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Toril Moi  
From the Director

This year, PAL's annual report is biennial. The sudden pandemic lockdown in March 2020 ensured that the report for 2019/2020 was not completed that spring. When it became clear that the pandemic would make it impossible for PAL to do much in 2020/2021, it seemed best to produce one amalgamated report for the past two years.

In 2019/20 we had the usual vibrant program. In fall 2019 we hosted a phenomenal day-long symposium to honor the memory of Stanley Cavell, who died on Juneteenth in 2018. Cavell was PAL's inaugural speaker in 2009, and remains our tutelary spirit. We continued to support work on intellectual women — this year in the form of a fabulous talk by Chicago's Deborah Nelson — and hosted another *Writing Is Thinking* event: Jon Baskin, a founding editor of *The Point* magazine taught us how to give serious academic work a readable form. We also hosted the annual Duke-Stanford Literature and Philosophy conference, with excellent turn-out. I am also delighted to report that in the COVID-year 2020/21, four PAL certificate earners completed their PhDs: Devin Buckley (English), Tessa Nunn (French/Romance Studies), Kathleen Maxymuk (French/Romance Studies), and Myles Oldershaw (English).

# Introduction

This biennial report is nevertheless bittersweet to write. For PAL is also saying goodbye to many people who have been vital to our existence: Heather Wallace, Neil McWilliam, and Matia Guardabascio, and Filippo Screpanti. And we are getting ready to say goodbye to PAL itself: the coming year will be our last.



**Heather Wallace**, PAL's stalwart Associate Director for many years, successfully defended her dissertation on Simone de Beauvoir in March 2020, just in time to pioneer the Zoom defense. I can't thank Heather enough for her excellent work, and for her faith in PAL's mission.



I am also sorry to report that **Neil McWilliam**, who has been a member of PAL's Steering Committee since the start in 2009 has stepped down, albeit for the best of reasons: Neil retired this summer. I am glad to announce that we have persuaded Rob Mitchell, Chair of English at Duke, to join our Steering Committee.

# Introduction

**Matia Guardabascio**, who was our main point of support in the English department left Duke this spring. It will be very hard to run our conferences and symposia without Matia's energetic support. Finally, we'll miss **Filippo Screpanti**, who defended his Ph.D. in Romance Studies last year. Filippo was our go-to graphic designer throughout his graduate career at Duke.

PAL began its work in the fall of 2009. The spring of 2022 will be our last semester. Pandemic permitting, we hope to celebrate our remarkable run with some equally remarkable events in the coming year. Please check our website for information!

Durham, August 2021  
Toril Moi

## Why Does The Claim of Reason Matter? A Symposium in Memory of Stanley Cavell (1926-2018)

Friday, September 13

In September 2019, a host of philosophers and literary critics converged at Duke to remember Stanley Cavell, by discussing his major work *The Claim of Reason*. We were proud to host Robert Chodat (English, Boston University), Juliet Floyd (Philosophy, Boston University), Espen Hammer (Philosophy, Temple University), Sandra Laugier (Philosophy, Sorbonne, Paris), and Avner Baz (Philosophy, Tufts University). From Duke Sarah Beckwith (English), and PAL's Director Toril Moi (Literature), participated. Each scholar spoke to the audience on a passage from *The Claim of Reason* that they found especially striking or significant, and articulated Cavell's importance for their own thought. The format, suggested by PAL Assistant Myles Oldershaw, sparked extensive discussion, and served both to introduce Cavell's masterpiece to beginners and to deepen more seasoned Cavell readers' understanding of the text.

Recordings of all the talks are available on YouTube:

[https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwplhcP1Fqo4APEvLr-UNtOe\\_eF2UAI5U](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwplhcP1Fqo4APEvLr-UNtOe_eF2UAI5U)



# Honoring Stanley Cavell at PAL

**PAL**  
Center for Philosophy, Arts, & Literature

**Duke**  
UNIVERSITY

**WHY DOES  
THE CLAIM OF REASON  
MATTER?**

**CAVELL**

**A SYMPOSIUM IN MEMORY OF STANLEY CAVELL (1926-2018)**

**AVNER BAZ**  
PHILOSOPHY, TUFTS UNIVERSITY

**SARAH BECKWITH**  
ENGLISH, DUKE UNIVERSITY

**ROBERT CHODAT**  
ENGLISH, BOSTON UNIVERSITY

**JULIET FLOYD**  
PHILOSOPHY, BOSTON UNIVERSITY

**ESPEN HAMMER**  
PHILOSOPHY, TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

**SANDRA LAUGIER**  
PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITE DE PARIS I-SORBONNE

**TORIL MOI**  
LITERATURE, DUKE UNIVERSITY

**FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 13 2019**  
**9:30AM - 4:00PM**  
BREAKFAST AND LUNCH WILL BE SERVED.

**AHMADIEH FAMILY LECTURE HALL**  
FRANKLIN HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
SMITH WAREHOUSE, BAY 4, FIRST FLOOR

An exceptional opportunity to get an introduction to Cavell's masterpiece. Or to deepen your understanding of it. Each speaker will comment on a brief passage from *The Claim of Reason*. The passages and a detailed program will be available online at [dukepal.org](http://dukepal.org) and at the venue.

[dukepal.org](http://dukepal.org)

## PAL Certificate Talks: Tessa Nunn and Kevin Spencer

Tuesday, October 29

In a joint session, two more graduate students gave talks presenting parts of their doctoral research, to fulfill the requirements for the PAL graduate student certificate. Tessa Nunn (Romance Studies) spoke about “The Tarantella: Melancholy, Mania, and Glory,” while Kevin Spencer (English) gave a talk entitled “The Recoiling Self in Patricia Highsmith’s *The Talented Mr. Ripley*”

# PAL Certificate



CARPENTER  
READING  
ROOM  
RUBENSTEIN  
LIBRARY 249

OCT  
29  
5PM

Reception to Follow

P  
A  
L

COME AND HEAR  
DUKE GRAD STUDENTS  
GIVE THEIR CERTIFICATE TALKS!



**KEVIN SPENCER**  
ENGLISH  
THE RECOILING SELF  
IN PATRICIA HIGHSMITH'S  
*THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY*



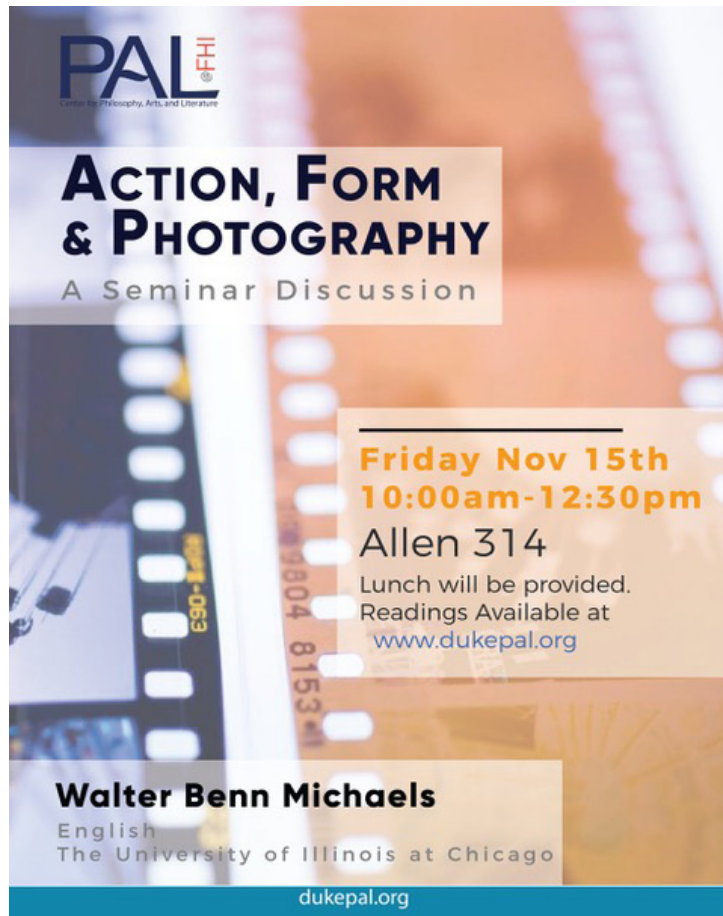
**TESSA NUNN**  
ROMANCE STUDIES  
THE TARANTELLA:  
MELANCHOLY, MANIA, AND GLORY

## Action, Form & Photography: A Seminar Discussion with Walter Benn Michaels

Friday, November 15

Professor Walter Benn Michaels (English, University of Illinois at Chicago) discussed his recent work on philosophical debates about action and intention, and how these debates illuminate art criticism.

# Other Events



**PAL**  
Center for Philosophy, Arts, and Literature

**ACTION, FORM  
& PHOTOGRAPHY**  
A Seminar Discussion

**Friday Nov 15th  
10:00am-12:30pm**  
Allen 314  
Lunch will be provided.  
Readings Available at  
[www.dukepal.org](http://www.dukepal.org)

**Walter Benn Michaels**  
English  
The University of Illinois at Chicago

[dukepal.org](http://dukepal.org)

## 2020 Winter Party

Wednesday, January 15

PAL hosted a reception for graduate students in the Ahmadiieh family lecture hall to ring in the New Year and publicize upcoming PAL classes and events.

# PAL for Graduate Students



*Kick off the new semester and  
learn more about PAL's spring courses!*

**Wednesday, January 15th**

**6-8 pm**

Ahmadieh Family Lecture Hall  
Smith Warehouse, Bay 4



## Thinking Publicly: What is the Good of Public Intellectual Writing? with Jon Baskin

Thursday February 6 and Friday February 7

Jon Baskin, editor and cofounder of literary magazine *The Point*, and Associate Director of the MA Program in Creative Publishing and Critical Journalism at the New School, New York, came to Duke to discuss public intellectual writing. On February 6th, he gave a talk, open to all, on the future of such writing, and the role academics might play in its production. On February 7th, he ran a workshop for graduate students, in which he offered feedback on students' writing, and taught us how to give serious intellectual work a form that makes it readable for more than a handful of academic experts.



# Writing is Thinking



## A PAL "Writing Is Thinking" Lecture

The event is co-sponsored by the English Department's Working Group on Writing and Academic Work

# Thinking Publicly

## What is the good of public intellectual writing?

When we founded *The Point* in 2008, we assumed that the chief obstacles to getting good essays from academics would have to do with prose style. In fact the most serious challenges we faced were both more interesting and more intractable. They had to do not with how academics could write for a public audience, but with why they wanted to.

In this talk, I'll discuss the two pictures of public writing that continue to predominate among academics who write for the public—we might call them the academic as public expert, and the academic as public pundit—and outline the virtues and limitations of each.

Then I'll make a case for a third way of imagining the distinct value of the academic in public, who we'll call the academic as public thinker.

I'll end by making the case, building on some of Hannah Arendt's writing on the subject, that in order to become better public writers, we first need to think more carefully about what good it does to write (and think) publicly in the first place.

On **February 7 from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m.** Professor Baskin will run a **workshop on structure**, in particular how to transform an academic essay into an essay for a wider audience. Information on how to sign up for the workshop, and where and when to submit the required (brief) writing sample, can be found on [www.dukepal.org](http://www.dukepal.org). Please contact [kevin.spencer@duke.edu](mailto:kevin.spencer@duke.edu) for more information.



### Jon Baskin

Founding Editor of *The Point*, Associate Director of the MA Program in Creative Publishing and Critical Journalism at the New School, New York, and author of *Ordinary Unhappiness: The Therapeutic Fiction of David Foster Wallace* (Stanford UP, 2019)

**Thursday FEB 6 2020**

**5:00 p.m.**

Reception at 4:30 p.m.

Rubenstein 349

[dukepal.org](http://dukepal.org)

## Deborah Nelson on Tenderness and Terror

Thursday, February 20

Professor Deborah Nelson (English, University of Chicago), the author of *Tough Enough: Arbus, Arendt, Didion, McCarthy, Sontag, Weil*, which won the MLA's prestigious James Russell Lowell prize in 2017. At Duke, on the evening of a snowstorm, she lectured to a large audience on the value of unsentimentality – as opposed to empathy – and its conscious practice in the thought and work of philosopher Hannah Arendt.

# Intellectual Women



20 5  
FEB pm  
followed by a reception

Pink Parlor  
East Duke Building

PAL's INTELLECTUAL WOMEN SERIES



## TENDERNESS AND TERROR

### Deborah Nelson

Helen B. and Frank L. Sulzberger Professor of English and the College Chair  
Department of English

Author of:  
*Tough Enough: Arbus, Arendt, Didion, McCarthy, Sontag, Weil*  
(Chicago UP, 2017)

We hear a lot these days about how important empathy is not only in national politics but also in the workplace and school, between friends and strangers. But what if we are wrong? What if empathy isn't what we need, but unsentimentality.

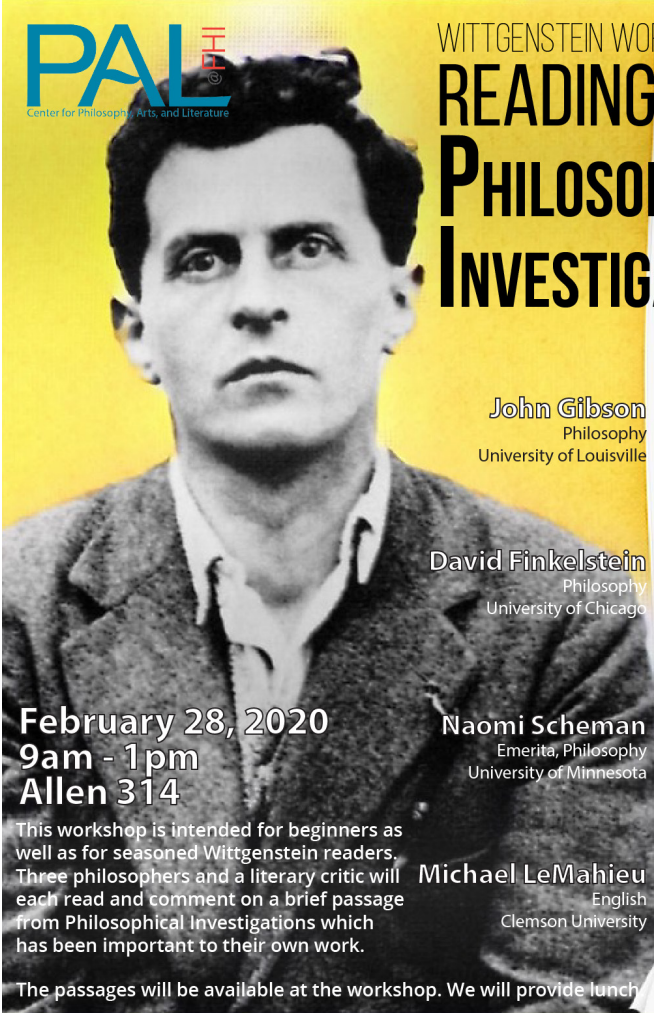
This talk will draw from my book, *Tough Enough*, which explores the unsentimental aesthetic, political, and ethical practices developed and defended by some of the late 20th century's most influential women writers: Flannery O'Connor, Joan Didion, Hannah Arendt, and Simone Weil.

## Reading *Philosophical Investigations*

Friday, February 28

David Finkelstein (Philosophy, University of Chicago), Naomi Scheman (Emerita, Philosophy, University of Minnesota), and Michael LeMahieu (English, Clemson University) chose a passage from Wittgenstein's late masterpiece and discussed its salience to their work. The event drew an audience which ranged from newcomers to Wittgenstein to experienced readers of his work.

# Wittgenstein Workshop



**PAL**  
Center for Philosophy, Arts, and Literature

WITTGENSTEIN WORKSHOP:  
**READING  
PHILOSOPHICAL  
INVESTIGATIONS**

**John Gibson**  
Philosophy  
University of Louisville

**David Finkelstein**  
Philosophy  
University of Chicago

**Naomi Scheman**  
Emerita, Philosophy  
University of Minnesota

**Michael LeMahieu**  
English  
Clemson University

**February 28, 2020**  
**9am - 1pm**  
**Allen 314**

This workshop is intended for beginners as well as for seasoned Wittgenstein readers. Three philosophers and a literary critic will each read and comment on a brief passage from *Philosophical Investigations* which has been important to their own work.

The passages will be available at the workshop. We will provide lunch.

[dukepal.org](http://dukepal.org)

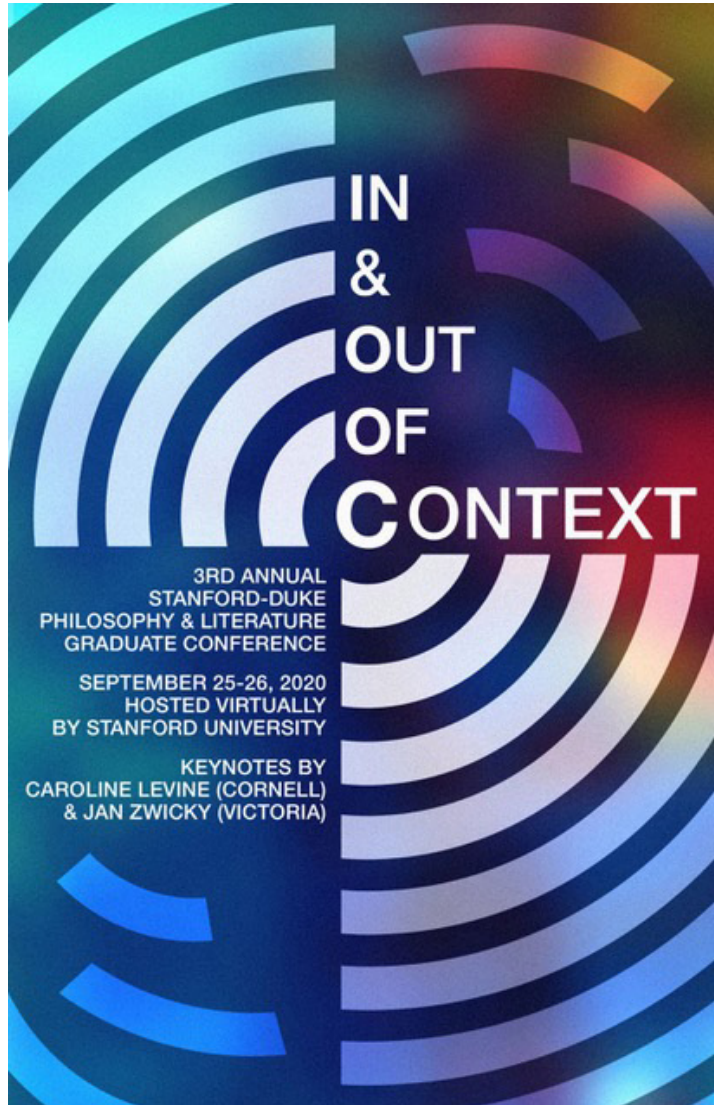
## 3rd Annual Stanford-Duke Philosophy and Literature Graduate Conference

Friday, September 25 & Sunday, September 26

In 2020/21 it was Stanford's turn to organize the annual Stanford-Duke graduate conference in literature and philosophy. The pandemic forced a transition to the virtual format. Nevertheless, graduate students from Duke, Stanford, and a number of other universities gathered online to participate in a conference lasting two days. The conference topic was 'In and Out of Context,' which students approached from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical standpoints. Thrilling keynote lectures were given by Professors Caroline Levine (English, Cornell University) and Jan Zwicky (Philosophy, University of Victoria).



# Graduate Conference



## PAL Certificate Talk: Kathleen Maxymuk

Thursday, February 11

Graduate student Kathleen Maxymuk (Romance Studies) gave a lecture on Francois Truffaut as part of the requirements for the PAL graduate student certificate.



# PAL Certificate



PAL CERTIFICATE TALK

**THE PARADOXES OF THE  
"POLITIQUE DES AUTEURS":  
READING TRUFFAUT'S  
ANTOINE DOINEL SERIES  
WITH FOUCAULT**

KATHLEEN MAXYMUJ  
ROMANCE STUDIES

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February 11 / 10 am / Zoom

## PAL Certificate Talk: Devin Buckley

Thursday, April 1

Graduate student Devin Buckley (English) gave a lecture on Percy Bysshe Shelley as part of the requirements for the PAL graduate student certificate.

# PAL Certificate



PAL CERTIFICATE TALK

**SHELLEY'S  
NEOPLATONIC  
METAPHYSICS IN  
ADONAI'S: POWER IS  
LOVE IS BEAUTY**

DEVIN BUCKLEY  
ENGLISH

THURSDAY APR 1ST  
2.30 PM/ZOOM

## Writing is Thinking – A Workshop with Caryl Phillips

Monday, February 15

Duke English Department's Blackburn Author-in-Residence gave a virtual Essay Writing Workshop. In this workshop, Prof. Phillips asked students to cultivate their sense of intuition when writing criticism.

# Writing is Thinking



# PAL Certificate Courses 2019-2021

## PAL Graduate Certificate

The PAL Graduate Certificate seeks to connect the study of specific works of art and specific art forms (e.g., literature, music, theater, painting, film) to questions concerning creativity, the nature of specific art forms, the relationship between knowledge and art, and between ethics and aesthetics. The Certificate aims to make students conversant with philosophical reflections on literature and the arts. The Certificate seeks to foster an understanding of the historical nature of different art forms, and of aesthetics and philosophy, and to encourage exploration of philosophy, art and literature from different historical periods.

## Fall 2019

**Toril Moi** – Simone de Beauvoir

LITERATURE 690S; FRENCH 690S; GENDER, SEXUALITY AND FEMINIST STUDIES 590S;  
PHILOSOPHY 590S

**Stefani Engelstein** – Kleist and his Interlocutors

GERMAN 890S

**Thomas Pfau** – Incomprehensible Certainty: A Theological Aesthetics of  
the Image

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY 890

**Markos Hadjioannou** – Film-Philosophers/Film-Makers

LITERATURE 620S; ENGLISH 620S; VISUAL AND MEDIA STUDIES 622S; DOCUMENTARY  
STUDIES 620S; THEATER STUDIES 620S

(at UNC) **Inga Pollman** – Film Analysis, Film Theory, and Film Philosophy via  
German Cinema

GERMAN 880

(at UNC) **Gregory Flaxman** – The Politics and Philosophy of Comedy

ENGLISH 862

## Spring 2020

**Toril Moi** – Wittgenstein and Literary Theory

LITERATURE 681S; PHILOSOPHY 681S; ENGLISH 582S

**Corina Stan** – Modernism: Philosophy, Arts, and Literature

ENGLISH 590S

**Robert Mitchell** – Romantic Aesthetics and Theory

ENGLISH 590S

**David Aers & Sarah Beckwith** – Tragedy: Shakespeare and Milton

ENGLISH 890S

**Sarah Pourciau** – The King's Image: A History of Representation

GERMAN 890S

(at UNC) **Alexandra Prica** – Form is Bliss: On a Basic Category in German Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Literature



## Fall 2020

**Saskia Ziolkowski** – Svevo and World Literature  
ROMANCE STUDIES 590S, GERMAN 590S, ITALIAN 590S

**Robert Mitchell & Charlotte Sussman** – History of Contemporary Literary Criticism  
ENGLISH 890S

## Spring 2021

**Sarah Beckwith** – Shakespeare, Tragedy, Ethics: The Responsibility of Response (ENG 890S – 02)

**Markos Hadjioannou** – Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy (LIT 850S – 01 (6146), VMS 850S – 01 (6183), ENGLISH 860S – 01 (6184), ROMST 850S – 01 (6185), ARTSVIS 850S – 01 (6186), DOCST 850S – 01 (6187))

## PAL Steering Committee

Sarah Beckwith, Professor of English and Theater Studies; Chair of English

Owen Flanagan, James B. Duke Professor of Philosophy; Professor of Neurobiology

Neil McWilliam, Walter H. Annenberg Professor of Art History, member of PAL's steering committee (retired in the summer of 2021)

Robert Mitchell, Chair of the Department of English; Professor of English (joined summer 2021)

Toril Moi, James B. Duke Professor of Literature and Romance Studies; Professor of Philosophy, English and Theater studies; Director of PAL

Thomas Pfau, Alice Mary Baldwin Professor and Eads Family Professor of English and German; DGS-German Studies

Jacqueline Waeber, Associate Professor of Music

## PAL Staff

Toril Moi (Literature)  
Director

Matia Guardabascio  
Staff Support for Events (2016 - 2021).

Quantá Holden  
Staff Support for Web Maintenance

James Draney (English)  
Assistant Director (from summer 2021)

Kevin Spencer (English)  
Graduate Assistant (2018-2019) and Assistant Director (2019/ 2020)

Myles Oldershaw (English)  
Graduate Assistant (2018-2019) and Assistant Director (2020-2021)

Filippo Screpanti (Romance Studies)  
Graphic Designer (2016-2021)



108 Friedl Building  
Box 90670  
1316 Campus Drive  
Durham, NC 27708

Duke  
UNIVERSITY

[palinfo@duke.edu](mailto:palinfo@duke.edu)  
[www.dukepal.org](http://www.dukepal.org)