee, Member.** 2023-24.

**Prodan Promotion Committee, Chair.** 2023-24.

**Acting Chair, DLCL,** Spring Quarter 2019.

**Veterans/War and the Arts Working Group, Co-Convener.** DLCL Research Unit, 2016-19.

**Acting Chair, Department of French and Italian** (2016-2017)

**OTHER SERVICE AT STANFORD:**

**France-Stanford Center for Interdisciplinary Studies Executive Committee, Member,** 2024-present.

**Library Committee (C-Lib), Member,** Stanford, 2024-2025.

**Faculty Director, "Why College?"** First-year, first-quarter course required for all undergraduates, 2023-2025.

**Co-Chair, Geballe Stanford Humanities Center Workshop in Health Humanities. With Professors Tanya Luhrmann, Audrey Shafer, and Lidia Schapira.** (2020-present)

**Chair, Committee for the Review of the Undergraduate Major (C-RUM).** (2018-22)

**Medicine and the Muse Steering Committee, Member.** (2018-2021)

**Committee for Undergraduate Standards and Policies, Member.** (2015-18)