

Davis Humanities Institute and
Academic Senate Collaborative Research Grant, 2012-2013
March 1
12:30-2

Reception Research Group presents

Tori White

Comparative Literature graduate student

"Boying Greatness: Youth, Adulthood, and Comedy in Marlowe's *Dido Queen of Carthage*"

Moderated by Professor Juliana Schiesari

In the late sixteenth century, a company of boy actors performed Christopher Marlowe's *Dido Queen of Carthage*, a play which stages Book IV of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Ostensibly, this play, ending as it does in a triple suicide, should be classified and read as a tragedy. Indeed, the print edition of 1594 announces it as such. This paper, however, insists that Marlowe's *Dido* resists that generic designation. Instead, the play asks to be read as a parodic send-up of the august Virgil's *Aeneid*. By examining textual evidence, performance histories (Elizabethan and modern), and the Elizabethan political context, we shall see that the objective of this comedic send-up is to present the young mocking the mature, the child mocking the adult. Ultimately we shall find that this motif of youth versus maturity is not only a textual theme, but is also a performative strategy particular to the boy's acting troupe—one that, at least in the case of *Dido Queen of Carthage*, facilitates political satire.

Zhen Zhang

Comparative Literature graduate student

"Virgil's Reception in the 'Third Rome:' A Study of the First Russian Translation of *Aeneid*"

Moderated by Professor Olga Stuchebrukhov

This paper analyses the reception of Virgil in Russia with a primary, if not the only focus on the first translation of *Aeneid* done by Vasilii Petrov (1736-1799) and its reception in Russian literary history. Petrov's relatively faithful translation was largely neglected in Russian literary history. After a detailed analysis of Petrov's deliberate modification of the texts as opposed to the Latin original, I argue that Petrov's translation is a political allegory, which attempts to eulogize a female monarchy, and Catherine the Great (1729-1796) seen first as Dido and then Aeneas with an imperial vision of building the Russian Empire as the Third Rome.

Ryan Wander

English graduate student

"Vergilian Whitman, Whitmanian Vergil: Whitman, Vergil, and a Poetics of Ambivalence"

Moderated by Professor Brenda Schildgen

Something rather fascinating is at play in modern critical receptions of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself." While a number of articles have been written that discuss the "epic of democracy" in relation to its epic forebears, modern critics seem all too ready to delineate Whitman's perceived successful departures from the epic tradition, at the same time downplaying the continuities between Whitman and his literary ancestors. But if we read "Song of Myself" and the *Aeneid* side by side and within the context of their respective historical and imperial contexts, provocative continuities between the two poems surface. The first part of this talk provides an overview of dominant interpretive tendencies in the post-New Criticism reception of "Song of Myself," touching as well on these receptions' relationship to modern receptions of the *Aeneid*. The second part briefly looks at "Song of Myself" in relation to prominent texts of the epic tradition, then moves into a more detailed discussion of "Song of Myself" and the *Aeneid*, a discussion that elucidates their shared poetics of imperial ambivalence.