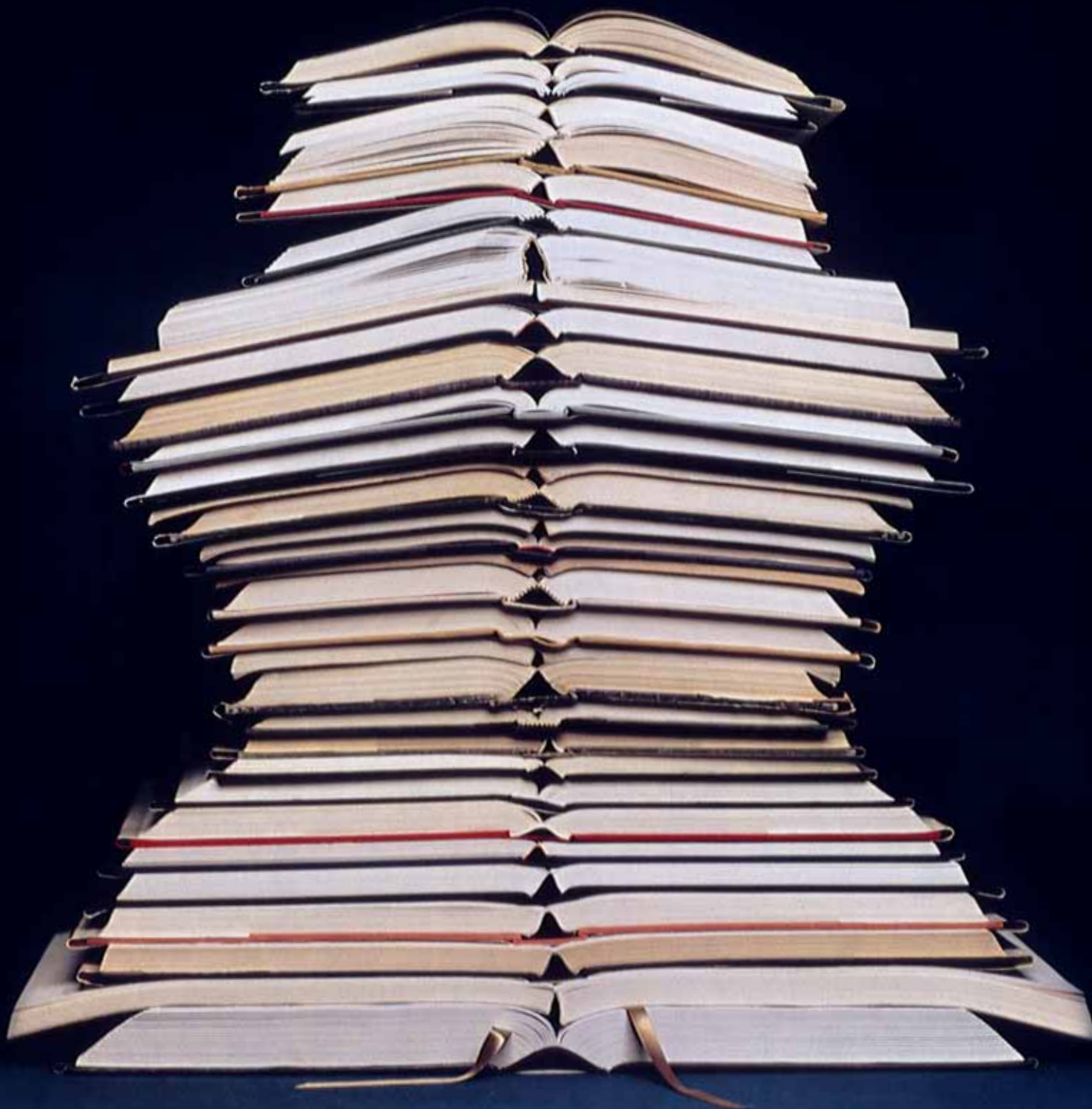


# TABLEAU

THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

SPRING | SUMMER 2007



IN THIS ISSUE | HIDDEN ARCHIVES | MARVELOUS REAL | REMEMBERING ENGLISH

## Editor's Corner

This issue of *Tableau* considers the book, broadly conceived. We consider the influence of the East upon the European romancers in Michael Murrin's feature article on the Silk Road and its chroniclers. Richard Stern describes changes in literary scholarship from the mid-1950s onward in his highly personal recollection of the Department of English. The need for universities to collect, to preserve, and to archive books and other primary sources for scholarly research is the theme of several articles. We look at Mark Slouka's new novel, *The Visible World*. And finally, David Thompson, PhD 1997,

tells the remarkable story of Professor of Romance Languages E. H. Wilkins (1880–1966), an important scholar of Petrarch, dean of the colleges at the University of Chicago in the late twenties, and president of Oberlin College in the thirties and forties.

Sadly, we have received notice of two deaths in Art History. Angela Volan, PhD 2005, died last year at the age of 35 from complications of Marfan's Syndrome. Professor Emeritus Harrie Vanderstappen, PhD 1955, died this year at the age of 86. Prof. Vanderstappen taught East Asian art history to several generations of students during his more than thirty years at Chicago. His

monumental work, *The T. L. Yuan Bibliography of Western Writings on Chinese Art and Archaeology*, remains a lasting contribution to the field. Prof. Vanderstappen was also instrumental in building the study collection of Chinese and Japanese scrolls at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago, including the donation of many works from his private collection.

### Joanne M. Berens

Editor of *Tableau*  
Director of Communications  
Division of the Humanities



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## dear alumni and friends



### I WRITE TO SHARE SOME EXCELLENT NEWS.

This past winter President Robert J. Zimmer announced a new graduate aid initiative that will direct \$50 million over six years toward the University of Chicago's doctoral programs in the humanities and social sciences. This is the largest investment in graduate fellowship aid in twenty years and means that we are once again able to offer fellowship packages to incoming graduate students that are competitive with our peers. Beginning with the entering class of autumn 2007, nearly all doctoral students in the humanities and the social sciences will receive five years of funding, including both tuition remission and generous living stipends, as well as health care and summer stipends to support academic work and hasten progress through our programs. Graduate aid was the highest priority articulated by faculty when I assumed the deanship. We needed to strengthen our capacity to recruit and support the best students not only for the sake of their educational experience, but also to retain our stellar faculty. I am delighted that we have achieved this.

I am also pleased to report that this autumn's matriculating class of doctoral and masters students will enter a Division of the Humanities that is as strong as it has ever been. At 170 members, we have the largest faculty since the early 1970s. We can once again report strength not only in areas like philosophy, art history, and English, but also in programs that are too often sacrificed in higher education, such as South Asian languages and civilizations, Germanic studies, and linguistics. Whereas the University of Cambridge last year stopped teaching Sanskrit, which they have offered since the mid-nineteenth century, we have recently hired four young scholars in South Asian studies, including a Sanskritist. In this issue of *Tableau*, you can read in depth about the historic and current strengths of Chinese scholarship across several divisional departments. Finally, this winter we opened the doors to the new Center for the Study of Languages. The \$1.7 million center provides a state-of-the-art research center for the development of teaching materials for second-language acquisition and language pedagogy, together with classrooms for teaching the roughly fifty languages regularly taught within the Division of the Humanities each year. The center will benefit not only divisional faculty and graduate students but also undergraduates and professional students. With resources like these, we have an unrivaled capacity for comparative work,

for multilingual work, and for the creativity that catches its light from surprising, unsettling conjunctions.

During my tenure as dean, we have also worked hard on developing our strengths in creative and performing arts. Visual Arts in particular has made three exciting new hires, as has English with the hire of novelist Mark Slouka and poet Srikanth Reddy. Art History, Cinema and Media Studies, and Music have recently added scholars who are forging strong links to the studio arts program. The Division is also actively strengthening ties to professional arts organizations both on and off campus. The recent movement of humanistic disciplines into closer proximity with the arts, which complements our decades of kinship with anthropology and history, provides an important occasion to envision new intellectual configurations within the humanities generally.

As many of you know, I will conclude my service as dean of the Division of Humanities at the end of June. In July, I will take up an appointment as the UPS Foundation Professor in the School of Social Science at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton; happily, this research appointment will also allow me to maintain a teaching appointment at the University of Chicago over the coming years. As of this writing in mid-March, a faculty committee is in the process of making a recommendation for the twelfth dean of the Division of the Humanities to President Zimmer and Provost Thomas F. Rosenbaum, and they will make a formal appointment of the new dean this spring.

As I close out my term, I am confident that the Division stands ready to maintain its position at the front of humanistic inquiry. Every day the imagination and intellectual intensity of my colleagues astonishes me. This issue's list of faculty honors is a reminder of the rich scholarly life within the Division. Let me also offer a few examples that reflect how new technologies are transforming research in the Humanities: in Art History, Professor Wu Hung has assembled a team of scholars and scientists to reconstruct digitally Buddhist cave temples from the Northern Qi dynasty, whose magnificent sculptural holdings were carried away or forcibly cut from the cave walls and taken out of China in the early part of the twentieth century. In Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Professor Matthew Stolper is leading emergency efforts to digitize thousands of endangered clay tablets whose Achaemenid Elamite cuneiform markings contain valuable, otherwise unknown information about daily life in the ancient capital Persepolis. In Linguistics, Professor Salikoko Mufwene is collaborating with colleagues in Computer Science to model language evolution.

We offer our sincere thanks to all of our alumni and friends whose generous and ongoing support of the humanities at the University of Chicago makes work like this possible. ■

Sincerely,

# here & now

## Uncovering Chicago's Hidden Archives

By Moira Hinderer, doctoral candidate in History

The work of uncovering Chicago's hidden archives will enter a new phase in the spring of 2007. Over the next three years the Uncovering New Chicago Archives Project (UNCAP), funded by a \$617,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, will bring together librarians, faculty, and graduate students at the University of Chicago and other local institutions to survey and process historically significant collections of archival materials.

The hidden collections targeted by UNCAP, many of them related to the literary and cultural history of Chicago's South Side between the 1930s and 1970s, are located in libraries, museums, and businesses, which require further organization and description to be made easily accessible; UNCAP will also identify significant materials residing in Chicago basements, attics, and storage lockers and facilitate their placement in one of the city's established archives.

The work of UNCAP grows out of the Mapping the Stacks (MTS) project developed by Associate Professor of English Jacqueline Goldsby. Funded by the Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture, the Division of the Humanities, and a Mellon Officer's Grant, MTS was designed to identify, survey, and ultimately make accessible Chicago's rich archival

resources in African American history. In the first phase of the project, MTS collaborated with archivists at Chicago cultural institutions, including the Vivian Harsh Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, the DuSable Museum of African American History, and the *Chicago Defender* newspaper to identify and process collections. The goals of the project include identifying key collections, developing donor relationships, increasing graduate-student

The project will establish Chicago's centrality in the history of African American and American arts, politics, and culture.

training in archival work, and promoting collaborative work both within the University community and the city at large. To date, MTS has processed the papers of poet-journalist Frank Marshall Davis, *Ebony* magazine editor Ben Burns, and is currently processing the vast photograph archives of the *Chicago Defender*.

The University's Regenstein Library is providing UNCAP with coordination and professional expertise, as well as technical infrastructure through the library's digital development center, which will design an online search software for the project. Special Collections Research Center will provide archival training for graduate students working on the project, and archivists, faculty, and students will together explore and organize the library's important collections in contemporary poetry and jazz. According to Goldsby, the goal of UNCAP is to increase accessibility to local archives and to establish Chicago's centrality as a site of "intense intellectual engagement" in the history of African American and American arts, politics, and culture. ■

### GIFTS

## Honoring Angela Volan

On 25 June 2006, Angela Volan, a recent graduate of the Department of Art History, passed away from complications due to Marfan's Syndrome. A scholar of late- and post-Byzantine apocalyptic imagery, Angela received her PhD in 2005, after which she pursued postdoctoral work at the Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton. At the time of her death, she was looking forward to taking an assistant professorship at the University of South Florida in Tampa. We continue to mourn the loss of this bright young scholar and friend.

To help honor Angela's life and work, an endowed fund in Art History has been established in her name, made possible in part by a generous gift that Angela herself bequeathed. We take comfort in the thought that we will be able to use Angela's donation to support art historical scholarship and in so doing honor and perpetuate her memory.

The Angela Volan Fund will support graduate students conducting research travel and related activities. Angela made several research trips with support from departmental funds, and we are grateful that we can now make such opportunities available to others in her name. ■

For information about the Angela Volan Fund, please contact Katherine Malmquist at 773/702-9243.

Left to right: Mollie Godfrey, English PhD student, Allyson Hobbs, History PhD student, and Melissa Barton, English PhD student, review files at the *Chicago Defender* offices. Photograph by Lloyd DeGrane.





## PROGRAMS

## MAPH Enters a Second Decade

By Jeff McMahon, AM 2002, Writing Advisor, Master of Arts Program in the Humanities

**A**s an alumnus of the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities (MAPH), I can quickly give you a sense of MAPH's reach by describing what my classmates are doing:

A half dozen teach full-time at community colleges and public and private schools. More are working on their dissertations. A couple work for literary agencies and a couple write for film magazines. Many, living the writer's life, have published stories and poems. We count an assistant dean among us, an attorney with a prominent law firm, a development director for a nonprofit organization, an education director at an art museum, and a newspaper editor, to name a few.

But those outcomes don't tell the whole story. Students who enter MAPH find themselves at an intense intersection of disciplines and ideas that can clarify interests and reveal new paths. Students have arrived with questions for literature and departed with answers from philosophy. They have entered considering PhDs and exited as published poets, or just as often, have entered as aspiring poets and exited as future poetry scholars.

Now, the program that has served as a crossroads for ten years and 779 students arrives at a crossroads of its own: MAPH will begin its second decade with new codirectors. Associate Professor of English Jay Schleusener has codirected MAPH

for four years, and Associate Professor of Philosophy Candace Vogler for seven, although Vogler has been associated in some capacity ever since MAPH was an idea debated in committee. This summer they will hand the reins to Mark Miller, PhD 1993, Associate Professor of English, and David Levin, Associate Professor of Germanic Studies, Cinema and Media Studies, and Theatre and Performance Studies.

Levin and Miller take over a program with an impressive record: despite MAPH's rigorous content and demanding schedule, which compresses coursework and thesis-writing into nine months, about 95 percent of students complete its requirements on time. MAPH also helps to prepare future professors by offering advanced PhD students the opportunity to serve as preceptors — teaching their own courses, supervising theses, and advising students.

Gerald Graff, AB 1959, and Lawrence Rothfield, both professors of English, founded MAPH to replace a competitive atmosphere among first-year PhD students with a more collegial intellectual community. Rothfield is happy with MAPH's decade of progress: "The development of internships and the vibrant alumni network are both indicators that the program has succeeded in bridging the gap between the academy and the world." ■

*"Students arrive with questions for literature and depart with answers from philosophy."*

## PUBLICATIONS

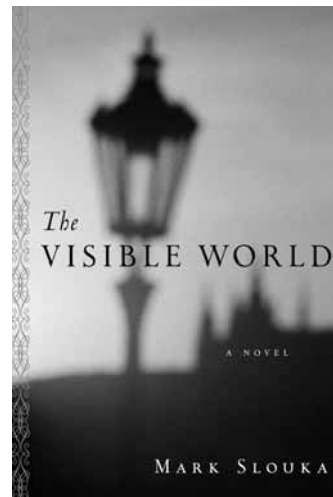
## Making the Invisible Visible

By Kristian C. J. Kerr, doctoral student in English

**M**ark Slouka, Professor of English and Chair of Creative Writing, published his second novel on April 19. *The Visible World* is an examination of the relationships between past and present, between personal experience and historical events, and between history, memory, and fiction. One of the book's achievements is that it performs this kind of analytic work while simultaneously unfolding an absorbing family mystery.

Its first section, labeled a "memoir," consists of the childhood memories of the unnamed narrator, the child of Czech immigrants, growing up in 1950s New York and suburban Pennsylvania. These memories are fragmentary, paradoxically unified only by the sense that they all lack some crucial disclosure about a past that haunts the present. Slouka's treatment of the workings of memory is finely nuanced: the child's observations are effective in their

simplicity and insightfulness; a particular atmosphere is evoked by the minute depiction of a sensory detail, which propels his reader into the fictional world. In contrast to this is the sense that memory is also something that is every day repressed, always present, but never articulated or elaborated. Then follows an "intermezzo" narrating the protagonist's return to Prague in search of answers to the questions raised by his incomplete understanding of his parents' past. There the face



and fabric of the present is revealed to be a living palimpsest, on which are inscribed centuries of experience, one that simultaneously yields and retains different secrets. The past is everywhere visible and everywhere submerged. The final, and longest section, entitled "a novel," is a fictional reconstruction of the intersection of the narrator's parents' experience and the 1942 assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazi governor of Bohemia and Moravia, and its aftermath.

Through this deft portrayal of a love story playing out against a historical backdrop, Slouka's novel suggests that the recourse to fiction may be the only way of knowing the past on a truly personal level. ■

# here & now

## COLLOQUIA

### The Fate of the Book in the Digital Age

By Arno Bosse, Director of Technology in the Humanities and doctoral candidate in Comparative Literature, and Russell Horton, AB 2002, Digital Library Development Center and the Project for American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language

Scholarly technologists, computer scientists, computer poets, and literary scholars gathered on campus last November for the inaugural Chicago Colloquium on Digital Humanities and Computer Science (<http://dhcs.uchicago.edu/>). Cosponsored by the Division of the Humanities, the University's Computation Institute, and the Illinois Institute of Technology, the colloquium brought together a large and growing community of scholars who apply computational tools to the study of texts and textual meaning. This year's event coalesced around Tufts classicist Gregory Crane's articulation of a central challenge facing humanists in the digital age: "What Do You Do with a Million Books?"

Books have long been at the center of digital collections in the humanities. But as mass digitization helps accelerate the change from a print culture to a networked, digital culture, it will also become necessary to consider how the text itself is being reconstituted. We are increasingly able to interact with texts in novel ways, as linguistic, visual, and statistical processing provide us with new modes of reading, representation, and understanding. This shift makes evident the necessity for humanists to enter into a dialogue with librarians and computer scientists to understand the new languages of open standards, search queries, visualization, and social networks.

At the colloquium, presenters engaged an often-passionate audience on a number of issues and possibilities facing digital scholars. One cluster

of particularly fruitful, interdisciplinary exchanges emerged around the use of data-mining and computer-learning techniques. These were used to address significant questions in literary criticism, such as the automated analysis of the representation of gender in Shakespeare or a digital hermeneutics of Gertrude Stein's use of repetition.

As a result of the vitality of these debates and the emergent nature of the topics under discussion, it was decided to make the colloquium an annual event, and Northwestern University has agreed to host the next colloquium in October 2007. ■

## LINGUISTICS

### Documenting Endangered Languages

By Kristian C. J. Kerr, doctoral student in English

Since its foundation in 1926 as the first modern linguistics department in the United States, the Department of Linguistics has preserved its commitment to the documentation of languages. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the documentation of so-called endangered languages in the wake of technological advances and amidst a sense that globalization is changing the nature of language use and development around the world. According to the National Science Foundation, of the world's 6,000–7,000 languages, over half will have become extinct by the end of this century. In 2005, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) collaborated to establish a set of research grants for the specific purpose of documenting endangered languages.

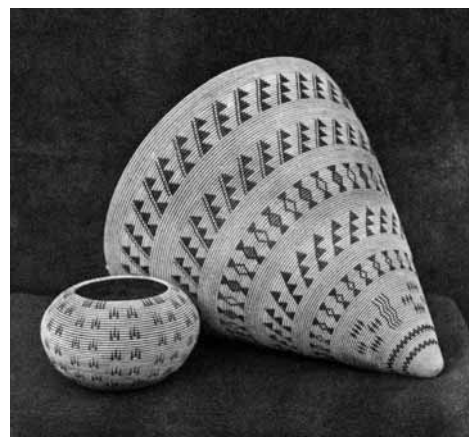
Alan Yu, Assistant Professor of Linguistics, was awarded a three-year NEH/NSF Documenting Endangered Languages grant in 2006 for the purpose of

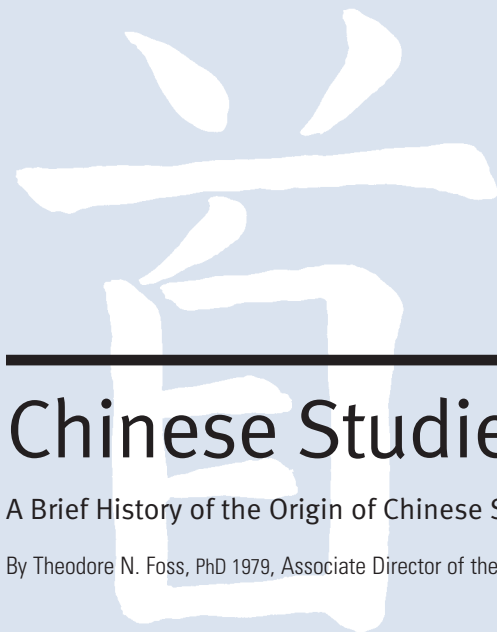
creating a grammar of the Washo language. Washo is spoken fluently by fewer than twenty people, most in their sixties, living around Lake Tahoe on the Nevada-California border. Yu's work focuses on the phonological structure of the language, how its speakers systematically manipulate sounds to produce words, how a particular sound is produced and perceived in the minds of the speakers, and how these aspects change over time.

Digital technology has not only allowed for more efficient fieldwork and data storage, but also provides scholars with methods of comparison and data presentation that lead to new avenues of analysis. These new research technologies and methods are also benefiting the speakers of the language. Yu's audio-dictionary and grammar, for example, are being developed electronically and will become available to the Washo people upon completion. His documentation project dovetails neatly with efforts within the community to preserve and revitalize their language. Language is an essential vehicle of cultural identity, and its preservation is tantamount to ensuring the transmission of cultural distinctiveness. Among other efforts, language classes are currently being held in the Washo colonies, and Yu's work will be an important pedagogical tool.

Documenting endangered languages, then, is work that serves two constituencies: both the academic and the indigenous communities. Documentation of a particular language contributes to the broader objectives of linguistic study, and these documentation projects ultimately help the native speakers of these languages by providing them with the tools they need to teach the language to others. The sense of cooperation between researchers and communities enlivens the quality of the material garnered in the field and the quality of the cultural artefact that will be preserved for the next generation. *To learn more about Washo language documentation and revitalization, visit <http://washo.uchicago.edu/>.* ■

Below: Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952), *Washo Baskets*, 1924, photogravure. Image courtesy of the Northwestern University Library, ct 15073.





I see life and progress everywhere and trust in the future of China. I believe that her literature will bring forth new facts and new thoughts, and that the time will come when it will arrest the attention of the world at large. It is to be hoped that the near future may see many American scholars taking a real interest in this literature, and when the time comes they will have at hand here in Chicago ample foundation material for their studies and investigations” — Berthold Laufer of the Field Museum, 1913

## Chinese Studies at Chicago

A Brief History of the Origin of Chinese Studies at the University of Chicago

By Theodore N. Foss, PhD 1979, Associate Director of the Center for East Asian Studies

**T**he evolution of Chinese studies at the University of Chicago, as old as the University itself, has seen the emergence of an interdisciplinary field with a strong future.

The University presently has twenty-one faculty China specialists in various departments and Chinese language classes bursting at the seams with five language instructors working diligently. The library's Chinese collection now numbers 410,131 volumes. In the last two years alone the Division of the Humanities has welcomed four new faculty members: Yuming He, specializing in Chinese literature, and Paul Copp in Buddhist literature and medieval Chinese literature (East Asian Languages and Civilizations); Ping Foong, whose current research is on spatial strategies in Chinese visual culture (Art History); and Tamara Chin, doing comparative work on classical Chinese and Greek literature (Comparative Literature).

In the 1890s a Chinese language professorship was proposed to President William Rainey Harper. The impetus for this early discussion was probably fired by missionary zeal for China and contrasted with Berthold Laufer's vision of Chicago as a true center for Sinology. Then, in 1908 and 1909, Professor Ernest DeWitt Burton traveled to Asia under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation's "Commission on Oriental Education" to investigate educational, social, and religious conditions there. The proposal to hire a China specialist finally came to fruition in 1928 when Harley Farnsworth MacNair, a pioneer in studying China's relations with the West, joined History. Soon after, Ernest B. Price, the author of studies on secret treaty relations of the Manchu and a former consul in Shanghai, began teaching in Political Science.

Even before 1928, students had begun investigating China. Curiously, the first dissertation with a China theme was presented in 1918 in Chemistry, Chi-che Wang's "The chemistry of Chinese preserved duck eggs and Chinese edible birds' nests"! Shou-yi Chen, who had been Burton's Cantonese translator, received his PhD in 1928 with a dissertation on



China in eighteenth-century English literature. A faculty advisor, John Manly, wrote of Chen that his "soul was saved in China and lost again at the University of Chicago." Chen is an unsung hero of the University. While a student, he taught the now better-known Herrlee Glessner Creel enough Chinese to use original sources for his dissertation. Upon completing his degree, Chen returned to China and, in 1930, wrote back to his alma mater with a vision for Chinese studies at Chicago and an offer to facilitate the purchase of a Chinese research library. He was politely rebuffed.

Creel earned his PhD in Chinese philosophy in 1929, and, after five years in Beijing, the University asked him to build a program in Far Eastern studies within the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures. One of the major tasks undertaken by Creel was to build a Chinese research collection for the library. Creel estimated that the Chinese books

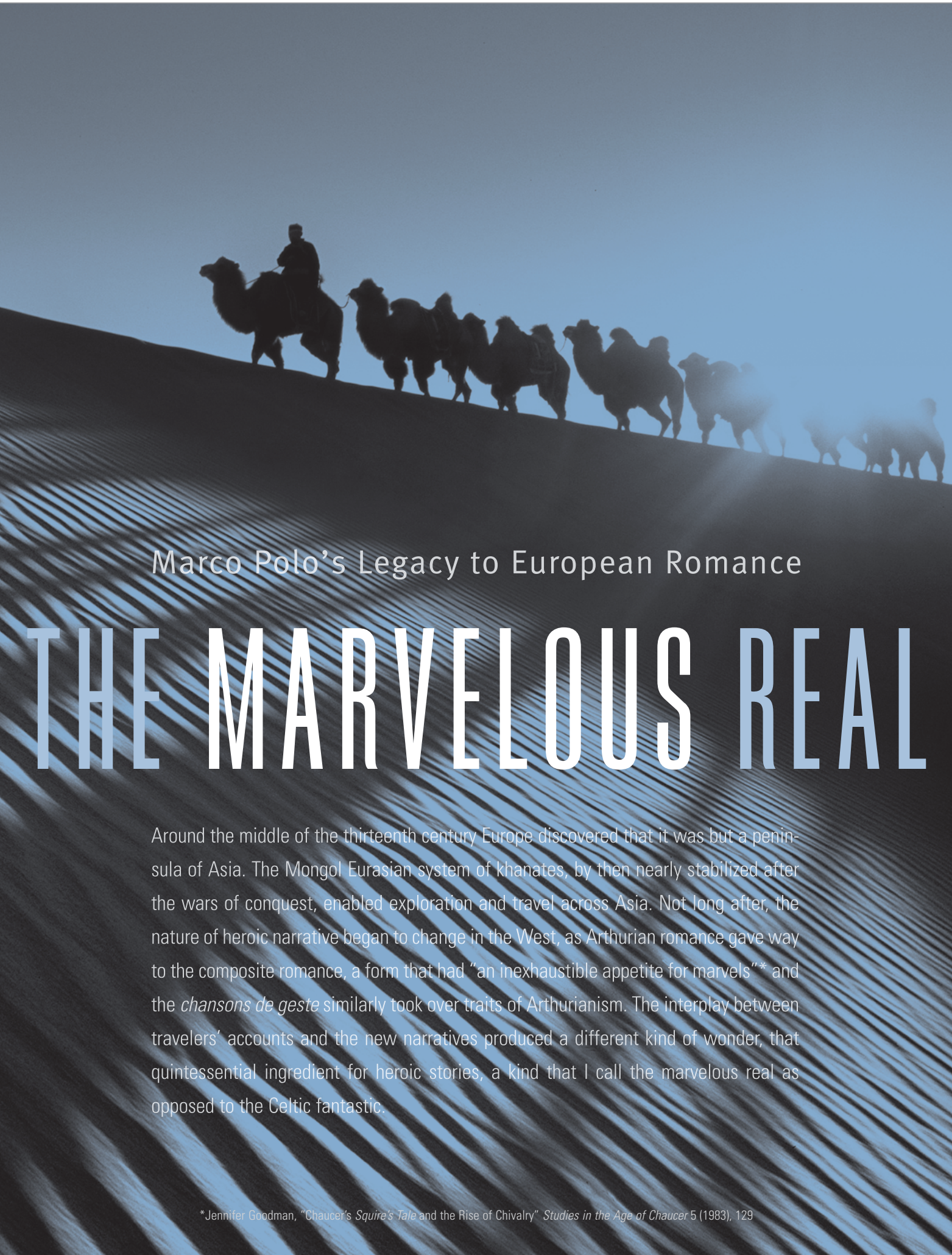
then numbered about 800. He would add another 2,100 volumes from his personal collection and a collection of some 20,000 volumes originally from the Newberry Library in Chicago. Soon after Creel's arrival, President Hutchins could write to Hu Shih, Chinese ambassador to the United States, that the University was building a Chinese library "which will be of such size and completeness as to provide facilities for serious research" and that Chicago was devoted "to the study and teaching of Chinese culture, history, art, and languages." The University granted an honorary degree to Hu, the father of the Chinese literary renaissance, in 1939.

From the beginning, the Chinese scholarly program was fully integrated into Chicago's intellectual life. Anthropology Professor Robert Redfield, PhD 1920, JD '21, PhD '28, stressed in 1957 that the University should not "ghettoize" non-Western civilizations. He pointed to Chinese civilization as an exemplary manifestation of the highest achievement of humanity, not as "exotica," but rather, vital in itself and central to our academic work. He saw Chicago faculty who studied Asia as both outstanding practitioners of their discipline as well as specialists in the culture of an area or group of people.

With the rise of Area Studies during and after World War II, Chicago joined other universities in designing accelerated language programs in non-Western languages. An interdisciplinary Committee on Far East Studies was organized in 1951, the Center for East Asian Studies was established in 1959 with the assistance of the U.S. Department of Education, and the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations was established in 1963.

Two recently created centers represent the continuity and advancement of Chinese studies at Chicago. Harkening back to its origins, the Creel Center for Chinese Paleography, directed by Professor Edward Shaughnessy, studies recently excavated manuscripts. The Center for the Art of East Asia directed by Professor Wu Hung looks to encourage new perspectives on East Asian visual culture as the societies of Korea, Japan, and China interact to an ever-greater extent with other nations and play greater roles in contemporary culture and international affairs. ■

Above: Zhang Huang (1527–1608), *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate*, from the *Compendium of Diagrams* (dated 1623). Ming Dynasty, Tiangu reign. Courtesy of the East Asian Collection, University of Chicago Library.

A photograph showing a caravan of camels and a rider silhouetted against a bright, hazy sky at sunset or sunrise. The camels are walking across a large, rippled sand dune. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, golden, and blue tones.

Marco Polo's Legacy to European Romance

# THE MARVELOUS REAL

Around the middle of the thirteenth century Europe discovered that it was but a peninsula of Asia. The Mongol Eurasian system of khanates, by then nearly stabilized after the wars of conquest, enabled exploration and travel across Asia. Not long after, the nature of heroic narrative began to change in the West, as Arthurian romance gave way to the composite romance, a form that had “an inexhaustible appetite for marvels”<sup>\*</sup> and the *chansons de geste* similarly took over traits of Arthurianism. The interplay between travelers’ accounts and the new narratives produced a different kind of wonder, that quintessential ingredient for heroic stories, a kind that I call the marvelous real as opposed to the Celtic fantastic.

<sup>\*</sup>Jennifer Goodman, “Chaucer’s *Squire’s Tale* and the Rise of Chivalry” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 5 (1983), 129





**Michael Murrin** is the Raymond W. and Martha Hilpert Gruner Distinguished Service Professor of English, Comparative Literature, and the Divinity School. This article is a revised version of the keynote address presented at Humanities Day, University of Chicago, on 28 October 2006.

For reasons of space and presentation the original and extensive critical apparatus has been replaced with a few parenthetical references within the text.

**The new heroic narrative with eastern settings** and wonders depended upon real places that could be found on a map, but they were real places that were *very, very* far away. In this vast new world travelers had found things quite as marvelous for Europeans as those in traditional fantasy, and the real itself became marvelous. These new wonders gave Western heroic stories a hard material edge but did not displace the older marvels. The result was a series of stories filled with many more wonders than their predecessors.

Of the many travelers to the East, I focus on Marco Polo, who left for Inner Asia in 1271 and only returned to Venice in 1295. His *Le Divisament dou monde* (1298–99), or *Description of the World*, opened up Asia to a broad readership in Western Europe. Polo did not produce merely another travel account, though he was the first European explorer who crossed *all* Asia, from one end to another. Rather, relying on his travels and on informants whom he trusted, he composed a geography. His amanuensis, Rustichello of Pisa, begins the *Divisament* saying that the book is written for all who wish to know the diverse generations of human beings and the diversities of the various regions there. Polo's work was an immediate success, the

first vernacular text composed by an Italian which attracted a readership outside Italy. It was translated many times, several translations being made while he was still alive. And it affected European maps. Polo himself had a Chinese map and marked out on it his journeys. His geographic work in turn caused changes in the famous Catalan map of 1375, and its scientific value grew in the following century. Finally, Polo profoundly affected European ambitions and dreams. Henry the Navigator may have used the *Divisament*, and Columbus had a copy when he sailed west to reach Asia, hence the adage: "Alive, Marco Polo discovered China;



after his death, America." In fact, he created the myth of the faraway, a myth which is still with us.

I draw many of my fictional examples from the cycle of Huon of Bordeaux. The author, who lived near Arras, perhaps in Saint-Omer, a place he stresses, composed the original romance in the early 1260s, before Polo left for Central and East Asia. The sequels followed between 1291 and 1311. An anonymous poet from the same area composed most of them, and the cycle itself diagrams the changes that affected European fiction, the difference between the original *Huon* and its first sequel, named after the hero's wife, *Esclarmonde*. In the fifteenth century, another anonymous Northerner turned the Huon cycle into prose (1454) and it became a bestseller in the age of print. Soon after this event, the poet Matteo Maria Boiardo composed the *Orlando innamorato* or *Roland in Love* (1483, 1495), another bestseller that spawned multiple continuations, the most famous being that of Ariosto. Boiardo set the new standards for Renaissance heroic narrative that continued to presuppose the Silk Road on the eve of the voyages of Columbus, Gama, and Magellan.

Left: Along the Silk Road, the Abakh Khoja Tomb in the city of Kashgar in Xinjiang, China

## A Huge World Replaces a Small

Chrétien's romances well illustrate the smaller spatial sense which Europeans had prior to the Mongols. In the *Perceval* or *Conte du Graal*, the Grail king lives in a forest wilderness, yet a town like Belrepeire is but forty leagues or a day's journey on horseback away. Other romances show the somewhat wider Mediterranean world opened up by the Crusaders. When he reworked Chrétien's *Perceval*, Wolfram von Eschenbach sent the hero's father to Cairo and North Africa, and the author of the Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal* (c. 1220) had the Grail return to Syria. This extension was as nothing, however, to what became possible, once the Mongols had established their system. For the first time Asia knew no frontiers. Before the mid-thirteenth century Friar Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, the first papal ambassador to the Great Khan (1245–47), had opened to Europe the long routes of Asia, and, after the Polos, Europeans and Mongol emissaries could go from one end of Eurasia to the other. The scholar Jean-Paul Roux aptly remarks that medieval explorers opened the door unwittingly to the limitless (*Les Explorateurs au moyen âge* [Evreux, France: Fayard, 1992], 19–20).

Quinsai or Hangzhou, the old capital of the Southern Song, a city near modern Shanghai, provides a good example for the new, wider world. It is roughly 5,600 miles from the Atlantic coast of France by direct flight. One can surmise how much longer the distance would be overland. Such vast distances had an immediate effect on romance. *Der jungere Titurel* (c. 1275) sent the Grail not to Syria but to "India," then a vague geographic term for the lands at the limits or beyond the reach of Alexander's campaigns.

The Mongol system lasted about a century (mid-thirteenth to mid-fourteenth century). The collapse of the Il-Khanate in Iran after 1336 and then the Ming closure of China after 1368 effectively ended travel to East Asia. Yet what remained still far surpassed the world known to the first romancers. Chaucer's Squire still envisages a large world for his tale (1390s). He begins it at Sarai on the Volga, considered then to be part of Asia, and its Khan receives gifts from the "kyng of Arabe and of Inde" (*The Squire's Tale*, 110). Some Chaucerians have accordingly talked of the vast background of space the poet presupposes, though it was actually a much smaller world than the one Marco Polo knew. In the next century Boiardo would have Angelica say she lived in Albracca, two hundred days journey beyond the Tana or Don (*Orlando innamorato*, 1.1.26), far away in Inner Asia.

Distance creates a new dimension and a new problematic. Getting there becomes as much an adventure as being there. Carpine admits all he feared, and yet the trip was *more* difficult than he had thought. The journey, nevertheless, was reasonably safe later, after the initial explorations, according to Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, an employee of

the Bardi Bank, who in 1340 described the way stations on the north or steppe route. Mongol infighting, though it might disrupt, never really stopped trade. Security, however, did not protect the traveler from long, fatiguing days, extremes of temperature, and all the difficulties and frustrations which attend a journey through a constantly changing alien environment. Not that getting there had been without incident in the earlier romances. One thinks of Lancelot's journey to Gore with its series of duels, mysterious cemetery, and sword bridge, but as often Arthur's heroes were not concerned with travel to a specific place so much as proving themselves or learning the lessons of chivalry, which could be done just as well by wandering through the countryside, as Yvain and Perceval do in Chrétien. The East in contrast gave romancers definite geographic goals and, therefore, not only new distances but a set of itineraries and endpoints toward which action is newly driven. Wandering became travel, and the narratives gave *specific* routes, much like the travel brochures we look at today.

Most of these routes went through the sparsely populated lands we loosely call Central or Inner Asia. Here was a zone of adventure, wonder, fear, and great difficulty, which Europeans coming from the West and Mongols and Chinese coming from the East experienced. In fact, much of our knowledge of the routes prior to the thirteenth century comes from the Chinese who crossed the zone much earlier, between the fifth and seventh centuries. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a traveler could choose any of three routes across this zone: the steppe route to the north, followed by Carpine and by William of Rubruck and Bartholomew of Cremona (1253–55), and the two routes further south which constituted different versions of the Silk Road, the routes normally used by merchants that crossed a series of deserts and mountains. I say two routes because one could go through Bukhara and Samarkand and then north of the Taklimakan desert, or follow a more southerly route across northern Iran, Afghanistan, and south of the Taklimakan and Gobi. Polo followed the southerly route. Actually, diverse combinations of these routes were possible, depending on one's destination. William of Rubruck had to cross the steppes to reach Karakorum, the old Mongol capital. If one's destination was Khan-balik (modern Beijing), one could follow some version of the Silk Road throughout.

Romancers accordingly had a set of itineraries across Asia, and the narration acquired geographical specificity. Boiardo's heroes follow standard routes between Europe and Asia. Rinaldo takes the steppe route back to Western Europe, while Orlando and Angelica follow the more southerly version through Iran. On the way out Orlando as well as Astolfo mixes the two routes. Of the three, the northern one across the steppe was the quickest and probably the easiest, since it had no significant obstacles. The Mongols themselves favored it. Yet even this route

gave travelers stories to tell. The Mongols did not mind winter travel. One slept under the snow, when one could not find hard ground or make an igloo, and many Europeans and Muslims, not brought up like Tatars, died. Bartholomew of Cremona became so hungry he cried and lost the memory of ever having eaten.

The other two routes, those that constitute the Silk Road proper, share similar difficulties: those of the mountains and those of the deserts, so I will treat them together. I begin with the mountains, the Pamirs or, for Polo, the areas of Badakshan and the Vakhan. Polo had many of the same experiences as Chinese pilgrims in this zone. He complained that in Badakshan he spent an entire day climbing what seemed to be a mountain and then discovered he had reached a plateau. Of the Pamirs he said they were so high and cold that birds did not come there. Great heights bring altitude and weather problems. The Chinese blamed altitude sickness on the local onions, hence their name for the Pamirs: Tsung-ling or Onion Mountains. They also complained about vertigo. A Buddhist pilgrim named Sung-yun (AD 518) made similar observations and said of the highest point of the Pamirs: "From this point as a centre, looking downwards, it seems just as though one was poised in mid-air" (*The Mission of Sun-yun and Hwei Sang to Obtain Buddhist Books in the West in Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World* [Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1994], vol. 1, xc). He also has a moving description of the bridges in the Karakoram, which, by then, were suspended on iron chains. Looking down, one cannot see the bottom, yet there are no side rails, and one dare not cross in high winds. A slip, and one could fall ten thousand fathoms.

The weather caused still more problems. One could cross the Pamirs only in summer and yet could experience terrible conditions, including snow. The Chinese explained the weather supernaturally. Faxian (AD 400) blamed dragons: "Moreover there are poison-dragons, who when evil-purposed spit poison, winds, rain, snow, drifting sand, and gravel-stones; not one of ten thousand meeting these calamities, escapes" (Faxian, *The Travels of Fa-hian in Si-Yu-Ki*, vol. 1, xxix). In the following century Sung-yun said that if the traveler pays some religious service to the dragon, he has less trouble. Xuanzang, the last of these pilgrims (seventh century), gave the same advice but blamed wicked spirits, just as Rubruck later would connect demons with snowy weather.

The desert zone offered its own set of problems, both the Taklimakan in Xinjiang, which travelers skirted, and the Ghashun Gobi, which they had to cross between Lop Nur (Lake Lop) and Dunhuang. Both areas really make a continuous desert, one of the driest in Asia, mostly because it is so far from the ocean, partially because mountains like the Himalayas block rain-bearing clouds. Travelers worried about losing their way, but mostly they feared death

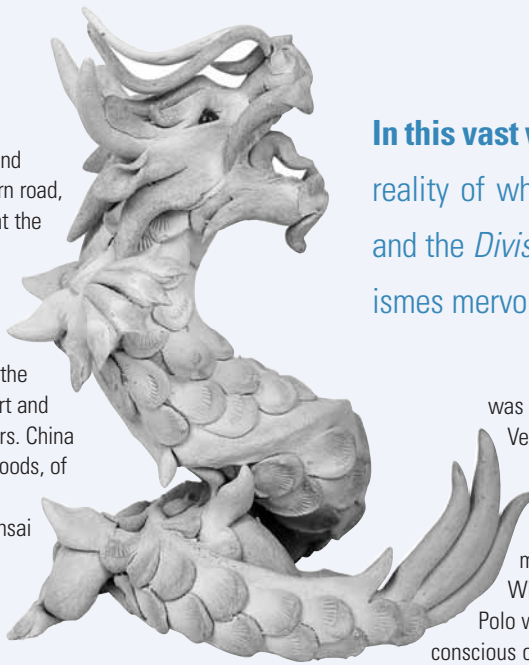
by thirst and also starvation. The area between Lop Nur and Dunhuang still lacks a modern road, and it seems appropriate that the Chinese after World War II used Lop Nur for nuclear tests.

Such long and arduous journeys made sense only if the destination justified the effort and time of the European travelers. China certainly did in the form of goods, of course, but also for its wondrous cities themselves. Quinsai or Hangzhou, the old capital of the Southern Song, well illustrates this fact. For Polo, it was a city unlike

any he had seen in Asia, and he kept adding to his initial description during his later life. Polo saw the city shortly after it surrendered to the Mongols. There had been no looting, and it was still the real center of China. Polo himself had grown up in an important urban center and loved cities, especially those of South China. That of Quinsai is *the* description at the exact center of Polo's book. It exceeds in detail all his other descriptions.

Polo says that the whole city is on water and surrounded by water. A river links Quinsai with its port twenty-five miles away, and the river is navigable well beyond the city. On its east side it has a channel to take the flood waters of the river, which also serves as a huge water moat. On its other side, the city has West Lake, and within, it is laced with canals, the main canal serving as the end of the transport system. A city of canals surrounded by water, of course, suggested Polo's own Venice. In fact, the Venetian version of the text, the earliest surviving manuscript of which goes back to the early fourteenth century, makes the comparison explicit. Talking of the many bridges in Quinsai, he says, "And let no one be surprised if there are so many bridges, because I tell you that this town is all situated in water of lagoons as Venese is" (*Divisament*, ed. and trans. A. C. Moule and Paul Pelliot [New York: AMS Press, 1976] 1.52.327). Other things strengthened the parallel. The only way into the Chinese province is by a causeway with water on either side, and in the city the tide cleans out the canals. The scholar Renouard accordingly suggests that Quinsai moved Polo so much because it recalled to him his homeland. Yet this parallel works only so far.

First of all, the scale was *so* different. Quinsai was the greatest city in East Asia. Polo called it the most noble and best city in the world, an opinion shared by other travelers. Population estimates tell the story. A sober modern estimate gives Quinsai between one and 1.5 million people. Venice then had about 120,000. By the lowest estimates Hangzhou



In this vast world the traveler came upon many things and places the reality of which defeated the imagination. They seemed marvelous, and the *Divisament* promises that its readers will find in it "les grandismes mervoilles" (the greatest marvels).

was ten times the size of Venice; by the high estimates, forty times.

Second, Quinsai or Hangzhou was a major cultural center. With his limited Chinese, Polo would not have been conscious of the literary scene,

but he could observe the architecture and arrangement of a city which had had artists as governors. Polo waxed especially lyrical about Hsi Hu or West Lake, surrounded by palaces and monasteries with two island palaces where people could hold wedding parties and feasts. He talks as well of the pleasure boats and recommends an excursion on the lake.

Venice in contrast was then basically a commercial city. Boatyards and stone yards lined the Grand Canal. Shipbuilding and repair, Venice's biggest industry, stretched from the Bacino di San Marco all the way to the Lido. Few of the landmarks we know then existed, though the city reached its basic arrangement, while Polo lived there. Still we must imagine Venice without most of its famous buildings: the white Gothic, its Renaissance structures, the stone bridges, and we must remember that the Piazzetta was water. At Quinsai Polo may have felt the similarities between this city and his home, as did later travelers, but his own description shows how great was the difference in scale. Venice, then, was at best a tiny mirror to this gigantic city. In other words, Quinsai was a marvel, and I now wish to focus on the category of the marvelous at the border between the new geography and the new romance.

### The Marvelous Real

The huge Asian world affected romancers and the composers of *chansons de geste*. Already with the Crusades poets had looked east, but by the later thirteenth century Asia had become a must for chivalric heroes. The poet of *Huon de Bordeaux* sent his hero to Palestine and transposed the steppe zone south so Huon could meet the Kumans. Similarly, the Paduan cleric who composed the Franco-Italian *Entrée d'Espagne* (mid-fourteenth century) sent Roland east in Part Two, where he wooed a Saracen princess. Not only Roland, but

Ogier and Charlemagne and other knights all went east. At about the same time as Polo traveled in Asia, Giraut d'Amiens, one of the writers who set the models for the composite romance, located his *Méliacin* in Asia. The new direct trade links across Asia allowed the romancers, moreover, to send their heroes well inland and not just to Palestine or Anatolia. As mentioned earlier, Chaucer has his Squire in *The Canterbury Tales* locate his tale at Saraï on the Volga, then on the Asian steppe route. More spectacular are the fifteenth century romances. In the Prose *Huon* (1454) the hero goes to Momur, capital of Auberon, the fairy king, situated near the Caspian and the Alburz Mountains. On the way Huon meets the ruler of Iran in Tabriz. Arthur and Morgan the Fay also come to Momur, and Auberon gives Arthur power among the fairies of Tatar, that is, the zone that included Samarkand. Morgan has married Ogier the Dane, a knight of Charlemagne's court, whom we learned earlier had been journeying to India. Boiardo similarly has Angelica endure a siege in Albracca, an Italian form of the name Bukhara, which the poet correctly locates beyond the Caspian, and where he sends his own heroes like Orlando or Roland. In effect, writers regularly moved famous characters of previous heroic narrative east and set them down in Inner Asia.

In this vast world the traveler came upon many things and places the reality of which defeated the imagination. They seemed marvelous, and the *Divisament* promises that its readers will find in it "les grandismes mervoilles" (the greatest marvels) (1.305). Much later Torquato Tasso would develop a theory of what he called the verisimilar marvelous, which with some modifications provides us with a useful guide. He distinguishes two kinds, the philosophical and the popular. It is the philosophical which concerns us here. For Tasso this category applies to events which seem marvelous because their causes are hidden from us. We can further break this down into two subcategories: the natural, which is rare in romance, and the artificial, which romance favors.

The natural marvelous in turn takes three forms: objects, fauna, and the landscape itself. Polo provides a whole list of objects which would seem marvelous to his readers. Among them is petroleum, for which Polo provides the first Western description. On the border between Armenia and Georgia he says there is an oil fountain, which can load one hundred ships. The oil is good for burning, and people use it to

anoint camels that have the mange. Polo here probably alludes to the region by Baku, which still produces oil. Next he gives a detailed description of asbestos, showing it to be a silicate and correcting the Western misunderstanding which connected it to a salamander. He describes its mining and manufacture along with the precise observation that it becomes white when thrown in fire, but protects one as long as there is no tear in the material. He also explains the origin of musk and is the first to mention coal in the West.

Romancers answered Polo in a variety of ways. In the *Esclarmonde* Huon finds the apples of youth that restore older people to the age of thirty. More often writers would imagine fountains with strange properties, drawing on the Fountain of Narcissus in the *Roman de la rose*. For his *Orlando innamorato* Boiardo developed a variant of this fountain. Angelica drinks unknowingly from the stream of love and falls for the first person she sees, in this instance Rinaldo. Boiardo emphasizes the fact that nature not magic produced this fountain and stream. Spenser presents a series of them, Ovidian fashion. One is a poisoned fountain that makes one grow faint, while another rejects all impurities and will not, therefore, clean the blood off one's hands. For something like asbestos, however, romancers normally turned to magic. A good instance would be a duel early in the *Orlando innamorato*. Argalia, the brother of Angelica, is fighting Feraguto and tells him to desist, since he wears enchanted armor. Feraguto replies that he wears armor only for show because his body is charmed in all but one part.

To space and marvelous fact one must add the greater variety of wonder Asia made possible for Europe. The fauna of Asia provide examples. Traditional romance had been mostly content with dwarves and giants. In Thomas, for example, Tristan receives his fatal wound when he and a dwarf of the same name battle a lord and his six brothers (*Roman de Tristan*, Fragment Douce, 1017–53). The Prose *Lancelot* abounds with giants and dwarves. Polo brought in the exotic.

The *Divisament* has scattered through it a small encyclopedia of Asian fauna, more inclusive, reliable, precise, and detailed than anything in that century. They can be new varieties of an animal previously known like the strange mastiffs of Tibet. Sometimes they are animals unknown since classical times, which Polo misclassified and described by periphrasis. Polo talks of a huge snake with a mouth large enough to swallow a human being. A hunter puts in its path a pole with sharp steel and then covers it over with sand. It impales the snake, when it passes over, and kills it instantly. One scholar identifies this huge snake as a crocodile. In a narrative of the same century, the *Volsunga Saga*, Sigurd kills Fafnir in the same fashion, hiding in a hole and stabbing the dragon through to its heart as it passes over on its way to drink.

Romancers also answered Polo with their own inventions. Boiardo imagined a composite monster at



Rocca Crudele, born of human incest and necrophilia, so horrible none dared look at or describe it. Ariosto contributed Orillo to this collection, a robber who could be cut up and come together again, what Asian conjurers used to do with their assistants. Ibn Battuta, the great Muslim traveler, describes such a performance at Quinsai (1346).

Our second main category is the artificial marvelous, and here too stories of Asian travel had much to offer. Buddhist pilgrims had already found both in the desert zones and in the mountains of the Silk Road. Chinese travelers mostly located the marvelous in the past. They talked of flying statues and holy men in trances who lived hundreds of years. Polo found it in the present, yet he resembled his Chinese predecessors by displacing the truly supernatural, this time in space not in time. It existed for him in another place, across the mountains to the south and south-east, in Kashmir, Gilgit, and the Northwest Territories of modern Pakistan. Polo never visited the area but learned about it probably from the Muslim merchants of Badakshan. Polo says that the Kashmiri make statues speak, change the weather, and bring darkness (49.362–63). Polo saw, of course, Kashmiri conjurers at Khubilai's court, and even in the nineteenth century Kashmiri dervishes were prominent in magic. In Polo's day, these lands were still Buddhist, and he connected magic with Buddhism. The lamas, who were influential then with the Mongols, stressed magic and exorcism, and Polo accordingly saw magic

Anonymous, *Marco Polo Arrives in China*, n.d.  
Image © Bettman Archives/Corbis

Buddhist-fashion, just as the earlier Chinese travelers had, but his version had shamanist elements as well, inevitable in a Mongol environment.

Romance specialized in the artificial marvelous, but even here Polo had much to offer. A comparison between the Grail Castle of Chrétien's *Perceval* and the real palace of the Song provides a good illustration. Chrétien imagines a castle with a square tower of lovely dark stone, flanked by two small towers. In front is a hall with lodges before it. People were then building many stone castles, but they were still expensive. The hall itself does not mirror a normal medieval hall. It is square with a huge fire in the center. Four copper pillars support its chimney, and four hundred could sit around it. The palace at Quinsai, therefore, easily surpasses Chrétien's imaginary castle. A high wall, miles in circumference, encloses the precinct. The palace itself contains twenty halls and innumerable chambers. Thousands could eat at table easily. The main hall has gilded columns and gilded sculpture on the ceiling. Gold pictures cover the walls. The marvelous thematizes itself in these paintings, which depict many histories, beasts, birds, knights, ladies, and *many marvels*. The marvelous portrays the marvelous. Furthermore, it is a garden palace, though by the city. The precinct encloses many lovely gardens with all good fruits one could desire. There

**Polo saw rhinoceroses in Indonesia** and described them minutely. He ended his discussion with the remark that such unicorns do not resemble at all European notions, nor do they allow themselves to be captured by a virgin.

are many fountains and more lakes with good fish, and there are preserves for various kinds of deer and rabbits. Romancers would soon imitate this magnificence, and the garden palace became the mark of Renaissance heroic narrative.

Influenced by such narratives of Asian travel, romancers gave to their castles and palaces a glittering material splendor. Boiardo presented one of his garden palaces in splendid fashion. The Palazzo Zoioso represents the Indian style and stands in an island garden of dense trees. The palace is built of marble, so polished and clear that it reflects the whole park. The door and floor are of polychrome marble, and the loggias have reliefs and circles of blue and gold. There are also hidden gardens with fountains and shade trees, some on the roof. Falerina preferred Timurid architecture. She set her garden palace on a river bank and covered its walls with glazed work colored with gold leaf. Its great gate had inset balas rubies and emeralds.

Finally, however, it is the land itself that unites the natural and the artificial marvelous and brings the stories of Chinese and European writers close to each other. The Pamirs perhaps show this best. In the mountains Polo crossed the Plateau of Shewá with the great lake of Sar-i-kol. Here he described the large sheep with huge horns which now bear his name, the *ovis Poli*. Shepherds make eating bowls out of the horns and use them to fence in their flocks by night. Since many wolves kill the sheep, the horns and bones lie scattered about and are used to guide travelers through the snow. Mostly, however, Polo found an idyllic place. Xuanzang long before had waxed lyrical over the lake with its water, pure and clear as a mirror, fathomless, and dark blue. He discovered that it tasted sweet and soft.

The Chinese tell a story about Sar-i-kol that has haunting parallels to Western romance. Sung-yun tells of a mischievous dragon which lived probably in that great lake. By spell it killed a merchant who was spending the night there, but eventually the local king, having learned Brahmin enchantments, turned the dragon into human shape and banished him from the Pamirs. Mountain lakes and dragons go together, but one which was ready to attack passersby and became human is just what Boiardo dramatized in the *Orlando innamorato*. In it Morgana transformed her reluctant lover, Ziliante, into a dragon to guard the lake entrance to her underground kingdom. Having botched the transformation, however, she had to change him back again to human shape to save his life. Boiardo located this scene further west, by the Caspian, but he had the same idea.

### The Intensification of the Marvelous

The other side of the marvelous real is the rejection of the marvelous unreal. Marco Polo was careful to disabuse Europeans of various fictional marvels that they then accepted as fact or which had considerable popular support. One case provides a good example. It concerns unicorns. Polo saw rhinoceroses in Indonesia and described them minutely. He ended his discussion with the remark that such unicorns do not resemble at all European notions, nor do they allow themselves to be captured by a virgin. Yet despite the fact that the *Divisament dou monde* had wide circulation and multiple translations, even while Polo was alive, his attempt to dispel or correct such European fantasies failed. The unicorn survived in tapestries like the great series now shared between New York and Paris and in the spiral horns of the narwhal that resembled the European idea of the unicorn's horn and can still be found in princely collections. Later romancers then merely added the marvelous real to the marvelous unreal and so intensified the element of wonder in these romances with eastern settings.

Nor was that the end of the matter. The wider world, both in travel and romance, required accelerated transport. Explorers like the Polos took years going and returning. Marco Polo's journey east with the elder Polos lasted three-and-a-half years. In the sixteenth century it took the Portuguese about as long to sail between Lisbon and Macau, and NASA once estimated it would take a similar period of years for interplanetary travel. To deal with such distances the Mongols had an accelerated system, or what we might call the pony express. A network of roads spread out to the provinces from Canbalu, and change posts with many horses existed every 25–30 miles. Riders could cover 200–250 miles a day, and the Khan heard news in twenty-four hours of events ten days away by normal travel. Such systems, of course, had been traditional in Asia, the only way to cope with vast distances.

In romance the new distances demanded new transport, in this case superfast horses. Boiardo associates Rinaldo especially with such steeds. More spectacular are the magical horses of the composite romances. For his *Méliacin* Giraut d'Amiens imagined a wooden horse which could fly, hence the alternate title of the romance, *Cheval de fust*. Adenès li Rois took over the idea for his *Cléomadès* and made it an ebony horse which could take its rider instantly anywhere in the world. Chaucer turned this into the Bronze Horse of *The Squire's Tale*, which could carry its rider anywhere within twenty-four hours, whatever the weather. Magic often hides the desire or

need for new technology. After all these flying horses, it is not surprising that Leonardo da Vinci tried to build a flying machine.

### A Glance at the Future

One could argue that all these wonders, whether real or unreal, helped prepare Europeans for the great discoveries of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This description was made by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, when Cortés and his men had their first view of the lakes and cities of Mexico:

During the morning, we arrived at a broad Causeway and continued our march towards Iztapalapa, and when we saw so many cities and villages built in the water and other great towns on dry land and that straight and level Causeway going towards Mexico, we were amazed and said that it was like the enchantments they tell of in the legend of Amadis, on account of the great towers and cues and buildings rising from the water, and all built of masonry. And some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream. It is not to be wondered at that I here write it down in this manner, for there is so much to think over that I do not know how to describe it, seeing things as we did that had never been heard of or seen before, not even dreamed about (*The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517–1521* [New York: Noonday Press, 1968], 190–91).

Iztapalapa was one of the Nahuatl cities, while the capital, Tenochtitlán, was on an island joined by causeways with the mainland. Spaniards noted the resemblance between the city and lakes system in the Valley of Mexico and Venice, the way Italian travelers had previously seen in Venice a little mirror of Quinsai in South China. The reference to *Amadis de Gaula*, however, suggests how these fantastic romances related to the voyages, discoveries, and conquests that began the early modern period. Amadis was the hero of a Spanish romance cycle in the late medieval period that, like the cycle of Huon of Bordeaux, had multiple translations and wide circulation in the age of print. It was another one of those fantastic stories that some historians have criticized, saying that the aristocracy had lost itself in a dream world, forgetting that such stories were popular as well with mercantile classes and had a broad readership generally. After all, merchants were mostly the ones who went to Asia. Yet such stories helped the conquistadores somehow to locate the unexpected magnificence they found in the Valley of Mexico. Just as today, when the defenders of science fiction argue that the genre helps us prepare for all possible futures, the late romances, with their Asian landscapes and wonders, conditioned Europeans psychologically for their encounters with the strange and brilliant cultures they would meet across the globe. ■

Richard Stern, the Helen A. Regenstein Professor Emeritus of English, writes about his early days in the English Department. A fuller version of this memoir will appear in Stern's twenty-second book, *Coasting*.

# remembering the english department

1 9 5 5

**Every afternoon at four**, the English Department met in 409B, a closet-sized storage space on the fourth floor of Wieboldt. All department members were welcome, but only a handful came every day. At the center of the regulars was Walter Blair, the wry, rotund, Canadian-born department chair who specialized in American humor, Mark Twain, and the tall tale. Walter had coffee boiling and cookies spread on a cracked plate. Stamped by the asceticism of the Depression, Walter and the rest of us four o'clockers somehow felt that the constricted, shabby setting suited our skeptical, post-Depression psyches.

Another regular was Arthur Friedman, a blue-eyed, white haired, nervous, wittily obscene eighteenth-century scholar up from the day's work on his edition of Oliver Goldsmith. Editing texts was a scholarly task held in high esteem by the department. Even such scholar-critics as the assistant professors, Stuart Tave and Gwin Kolb, edited texts: Gwin slaving away at *Rasselas*, the tale Samuel Johnson dashed off in a week to defray his mother's funeral expenses, Stuart later editing Robert Bage's Voltairesque novel, *Herm-sprung*. Downstairs, Donald Bond was finishing up his edition of Addison and Steele's *Spectator* and *Tatler*. (Later, there'd be Bill Ringler's wonderful edition of *Arcadia* and David Bevington's marvelous editions of Shakespeare.) Donald, the only Republican in the department, was too refined for our coffee klatches, but Stuart and Gwin, who shared an office in Wb 409A with the one-eyed Texas linguist, James Sledd, were usually there. Gwin and Stuart had both been in the navy, Gwin an ordinary seaman, then an ensign, out of Jackson Mississippi's Millsaps College, Stuart an officer from the Bronx, Columbia, and Oxford, who'd driven around Hiroshima not many weeks after it had been atom-bombed into ash and flesh rubble.

The department was full of ex-soldiers. Another was the medieval scholar Ted Silverstein, baptized "Roughy" by Friedman, perhaps because his heroic

mustache and high-decibel geniality were like those of Teddy Roosevelt (of the Rough Riders). Silverstein's squadron had requisitioned the Eiffel Tower for Air Force intelligence in 1944; a military lilt lingered in his geniality. My office mate, Ernest Sirluck—scrupulous editor of a volume in the Yale Milton—seemed to carry an invisible swagger stick. Son of a provincial Jewish shopkeeper in Winnipeg, Sirluck had slid into the locutions and manners of a British officer; he intimidated such fearful but admiring students as the future poet-editor George Starbuck and the European-trained intellectual, George Steiner. Sirluck showed up at the coffee klatch but not when Silverstein or wicked-tongued Sledd were there. Sledd's savage humor sprang from a bellicosity sharpened by the humiliation of being an almost able-bodied man who'd not served in the armed forces. The "almost" was due to a glass eye inserted after a childhood accident. Sledd's ability to pop it into his palm during colloquies was part of his comic repertoire.

The department's token woman, Catherine Ham, had been an officer in the WAVE, the women's branch of the U.S. Navy. In Chicago, her soft, southern authority was exercised as the department's executive assistant, although she also taught a survey course in the humanities. Catherine saw to it that our coffee closet was more or less habitable.

I loved the coffee hour. Lowest of the low, an instructor, I was the first writer the department had hired as a regular member since Thornton Wilder had served it for six years in the 1930s. (Wilder didn't teach what later came to be called "creative writing" courses but after class did read the poems and stories of such favorite students as Elder Olson and Edward Levi.) If I didn't fit Chicago's bill, there'd be little lost: my annual salary was \$4,850. For some years, around Christmas time, I'd be called into the office of the Humanities dean, the gruff-voiced, egg-bald Ameri-

canist, Napier Wilt (another ex-soldier who'd been "gassed" in World War I) who would inform me that I probably deserved the large annual raise he was proposing to the administration, \$200. Wilt's dignified, genial patronage made me feel that I'd won a trifecta.

To me, there seemed to be no rank pulled in Wilt's division or in the department. It was as democratic (in every sense) as it could be. The coffee hours were full of politics and jokes. (Walter's were modeled on Will Rogers's, minus the lariat and the racism.) Another common topic was of course books, which more often meant new novels than scholarship. Almost all members of the department read them which meant much to me and my work. It was another measure of departmental commonality and cohesion.

We had a living image of a riven English department. Every summer quarter in the late fifties, the bibliographer, Fredson Bowers, came up to Chicago from the notoriously unhappy University of Virginia English Department to teach a couple of courses. In his first Chicago days, Bowers's shoulders were crooked, the right one lower than the left. In a week or so, his shoulders straightened out. Then, days before his return to Charlottesville, down went the right shoulder.

Wives—there were no male spouses—were very much a part of departmental life. They were or were given characters, Walter's artistic, comically pessimistic Carol, Donald's ebullient Judith, the doyenne of the excellent poetry collection, Norman Maclean's dry, laconic, "true Westerner," Jessie, Gwin's charming, witty Ruth, Stuart's high-spirited Danish-born Edel, and so on. Divorce was nearly unknown. Friedman and Olson had been divorced and then in the early seventies, I was divorced and felt like a pariah. Several wives worked, but their identities were submerged in their husbands'. One of the fruits of the modern women's movement was the death of "the faculty wife." (I suppose the sepulcher is *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.)

**Perhaps a word or two** is in order about the remarkable group of graduate students here in the fifties. I've mentioned two, Starbuck and Steiner. There were other writers, the poet David Ray, the avant-garde novelist, Austin Wright, the literary critic, Ted Solotaroff, and Philip Roth, who came back for PhD work (he had a Chicago MA) in 1956 and began writing *Goodbye, Columbus* as he sweated over Old English. I'll mention here what has become a well-known episode of American literary history. In 1957, Dean Wilt gave me

money to bring writers to my writing class. The first year brought Saul Bellow, Robert Lowell, Howard Nemerov, and Peter Taylor, the second Flannery O'Connor, Ralph Ellison, John Berryman, and Bernard Malamud. Roth, a friend and fellow instructor, asked if his story, "Defender of the Faith," could be the class story discussed by Bellow. It was, Bellow relished it, and the three of us got together after class, the initial meeting of their complex relationship. Next year, the third member of what Bellow would call "the Hart, Schaffner, and Marx," of American literature, Bernard Malamud, visited and, in our apartment, met the visiting Bellow. (I have described elsewhere a bit of the excitement generated in Hyde Park and the city itself by these visitors.)

**The faculty of the seventies**, eighties, and nineties had reading obligations, which were heavier and heavier with difficult literary theory. For relaxation, many of my younger colleagues were more at home with *Miami Vice* than *Herzog* and drew class illustrations from it and its television peers. Our colleague John Cawelti had pioneered popular-culture studies, but although he'd applied close analysis to westerns and the Three Stooges, he himself knew where they stood in the hierarchy of mentality. Such departmental friends of mine as Arthur Heiserman and John Wallace believed that our newer colleagues didn't. A consequence was the abasement of their culture and the systematic torture of their critical prose. Still, both Heiserman and Wallace joined the board of Shelley Sacks' new periodical, *Critical Inquiry*, which became the home base of the new criticism. Neither of them, though, ever penned a sentence in the labyrinthine mode of Yale-muddled Derridiana. (I remember trying to get through Gayatri Spivak's introduction to Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. "Fog escorting mist," was my reaction.)

The division between new and old also ended our curricular requirements. I remember a meeting in which I asked that an exemption be made: a required course in Shakespeare. The rigorous seventeenth-century scholar Janel Mueller led the opposition to this "privileging." It was clear, though, even to the most curmudgeonly of the old timers, that new energy had poured into the thinking of English departments, much of it from dynamic young women professors. Back in 1954, I'd read Beauvoir's *Second Sex*, and had indeed discombobulated my classes at Connecticut College in 1954 by making assignments out of it. (My copy of the book was returned with the markings of multiple readings, but the young women of New London could or would not digest this revolutionary

contradiction of their upbringing.) Despite this and such other books as *The Madwoman in the Attic*, I was unprepared for the new ways of looking at and teaching literature, the concentration on what was *not* in the book, the clues to social and political inequity discernible in the most familiar novels and poems. Luckily, our new people—Ruddick and Kruger, Knight and Hadley, Ash, Postlewaite, Rigal, Berlant, and Stewart—were generous, even prodigal, with guidance. It meant not only alteration in reading and teaching, it meant "new types of architecture, a change of heart." The adjustment was, I think, easier for some of us older men than for such fine women scholars as Elizabeth Helsinger and Janel Mueller whose training had begun well before graduate school, well before school itself.

**The 1950s coffee-hour gang** had not prided itself on what I'd thought before I came to Chicago was its departmental glory, the critical methods of R.S. Crane and Richard McKeon as embodied in the then famous *Critics and Criticism*, two of whose contributors, Olson and Maclean, were active members of the department. To some degree, all Chicago professors paid attention to textual analysis in the manner of the Chicago critics, but it was the exacting scholarship of editors and the historical scholarship of such faculty as R.C. ('Cecil') Bald and George Williamson, which constituted the departmental ground bass. The courtly Bald (who'd been a bravely outspoken professor in South Africa) worked on Donne's biography, Williamson on the transformation of seventeenth-century English prose style and on T.S. Eliot (his *Guide* was the first published book on the Anglo-American poet-critic). The ironic skeptic, Williamson, was also the first-rate editor of *Modern Philology*, following the long tenure of Ronald Crane (who had famously reviewed every important work of eighteenth-century scholarship in its annual bibliographical issue).

Crane had retired but was still a presence. Stocky, white-haired and mustached, he had the dignity of intellectual self-confidence. When his best-known student, Wayne Booth, came back in 1962 to teach in the department, Crane was delighted. Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction* had become one of the must-read books for graduate literature students around the

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

Left to right: Ronald S. Crane, Richard P. McKeon, Norman Maclean, Napier Wilt, Walter Blair, and Richard Stern



## CURRICULUM VITAE

We have received notices of faculty honors for 2006–7, which were awarded after the publication of the spring 2006 issue of *Tableau*, as well as honors for 2007–8, which were awarded as of 12 March 2007.

**Danielle Allen**, Professor of Classics, Political Science, and Social Thought and Dean of the Humanities, has been elected to the board of the Pulitzer Prize.

**Shadi Bartsch**, Ann L. & Lawrence B. Buttenwieser Professor of Classics and Chair of History of Culture, was awarded a 2006 Faculty Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching and a 2007–8 Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship.

**Jonathan Beere**, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, received a 2006 Humboldt Foundation Fellowship for research in Germany.

**Lauren Berlant**, George M. Pullman Professor of English and Gender Studies, was named Director of the Center for Gender Studies' Lesbian and Gay Studies Project (<http://genderstudies.uchicago.edu/lgsp/>) in 2006–7.

**Persis Berlekamp**, Assistant Professor of Art History, has received a Getty Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship as well as a fellowship to the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton for 2007–8; she will decide which to hold later in the spring.

**David Bevington**, Phyllis Fay Horton Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus in the Humanities, will be awarded the Norman Maclean Faculty Award at the spring convocation. Named for Professor Norman Maclean, PhD 1940, the award recognizes emeritus or very senior faculty members who made outstanding contributions to teaching and to the student experience of life on campus.

**Philip Bohlman**, Mary Werkman Professor of Music, delivered the Royal Holloway-British Library Lectures in Musicology in London during February and March 2007. The five-lecture series, examining the aesthetics and politics of world music and global history, was entitled "The Silence of Music."

**Jason Bridges**, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, has been awarded a Whiting Foundation Research Fellowship for Excellence in Core Teaching. This new fellowship brings a year of research leave to the recipient as well as funds to the department for replacement teaching.

**Tania Bruguera**, Assistant Professor of Visual Arts, held her first Madrid solo exhibition at the Juana de Aizpuru Gallery during November 2006 and exhibited at the Moscow Biennale in March 2007; in the same month she was invited to speak on contemporary art practices at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris.

**Dipesh Chakrabarty**, Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor of South Asian Languages & Civilizations and History, was made an honorary fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in late 2006.

**James Chandler**, PhD 1978, Professor of English, Cinema & Media Studies, and History of Culture, Director of the Franke Institute and the Center for Disciplinary Innovation, has been promoted to the Barbara E. & Richard J. Franke Distinguished Service Professorship.

**Helma Dik**, Associate Professor of Classics, has been awarded the 2006 Llewellyn John & Harriet Manchester Quantrell Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.

**Fred Donner**, Professor of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations and the Oriental Institute, and Associate Chair of the Graduate Program in NELC, has received a 2007–8 Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship.

**Martha Feldman**, Professor of Music, has been elected to the editorial board of *Opera Quarterly*.

**Victor Friedman**, PhD 1975, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Slavic Languages & Literatures, was elected as a foreign member to the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania in 2006. Friedman is already a member of two other Balkan academies: Macedonia (1995) and Kosova (2004). In August or October of

this year, he will receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Skopje, Republic of Macedonia.

**Jacqueline Goldsby**, Associate Professor of English, was awarded an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Officer's Grant in June 2006 to allow her and a group of eight PhD students to begin organizing more than 100,000 photographs in the *Chicago Defender's* archives. As of January 2007, another grant from the Mellon Foundation to the Regenstien Library is continuing and expanding the cataloguing efforts begun by Goldsby (see related story on p. 2).

**Mark Hansen**, Professor of English and Cinema & Media Studies, received a 2006–7 Fulbright Research Grant for nonspecialist studies relating to mainland China.

**Miriam Hansen**, Ferdinand Schevill Distinguished Service Professor in the Humanities and Professor of English and Cinema & Media Studies, has been awarded a 2007–8 Fellowship at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.

**Elizabeth Helsinger**, John Matthews Manly Distinguished Service Professor of English and Art History, has been named a Senior Fellow at the National Humanities Center for 2007–8.

**Judy Hoffman**, Senior Lecturer of Visual Arts and member of Cinema & Media Studies, saw the 2006 release of *Labor Stories* on DVD through Facets Multimedia, making three rarely-seen 1975 documentaries available for the first time. Hoffman produced and directed the original videos through Kartemquin Films, a Chicago collective specializing in socially relevant nonfiction cinema.

**Robert Kendrick**, Professor and Chair of Music, was awarded a 2006 Faculty Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching.

**Laura Letinsky**, Professor and Chair of Visual Arts, had a solo exhibition at the Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto, 22 March–2 May 2007. She also participated in group shows at the Michael Sturm Gallery, Stuttgart, the Southeast Museum of

Photography, Daytona, Florida, and at Wright State University. A folio of her photographs was published in *Gourmet Magazine's* 2006 arts supplement.

**David Levin**, Associate Professor of Germanic Studies, Cinema & Media Studies, and Theatre & Performance Studies, and **Mark Miller**, PhD 1993, Associate Professor of English, have been named codirectors of the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities, beginning in 2007–8 (see a related story on the tenth anniversary of MAPH on p. 3).

**Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle**, Professor of Visual Arts, had a solo exhibition at Max Protetch Gallery, New York, in autumn 2006 and will be one of only a handful of American artists featured at the Documenta 12 international exhibition of art in Kassel, Germany, in summer 2007 ([www.documenta12.de](http://www.documenta12.de)).

**Carla Mazzio**, Assistant Professor of English, will be a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University in 2007–8.

**W. J. T. Mitchell**, Gaylord Donnelley Distinguished Service Professor of English, Art History, and Visual Arts and Editor of *Critical Inquiry*, is the cowinner of the Modern Language Association's 2006 James Russell Lowell Prize for *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

**Salikoko Mufwene**, PhD 1979, Frank J. McLoraine Distinguished Service Professor of Linguistics, was a fellow of the Institut Universitaire de France in 2006; he also completed a two-year term as President of the Society for Caribbean Linguistics last August.

**Deborah Nelson**, Associate Professor of English, was named Director of the Center for Gender Studies (<http://genderstudies.uchicago.edu/>) in 2005; she formally assumed the directorship in 2006–7 after a year's fellowship at the University's Franke Institute for the Humanities.

**Dennis Pardee**, PhD 1974, Professor of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, the



Oriental Institute, and Jewish Studies, has been elected to the Conseil Scientifique of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris.

**Marta Ptaszynska**, Helen B. & Frank L. Sulzberger Professor of Music, was awarded a 2006 Fromm Music Foundation grant to support the writing of a symphonic work for the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, which will premiere in spring 2008. She has also received two additional commissions: for the National Opera in Warsaw, Poland, *Der Magischer Doremin*, in cooperation with the Vienna Opera, premiering 6 December 2007; and for the National Symphony Orchestra in Katowice, Poland, a Concerto for Flute, Harp, and Orchestra on 18 May 2008.

**Shulamit Ran**, Andrew MacLeish Distinguished Service Professor of Music, had a world premiere of her *Credo/Ani Ma'amin*, part of a collaborative liturgical project, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on 26 April 2007.

**Srikanth Reddy**, Assistant Professor of English, received an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship for 2006–7 to assist in the composition of a new book of poetry entitled *Voyager*.

**Martha Roth**, Professor of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, the Oriental Institute, and Jewish Studies has been named the first Chauncey S. Boucher Distinguished Service Professor; Roth is also Deputy Provost for Research and Education and the Editor-in-Charge of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*.

**Lawrence Rothfield**, Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Faculty Director of the Cultural Policy Center, received two grants: the first from the Otto L. and Hazel T. Rhoades Fund, for a conference-and-book project on preventing the looting of cultural heritage in the aftermath of armed conflict entitled "Learning the Lessons of Iraq"; the second from the Chicago Music Commission, for a comparative study of the strength of the music industry and live music scene in Chicago with that of other U.S. cities.

**Edward Shaughnessy**, Lorraine J. & Herrlee G. Creel Distinguished Service Professor

of Early Chinese Studies and Director of Undergraduate Studies in East Asian Languages & Civilizations, was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant in 2007 to study the Chinese classic text, the *Yi jing*.

**Martin Stokes**, Associate Professor of Music and Director of the Center of Middle Eastern Studies, received the Society for Ethnomusicology's 2006 Jaap Kunst Prize for most significant article in ethnomusicology written by a member of the society and published within the previous year.

**Richard Strier**, Professor of English, Associate Faculty of the Divinity School, and Editor of *Modern Philology*, has been promoted to the Frank L. Sulzberger Distinguished Service Professorship.

**Catherine Sullivan**, Assistant Professor of Visual Arts, exhibited at the Moscow Biennale and the Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Siegen, Germany, in 2007. She had solo exhibitions in 2006 in Brussels, Italy, and Scotland; numerous group shows and screening in England, Germany, Poland, and the United States; and conducted an acting and directing workshop at the Mobile Academy, Warsaw, Poland.

**Kotaka Suzuki**, Assistant Professor of Music and the Visual Arts, had a world premiere of a work for piano, live electronics, and video at the Ultraschall Festival in Berlin on 26–27 January 2007. Contempo, the University of Chicago contemporary chamber players, performed her *Minyo* in its Chicago premiere on 3 February 2007.

**Candace Vogler**, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities and Codirector of the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities, has been awarded a 2007–8 Fellowship at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.

**William Wimsatt**, Professor of Philosophy, Evolutionary Biology, and the Conceptual & Historical Studies of Science (CHSS) and Director of the Big Problems Program, was elected a fellow by the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2006.

**Wu Hung**, Harrie A. Vanderstappen Distinguished Service Professor of Art History, East Asian Languages & Civilizations, Director of the Center for the Art of East Asia, and Consulting Curator to the Smart Museum of Art, curated Miao Xiaochun: "Last Judgment" in Cyberspace at the Walsh Gallery, Chicago, and *Between Past and Future: New Photography and Video from China* at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. He was also chief curator of the Gwangju Biennale, 9 September–11 November 2006.

**Alan C. L. Yu**, Assistant Professor of Linguistics, received a three-year National Science Foundation/National Endowment for the Humanities Documenting Endangered Languages grant to study the Washo language (see related story on p. 4).

**Anthony Yu**, PhD 1969, Carl Darling Buck Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of the Humanities and Professor Emeritus of Religion & Literature in the Divinity School, received a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support his ongoing research on *The Journey to the West*.

**Rebecca Zorach**, PhD 1999, Assistant Professor of Art History, has received two honors in 2006 for her book *Blood, Milk, Ink, Gold: Abundance and Excess in the French Renaissance* (University of Chicago Press, 2005): the Council of Graduate Schools' Gustave O. Arlt Award in the Humanities for outstanding contribution to scholarship in the humanities and the book award of the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Harrie Vanderstappen** AM 1951, PhD '55

1921–2007

The Reverend Henricus "Harrie" Vanderstappen, Professor Emeritus, died on Thursday, 25 January 2007, of an apparent heart attack. He was 86.

An expert in the art of the Yuan and Ming periods, Vanderstappen was part of a group of art historians that changed the study of Chinese art. "He was one of the first Western scholars to master the Chinese language, to examine the primary sources," said Wu Hung, the Harrie A. Vanderstappen Distinguished Service Professor of Art History. Before World War II, the Western study of Chinese art was limited to aesthetics and style. Wu regards Vanderstappen's dissertation, "Investigation into the Status of Chinese Painters at the Early Ming Court and the Existence of a Painting Academy," as the first Western dissertation to consider the influences of institutions and patronage in the development of Chinese art.

Born in the Netherlands, Vanderstappen was ordained a priest of the Society of the Divine Word in '45. While serving as a missionary in Beijing, China, he was asked to teach art at the Fu Jen Catholic University (now in Taiwan). Expelled by the Chinese communist government in '49, he received his PhD in art history at Chicago. After teaching abroad, Vanderstappen returned in '59 and taught for over thirty years, retiring in '91. His interests were unusually broad, teaching classes in Chinese and Japanese art history, East Asian sculpture, and the art of Buddhism. A renowned teacher, Vanderstappen won numerous awards, including the College Art Association of America's Distinguished Teaching of Art History Award. His students are now professors at more than twenty universities, and several are among the country's most prominent East Asian art historians.

Vanderstappen began his major work in '68: the first comprehensive bibliography of Western writing on the art of China, which continued the cataloguing effort begun in '55 by the Chinese scholar Tung-li Yuan (1895–1965). The culmination of this exhaustive project, *The T. L. Yuan Bibliography of Western Writings on Chinese Art and Archaeology* (London: Manselle Information Publishing, 1975), remains a vital research tool for scholars, curators, and connoisseurs.

As a collector of Chinese and Japanese art, he lobbied for a "solid study collection" at the University's Smart Museum of Art. "Not only did he offer invaluable advice, but also he helped raise the funds for the eventual purchase of the museum's core holdings of Chinese and Japanese scroll paintings," said Richard Born, the museum's senior curator.

A public memorial will be held on campus at a later date. ■

*A longer version of this obituary appeared in The University of Chicago Chronicle on 2 February 2007.*



# The Archive and the Office

by David M. Thompson, PhD 1997

**Most of us come to know Petrarch** (1304–74) as the poet of the self. The figure of Laura stands as the central object of praise in the *Canzoniere*, the collection of 366 poems (mostly sonnets) that Petrarch assembled over the duration of his career as church official and man of letters. Notwithstanding her presence, however, it is ultimately the voice of the *Canzoniere's* speaker coming to terms with not being able to have Laura that is the most influential element of Petrarch's contribution to literature. As he writes in poem 129, "A ciascun passo nasce un penser novo/de la mia donna, che sovente in gioco/gira 'l tormento ch' i' porto per lei" ("With every step I take comes a new thought/about my lady which will turn/to pleasure torment that I bear for her" [trans. Mark Musa, 1996]). Retracing these steps, and the progress of the new thoughts accompanying them, is what makes reading the *Canzoniere* a transformative experience.

A great deal of what we know about Petrarch derives from the work of one man, Ernest Hatch Wilkins (1880–1966). A faculty member in the University of Chicago's Department of Romance Languages for fifteen years and Dean of the Colleges from 1923 to 1925, Wilkins was a painstaking investigator of manuscripts and organizer of facts. Petrarch provided him with perfect terrain. The *Canzoniere* emerged from an ever-growing and ever-shifting series of individual poems, which were revised and recopied by Petrarch or scribes. The collection cried out for a scholar's taxonomical touch. Petrarch also worked at charting the vicissitudes of his inner life in many letters, addressed not only to personal acquaintances but also to literary predecessors such as Horace and Virgil as well as to "Posterity." For Petrarch, identity and textuality were intertwined with particular intensity, and Wilkins's contribution as a scholar consisted in bringing to light the precise implications of this intense interaction.

As if these aspects of Petrarch's achievement were not attractive enough to a scholar like Wilkins, add the fact that Petrarch was himself a haunter of archives. As Wilkins recounts in his *Life of Petrarch* (University of Chicago Press, 1961), Petrarch fled to Verona in the spring of 1345 while escaping a siege on Parma by troops under the control of the Visconti family of Milan. Far from simply hiding out with Veronese friends, Petrarch occupied himself in the library of the town's cathedral.



One day he came across every scholar's dream: a box containing unknown (or at least unrecognized) writings of a major author, in this case, Cicero. The sixteen-volume collection of letters written to his close friend Titus Pomponius Atticus recounts Cicero's thinking as he struggled with political turmoil in Rome over the course of his career as statesman and lawyer. As Petrarch copied the letters of Cicero, he had hours to survey and ponder the confusions and costs of a public life.

In his *Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch* (Mediaeval Academy of America, 1955), Wilkins notes that Petrarch was drawn to, but ultimately resisted, an appointment as cardinal in the Catholic Church. Studying Petrarch's correspondence closely in order to trace the movement of his thoughts, Wilkins concludes that Petrarch feared such a promotion would "put an end to his moderation and his personal liberty" (p. 80). One can surmise that the testimony of Cicero helped Petrarch decide to curtail his own administrative ascent. By 1955, Wilkins had himself recently stepped off the administrative ladder. Unlike Petrarch, however, he did so after reaching its highest rung. After leaving the University of Chicago, Wilkins spent twenty years as president of Oberlin College (1927–46). While there, he maintained a friendship with Robert Maynard Hutchins, whose presidency (1929–45) at the University of Chicago coincided with his own. Like Hutchins, Wilkins devoted serious attention to the kind of education that best prepares one for life in the world.

Notwithstanding the fact that Wilkins's scholarship stands as tangible proof of the hundreds of hours that he spent alone in libraries sorting through texts, his public statements suggest an insatiable curiosity about the world and its affairs. In a 1933 talk to Oberlin students entitled "Six More Lives," Wilkins noted his own transition from the life of "a teacher of Italian literature" to that of an academic administrator and suggested six other careers that he could have pursued—minister, politician, newspaper editor, and psychologist made his list. So did "personnel work in industry," because he wanted to improve the offices and factories that consume much of human life. The sixth alternative career was "teacher of American literature." Wilkins craved the opportunity to conquer another national literature to the degree that he had Italian because, as he put it, "literature is, after all, the main medium whereby people of one time and place pass on to those of other places and others their conclusions as to what makes life worth while."

In a moving obituary published in the year of Wilkins's death, fellow scholar Vincenzo Cioffari called him "the man who best personified the ideals of humanism." In describing such accomplishments as Wilkins's leadership of the Dante Society in its formative years, Cioffari notes that Wilkins's "life was so arranged as to make maximum use of his energies and remain pleasant and in control." Not a bad principle for anyone to adhere to, especially administrators who are also scholars and writers, such as Cicero and Petrarch. I find Wilkins fascinating for just these reasons. He was a remarkable man whose energies were directed at reconstructing the inner lives of public men as revealed by the unruly stream of texts they produced. ■

## David M. Thompson,

Associate Dean for Planning and Programs, considers aspects of divisional history in this regular column for *Tableau*.

Above: Portrait of E. H. Wilkins. Courtesy of Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.



For practical details about these events please check the new Humanities Calendar at [humanities.uchicago.edu/calendar](http://humanities.uchicago.edu/calendar).

## > Learn

The **Robert Vare Nonfiction Writer-in-Residence** this spring is Ron Rosenbaum, essayist, journalist, and bestselling author of *Explaining Hitler* (1998) and *The Shakespeare Wars* (2006). The writer-in-residence teaches a workshop-based course in Creative Writing and offers a public lecture, which Rosenbaum gave on April 17, entitled "Shakespeare: The Terror of Pleasure."

On April 29 and April 30 Daniel Mendelsohn of Bard College delivered Jewish Studies' **Jean and Harold Gossett Lecture in Memory of Holocaust Victims Martha and Paul Feivel Korngold** and the **Sigmund H. Danziger Jr. Distinguished Lecture in the Humanities**.

The Department of English **Frederick Ives Carpenter Lectures**, "Ethics in a World of Strangers," were delivered by Kwame Anthony Appiah of Princeton on May 21, 23, and 25.

This year's **Georges Lurcy Lecture** was given by Frank Lestringant of the Sorbonne on "Staged Encounters: From Théodore de Bry to Captain Cook" on May 14.

Shimshon Zelniker, Director of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and formerly special advisor to Prime Minister Shimon Peres, delivered the **June and Harold Patinkin Lecture** in Jewish Studies on May 22 at the Standard Club on the "Stalled Peace Talks and the Israeli Domestic Crisis."

The **Smart Museum of Art** is showing *Exported Visions* (March 17–June 10), which exhibits examples from the early twentieth century revival of woodblock prints in Japan. Over the summer months, see *Majestic Nature/Golden History: German Romantic Art from the Crawford Collection and the Smart Museum of Art* (April 24–October 21); the exhibition explores the Romantic movement's aesthetic concern with the local, the sublime, the gothic, and the natural in landscape painting.

## > Listen

Contempo, the University's contemporary chamber music group, performed a double bill with the Dave Douglas Quintet at the Museum of Contemporary Art on April 7. The 2007–8 "Music Among Friends" season of **Contempo and The University of Chicago Presents** has recently been announced, with several debuts of works by performers new to Chicago. To reserve tickets for this exciting season visit [chicagopresents.uchicago.edu](http://chicagopresents.uchicago.edu).

On May 3, **Mark Slouka**, Professor of English and Chair of Creative Writing, read from his new novel *The Visible World* (see review on p. 3).

The Humanities **Kestbaum Family Writer-in-Residence** is Lydia Davis, acclaimed short-story writer and translator of French philosophy and literature. She has been described as a virtuoso of the short-story form, bringing it close to poetry and philosophy in places. She discussed "Different Forms of Narrative Prose" on May 8.

Upper left: From the Smart Museum of Art's exhibition *Exported Visions: Early Twentieth-Century Japanese Woodblock Prints* — Tokuriki Tomkichiro, *The Cherry Blossoms of Tateho*, from the series *The Eight Views of Mount Fuji*, n.d., color woodblock print.

Lower left: The Dave Douglas Quintet performed in a double bill with Contempo at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Photograph by Suzannah Kincannon.

Center: Katharina Grosse, maquette for *Atoms inside Balloons*, installation at the Renaissance Society, 2007.



The lectures were respectively entitled "The Lost: A Search for Six of the Six Million" and "Reality in Crisis: What Greek Tragedy and Roman Games Can Tell Us About Pop Culture Today."

Art History's triennial **Louise Smith Bross Lectures** were held on May 9 and 10 at the Art Institute of Chicago. "Hieronymus Bosch: Enemy Painting" was delivered by Joseph Leo Koerner, Courtauld Institute of Art, London. The Bross lectures are published by the University of Chicago Press; the inaugural lectures, delivered in 2000 by Martin Kemp, have been published as *The Human Animal in Western Art and Science* (2007).

## > Look

**Court Theatre's** production of Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* (May 3–June 3) included pre-play discussions by scholars and scientists focusing on the play's engagement with early nineteenth-century science, mathematics, literature, and aesthetic theories.

The **Renaissance Society** will be showing Katharina Grosse —Exhibition Icon, April 29–June 10. Grosse's work presses against or explodes the confines of the painterly tradition, engaging a range of surfaces, including aluminum, canvas, paper, and existing architectural elements.

A Selection of  
Past, Present, and  
Future Events on  
Campus and in the  
Neighborhood

happenings

**Stern**, continued from page 13

world. Its conversational style, immense, easy learning and fascinating narrative distinctions seemed a mirror of its author, although Wayne the professor was even more open to every sort of theory, and despite an almost naïve irony, was genuinely open about his own self-doubt. Wayne's tolerance and intellectual hunger bridged the gaps in the department and set its critical tone for the next years. In addition, he and his wife Phyllis, along with their fellow chamber musicians, David and Peggy Bevington, and the chairs James (with Barbara) Miller and Beth (with Howie) Helsingier revived the hospitable graciousness which hadn't existed in the early seventies, the years of political-cultural ferocity.

**I was told that in the years** before my arrival, there'd been tension in the department between the Crane group and one headed by Williamson, Bald, Blair, and Wilt. Not in my time. There was amiability and more than surface respect for each other. Sometimes disagreements about which students should be awarded which fellowships flared up during the annual fellowship award night—which lasted till after midnight—but that was the only departure from genial courtesy I noticed. These award sessions were attended by every one in the department, full professor to instructor. Indeed, when outside appointments were discussed, senior members elicited the opinions of us juniors. All this made for an easy, ego-boosting ambience. My guess is that the notorious "Tenure Syndrome"—which showed up in the children of department members up for tenure—didn't exist back then.

Other elements of departmental cohesion were parties, biannual ones given by the Blairs in their apartment, and occasional ones given by all other members, senior and junior. The esprit of manly drinking, à la Hemingway, led to crises for such members as Maclean, a devoted Hemingwayite who could and did drink a lot and Olson and Friedman whose personalities altered, not for the better, after one or two snifters or even sniffs of bourbon. Mostly, though, the parties were what parties should be, diversions from work and sources of collective amiability.

The department also held an annual spring barbecue in the woods an hour from Hyde Park. There senior members in aprons turned the spits and served cuts of beef and pork sliced from roasting torsos. The rest of us played softball or volleyball. Kids abounded.

Back then, almost everyone, senior and junior, lived in rented apartments. This domestic equality was another element of departmental solidarity. It was during the academic prosperity of the mid-sixties to the present that many of us managed to get mortgages for houses or to buy, like the Taves and Bevingtons, farms where summers were spent.

Prosperity didn't end departmental esprit. Nonetheless, there have been more divisions in the department in recent years than there were in my early years. Personnel and scholarly battles seemed to cause more bleeding and leave uglier scars. I myself think I have no scars, only a couple of scratches. (This may be insensitivity or the oblivion of old age.) I have friends in every departmental generation (particularly that of Tom Mitchell, Beth Helsingier, Michael Murrin, then of Richard Strier, Jay Schleusener,

Miriam Hansen, Bob von Hallberg, Lisa Ruddick, Ken Warren, Jim Chandler, Bill Veeder, Christina von Nolcken and, a bit later, Bill Brown, Josh Scodel, Janice Knight, and Larry Rothfield), and although some of the work done by still younger colleagues has been out of my ken, I'd say that I've read and profited from three-quarters of my colleagues' work. I have also greatly admired the extraordinary care with which the department has treated promotions and appointments. My colleagues often write long, brilliant analyses of candidates' work, analyses which, in the way of the academy, often come to nought as a candidate turns down an offer or is turned down at a higher level of the University.

**Perhaps nostalgia is hiding** too much of the past from me. Proust writes about the different stages of acquaintance. At first, things are names which, reinforced by reading, become places, persons, or ideas of more complex enchantment. When the places are actually visited and the persons encountered in the flesh, reality complicates, adulterates, and darkens them. Finally, remembering, each person transforms remembrance along the lines of his disposition. In memory, I treasure the department even more than I did in the forty-six years of my active membership in it.

Seventy odd years ago, my father cautioned me about saying that I loved Brown Betty. "You can't love what can't love you. You *like* Brown Betty." But I *did* love that grand fusion of apple, crumb, and hard sauce, and I say that I love and have loved the English Department for over half a century. ■

**ON THE COVER** *33 Spine # 2*, 2003. Internal dye diffusion print (Polaroid), 31 x 23 ½ inches framed.

Courtesy of the artist, Buzz Spector, MFA 1978, and Zolla-Lieberman Gallery, Chicago | Collection of Bill and Vicki Hood

Buzz Spector has said, "My work is abstract: it derives from things in nature or things in culture, but it is meant to be understood in terms of the excavation or displacement of objects from their situations." In his series of Polaroid images of books from his personal library, books (and by extension the learning contained within) are perceived as monumental sculptures. The allusion to the vertebra of the human spine and the silhouette of a back taken by this pile of books suggests that the act of reading—of cognition—is akin to a sensate engagement with a living being. Spector is Professor of Art and Department Chair of Art at Cornell University. He has exhibited widely and his works are in many public and private collections.

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