

TABLEAU

A collection of vintage pocket watches and a wooden ball on a reflective surface. The watches are of various designs, some with white faces and some with black faces. The wooden ball is in the center, and the entire scene is reflected on a dark surface below. The background is a warm, golden-brown color.

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THE NEWSLETTER *for the* DIVISION *of the* HUMANITIES

at THE UNIVERSITY *of* CHICAGO

DEAR ALUMNI
AND FRIENDS,

AS MY FIVE-YEAR TERM as Dean draws to a close this spring, I take this opportunity to reflect upon key developments that have occurred in the Division of the Humanities. These include the recent impressive increases in the rate and range of faculty publications, the new faculty members—extraordinary in both their quality and number—who have joined us, the promising growth of our creative writing and visual arts programs, the successes of our graduates' diverse career paths within and beyond the academy, and the co-founding of the University of Chicago's Paris Center by the College and the Division.

I take special pride in *Tableau* as a recorder of these accomplishments. When my predecessor Phillip Gossett launched this newsletter in the final year of his deanship, he did so "in an effort to keep you—our alumni and friends—better informed about the spectrum of activities and programs in the Division of the Humanities." I hope that you feel that we have succeeded.

It is fitting that the final issue of *Tableau* published during my deanship looks to the future. This issue highlights some vital ways in which technology, in a great variety of media, is expanding the boundaries of humanistic inquiry in ways that would have been, if not unthinkable, impossible to achieve as few as ten years ago. You will discover in these pages a number of ways in which the humanities benefit from advances in computer science and digital processing.

Perhaps the combination is surprising, but it is equally promising.

At this point I take great pleasure and pride in welcoming Danielle Allen as my successor as Dean of the Humanities. Upon arriving on campus in 1997, Danielle swiftly emerged as one of the Division's natural leaders. She has the intelligence, passion, tenacity, and drive to guide the Division through its routine complexities of operation. At the same time her expansive vision of further possibilities in arts programming and community outreach, together with her unwavering commitment to our core scholarly mission, will surely carry the Division of the Humanities ever onward in the unfolding of its bright future. I know you will grace Danielle too, as you have graced me, with your friendship, encouragement, and support. My deepest thanks and best wishes to each and every one of you.

Sincerely,

JANEL MUELLER

Janel Mueller, Professor of English Language and Literature and William Rainey Harper Distinguished Service Professor in the College, will complete her five-year term as Dean of the Division of the Humanities on June 30, 2004.

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Revolutionary

Technology Upgrades

Arrive at Special

Collections

S M A L L T R E A S U R E S O N

THE BIG SCREEN

OLD BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS ARE HIDING PLACES OF HISTORY, within their pages unique information for the savvy investigator to happen upon, eke out, and interpret. To many, little can compare to the thrill of discovering an item or fact that has remained hidden, for perhaps hundreds of years, and with it the key to an idea that until that moment had remained unclear. Yet however exciting this encounter may be, things change when the time approaches to present the same volume or volumes to a classroom full of students. “What does it take to bring a book back to life?” asks Assistant Professor of English Bradin Cormack, who regularly teaches at the University of Chicago Library’s Special Collection Research Center. If the item is small and the class large, how can one ensure that everyone can see? If the volume is thick, which sections get covered? And ultimately, if students feel that they are facing a precious object, they can feel intimidated, unsure of how to relate to it in a meaningful way. >>>

The Marie Louise
Rosenthal Seminar
Room, Special
Collections.



UNLESS STUDENTS learn how to engage with an old book or manuscript on their own, they will not feel the exhilaration that can come from peering through one of these portals to the past. They need to know how to bring the book to life.

Students can be taught this kind of responsiveness. At the Special Collections Research Center, graduate students become expert in reading for detail, and in sifting new discoveries from archived texts. Lucky undergraduates are open to connecting with a historical object in a way that helps them learn, and they too catch the spirit of new discovery in old materials. Within the classroom, all gain valuable exposure to the discipline of research, as carried out by the advanced scholars around them at the University.

This year, after extensive renovation of a classroom space, Special Collections has acquired state-of-the-art viewing technology that will dramatically assist both preservation efforts and the Center's primary goal of making its holdings more accessible for classroom use. With a new ultra-powerful, high-definition camera, in-classroom internet technology, and two 50" plasma television screens, and a project to digitize a collection of manuscripts, students and faculty alike will soon be seeing old materials in ways that no

one ever has before. And when an image of the material is projected onto a screen, the books are protected from some of the extra handling that comes with classroom use.

Process Oriented

The plans for these improvements arose from intensive collaboration by a group of representatives of the interested parties—Special Collections, University faculty, and a staff of experts from NSIT (Networking Services & Information Technologies). The exciting outcome was the opening of the Marie Louise Rosenthal Seminar Room in October of 2003. This project was made possible



by a gift from the D and R Fund, the family charitable foundation of University Trustee James J. Glasser, Louise R. Glasser, and Babette H. Rosenthal (AB'63).

Director of Special Collections Alice Schreyer, and Chad Kainz, Senior Director of Academic Technologies at NSIT, solicited input from faculty and graduate teaching fellows who expressed widely differing ideas about the future of the seminar room (this is Chicago). Several were not enthusiastic about technical upgrades of any sort, concerned that such changes might distract attention from the material itself. The potential of technology to aid research with old and rare materials was so largely unexplored that users did not feel its absence as a loss. ("Don't forget a blackboard" was the recommendation of one participant.)

"Most of these objects are very stable and can survive the rigors of class use fairly well . . . the new technology aids in the preservation of the objects, but that is really a fringe benefit to the primary intent of increased (and innovative) access."

—Jay Satterfield, Head of Reader Services

To Kainz, “the central issue in this project was getting everybody at the table . . . to stop viewing technology as a problem to which they would need to adjust, and learn to ask ‘what do I want to do?’” Like their students encountering rare books, once faculty felt comfortable with the idea of using advanced technology, their imaginations began to flow and the feeling of excitement grew.

Once underway, this group produced some challenging new ideas. “It’s new to IT [Information Technology] to address problems having to do with . . . qualitative outcomes,” said Kainz. The needs of historically computer-friendly fields, such as physics or mathematics, are likely to be quantitative—for example, a computer program that performs advanced scientific computations or creates complex models of certain molecules. The role of technology shifts dramatically when users are “a group of scholars sitting around a large poster or several displays, making subjective judgment calls.” What, Kainz asked, will they want to do with computers? With this line of inquiry as his guide, Kainz designed a state-of-the-art viewing system that is both highly adaptable and user-friendly enough even for those users whose prior equipment had been a magnifying glass.

Access Granted

Chad Kainz’s sense of how technology could improve the experiences of teaching and research at Special Collections has proven to be truly visionary. On entering the Rosenthal Seminar Room, the only readily apparent technology is the two plasma screens and a portable machine that looks like an overhead projector. The room is sleek in design, with artful lighting, dark wood and clean lines. In no way does it appear crammed with technology. (And yes, there is a blackboard.)

When out of use, the equipment is, in fact, so unobtrusive you might be tempted to under-

estimate its significance. The room’s most powerful instrument is a high-definition video camera suspended from the ceiling in front, high above one of the plasma screens. When not in use, it is hidden from view behind a section of the ceiling.

Touch the screen and place a book underneath the camera. The page appears magnified on one of the screens, in startling clarity; there, it can be frozen or zoomed in on. Whenever you choose, you can turn the page. The “projector” is actually a portable, medium-resolution document camera that can be used anywhere in the room and stores up to nine images for comparison.

The new means of access scores a subtle change with a dramatic difference. “The pre-existing technology was a slide,” explained head of Reader Services Jay Satterfield at a January open house event. “But [with slides] you can’t zoom; you are wedded to the examples you’ve chosen. Now, if a student says ‘there’s a similar [image] on page three,’ you can just turn the page.” He demonstrated numerous other features, such as the portable camera’s ability to store up to nine



frames, for flipping among or showing together on the same screen. And for all of this, Satterfield pointed out with a smile, the computer component hadn’t even arrived yet. Now that it is installed, the internet is available in the classroom, too, already hooked up so that access takes no more than a moment of forethought.

The new media equipment will improve other

“The pre-existing technology was a slide, but [with slides] you can’t zoom; you are wedded to the examples you’ve chosen. Now, if a student says ‘there’s a similar [image] on page three,’ you can just turn the page.” –Satterfield

elements of classroom activity, too. Student presentations in Special Collections will be greatly simplified because students can point to exactly what they are referring to on the plasma screen. Discussions of handwriting and typography can be pursued in great detail. By the time the students handle the text directly, they will be much



Professor Margaret M. Mitchell shows off *Archaic Mark* on Special Collections’ 50-inch plasma screens



better prepared for the encounter, and their experiences will be dramatically improved.

Out of Hiding

Special Collections wants as many students and faculty as possible to take advantage of the rare materials housed there. Although preservation is a high priority, and extensive use puts wear and tear on the materials, books and manuscripts must be used if they are to remain of value to the

community. An unread book contributes nothing. As Satterfield observes, "Most of these objects are very stable and can survive the rigors of class use fairly well . . . the new technology aids in the preservation of the objects, but that is really a fringe benefit to the primary intent of increased (and innovative) access."

Even so, the care with which very old paper and bindings must be handled can distract even the most motivated student, who may be accustomed to reading from photocopies, Hi-liter pen in hand. Helping students, particularly undergraduates, become comfortable with delicate material is seen by the Center as a major step needed to encourage greater use of their resources.

Efforts to increase use of Special Collections by students have been a mainstay of a ten-year long outreach effort that has marked Alice Schreyer's directorship. This success has been evident in the rising number of visitors that Special Collections has seen over the past several years. In 1998, visits to the Special Collections Research Center numbered around 2,500. Since then, the number of users has skyrocketed, and this year is projected to surpass 4,500. In Winter Quarter 2004, before its reputation as a facility could even become established, the Rosenthal Seminar

Room was booked for at least one class every single day. There is little doubt that when the nature of the new technology becomes more widely known, usage will continue to soar.

Privileged Classes

The Seminar Room was opened to almost overnight enthusiasm among faculty and students alike. Says Margaret M. Mitchell (AM'82, PhD'89), Associate Professor in the Divinity School and Chair of the Department of New Testament & Early Christian Literature, "This changes everything." Mitchell has been working independently with a team from NSIT (including Chad Kainz) to digitize the library's Goodspeed Bible collection, and consequently her teaching has branched into questions of technology and

Left: Honoré de Balzac. *Le Secret des Ruggieri*. Below: Robert Redfield. "Peregrinos." Field notes, Tepoztlán, Morelos, Mexico.



"This changes everything." — Margaret M. Mitchell

WHAT'S NEW

Kanji

a l i v e

A New Computer Learning Tool Enhances Japanese Language Instruction

A new computer program designed by a team led by Harumi Lory, Senior Lecturer in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, is changing the way that beginning and intermediate Japanese is taught at Chicago. The program, called "Kanji alive," is available on-line free of charge to the public, and customized versions will be developed for other learning institutions. Last year, the "Kanji alive" team was awarded the Humanities Division's George Walsh Award for computer projects that benefit teaching in the humanities.

A central challenge for English-speaking students of Japanese is, not surprisingly, the character-based system of Japanese writing. Japanese characters come in three types. Two of these types of characters are used phonetically, in a way similar to that of letters in the Roman alphabet. The third, kanji, are imported Chinese

characters whose uses vary depending upon when in history they appeared.

Chinese characters, along with Chinese culture, came to Japan in the fourth or fifth century, at a time when the Japanese language had as yet no writing system. The Chinese characters were first adopted to represent in writing the sounds of the Japanese spoken language, regardless of the character's Chinese definition. Later, this approach was reversed: Chinese characters were used ideographically, regardless of their Chinese pronunciations, to represent Japanese words of the same or related meaning. Imaginably, the resulting body of characters is extremely complex, and learning them requires more guidance than handouts and homework can provide.

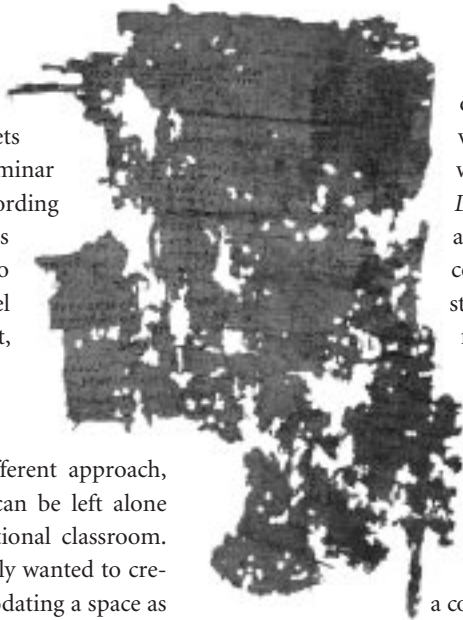
In the face of such difficult fundamental material,

interpretation. This spring, she is teaching a class that meets regularly in the Rosenthal Seminar Room. Called "The Gospel According to Mark," the class confronts questions about what it means to digitize and interpret the gospel as students, as Mitchell puts it, "interface between the digital representation [on screen] and the actual manuscripts."

For those who prefer a different approach, however, the new equipment can be left alone and the room used as a traditional classroom. According to Schreyer, "We really wanted to create as gracious and as accommodating a space as possible for using rare books and manuscripts."

Rebecca Zorach (AM'94, PhD'99), Assistant Professor of Art History, has been using the new equipment in a graduate seminar to look at two of the earliest known editions of Albrecht Dürer's treatises "On Painting" and "On Human Proportions." According to Zorach, whose field of Art History has traditionally relied on the use of slides more heavily than others, the new technology provides an opportunity for art historians to teach and learn "with objects that before we hadn't been able to easily go over [to the library] and use." Now that Special Collections has a teaching space that is compatible with their teaching format, art history instructors will be better able to integrate objects from Special Collections into their curricula.

Many of the items in Special Collections are



of particular research value as objects. If one wants to read *Moby Dick*, for example, there are recently published copies available in the stacks. Flip through the first edition, published in London as *The Whale*, in Special Collections, however, and you can find an inscription from Melville and the penciled notations of a contemporary reader who was personally acquainted with some of the non-fictional characters.

"Until recently," says Bradin Cormack, "we've been trained to think about text as a meaning rather than as an artifact." But working with Special Collections, scholars can begin to approach new kinds of questions. "Given that books are the way that we transmit knowledge," he adds, "What is the relationship between the layout of a page and conviction [of the reader]? . . . Or how did a printer make poetry look like knowledge, rather than something else?" As students grow comfortable with the sometimes centuries old original volumes held in the Center, they are able, in Cormack's words, "to re-embed the text into its social, material context" by handling it, and having the opportunity to adopt the perspective of the original readers.

Left: Homer. *Iliad*, Book Nine. Papyrus fragment, 2nd century, C.E.

On to the Future

"We try to anticipate the faculty by two years," claims Kainz, and with the Rosenthal Seminar Room only just up and running, his team is already working on ways to upgrade it. In the not too distant future, he says, other institutions will be equipped with similar technology, opening up still more fields of opportunity, such as live teleconferences between rare book facilities in which objects are compared in real time. If the University of Chicago owns one piece of a manuscript, for example, and the rest is at the British Library, it will be possible to reunite the pieces live, in high definition, and to discuss them together with the British Library's resident expert in the field. What is more, this could be done during class.

The implications of digital technology promise to push against the frontiers of technological innovation and humanistic inquiry alike, changing not only the images before us but how we engage them as well. What does it mean for something to be interpreted digitally? How will students learn differently? How will this kind of access change their inquiries into the manuscript? Is this enormous image "real?" According to Kainz, "Today's technology is opening up a whole new set of opportunities for humanistic scholars. I like to say it's the sleeping giant."

It appears that the giant is finally beginning to stir here at the University. □

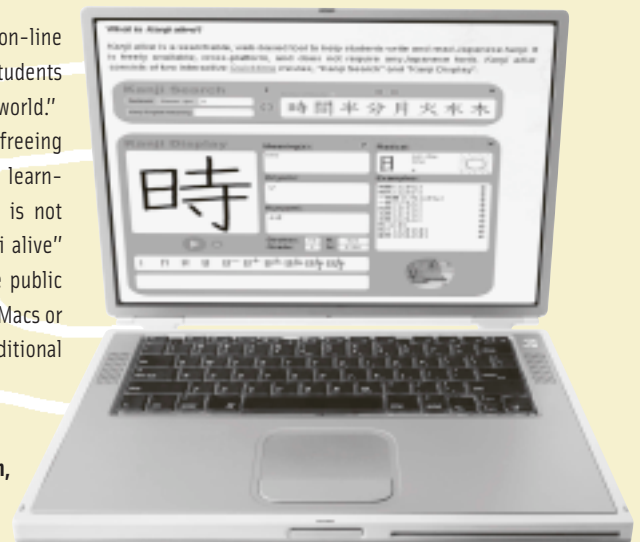
the learning style of an individual student can deeply impact his or her success. For example, some students can learn to make the characters with ease but need help learning to use them to spell words properly. Others need more time to practice their writing skills. Still others may struggle with pronunciation and memorization. "Kanji alive" allows students to customize at-home exercises to meet their learning needs.

Technologically, "Kanji alive" is uncomplicated. In one web page, users can watch a kanji being drawn stroke by stroke by a Japanese writer, hear it spoken, and see it spelled phonetically using other characters ("Kanji alive" is not a Japanese-English dictionary.) Users can see how a particular kanji is used in words and even watch an animated etymology of its radical. Image, sound, theory, history, and references to other learning

resources for over 620 kanji are provided by an on-line program that, Lory points out, "is available to students twenty-four hours a day from anywhere in the world."

This new resource goes a long way toward freeing up class time for more "communication-based learning," such as practicing conversation, that it is not possible outside of a group format. The "Kanji alive" team aims to have 1200 kanji available to the public by March of 2005. "Kanji alive" can be used on Macs or PCs and does not require the installation of additional Japanese fonts.

For more information, or if you wish to view the University of Chicago's version of this program, visit <http://kanjialive.lib.uchicago.edu>.





HOWARD SANDROFF — DIRECTOR OF THE COMPUTER MUSIC STUDIO

an interview with composer howard sandroff

MAKING MUSIC ON CAMPUS

Tableau readers know a scholar's work is lonely: a profession adopted by only an independent few willing to devote countless solitary hours to research and writing, often on topics that interest only a handful of others in the same field. Philosophers, linguists, literary specialists, and many others operate with a kind of internal engine, a passion for knowledge that keeps them toiling into the night (or early morning). Such a life is chosen by those for whom new discovery and understanding are their own true rewards.

At Chicago, the vast majority of our faculty members are "scholars" in this traditional sense. But visual artists, filmmakers, musicians, and writers also form a small community of artists-in-residence on campus, many enjoying significant public recognition in the world beyond. These individuals are talented, inspired, and committed. Like that of their research-oriented colleagues, their work is solitary and fueled by passion.

Perhaps more than anyone else, composers exemplify the solitary artist. Unless they're scoring Hollywood movies, contemporary composers receive sparse recognition from the mainstream cultural establishments, and still less from the consuming public.

Howard Sandroff is one of the Music Department's three composers. His specialty is electronically generated sound, which is usually created today using computer software. Called Chicago's "joyful iconoclast" by the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Sandroff often combines electronic sounds with traditional instruments, most recently clarinet and flute. In his music, computers generate sounds—or, more frequently, manipulate those of live, conventional instruments—to create arrangements of striking originality, even allowing a soloist to "accompany" him or herself.

Sandroff is the director of the Music Department's Computer Music Studio, which he designed and built in 1981 and has led ever since. The Computer Music Studio today provides faculty and graduate and undergraduate students with the production and

Although they are rarely performed on campus, Howard Sandroff's compositions are frequently performed in the Chicago area.

The Chicago Pro Musica (a chamber ensemble of Chicago Symphony Orchestra musicians) dedicated an entire concert in the CSO Chamber Series to Sandroff's compositions in honor of his 50th birthday. This past September, a performance in Singapore was one of many performances worldwide. To hear the next performance of a Sandroff composition you will have to travel to the farmlands of Ohio, where flutist Leonard Garrison will perform *Chant de femmes* (1996) in Bowling Green.

continued >

research equipment they need to create and explore the computer as a tool for composing and performing.

Occupying a classroom-sized space in Goodspeed Hall, the Computer Music Studio appears to an outsider as a confusing jumble of wires, computers, and electronic instruments. To students, however, this is a treasure trove of equipment for hardware and software synthesis, digital audio recording and editing, signal processing, score development, and signal analysis.

Sandroff teaches introductory, intermediate, and advanced classes, which cover an array of topics that include computer programming, the Musical Instrument Digital Interface (M.I.D.I.), the taxonomy and acoustics of musical instruments, synthesis theory, and the computer as a tool for composers and performers.

Sophia Carroll sat down with Sandroff in February to talk about artists on campus, the use of computers in music, his experience teaching, and his artistic career.

How is the experience of an artist different from those of other scholars here at the University of Chicago?

In many regards, artists' and scholars' relationships to the institution are very similar. We do our own work, teach, advise and mentor students, participate in governance, and carry the University of Chicago banner forward through our work.

There is one regard in which artists are different. Most scholarly work is created

Many of your compositions include computer-generated sound, or use computers to manipulate the sounds produced by musical instruments.

Do you find that people are put off by the fact that you're using machines rather than musical instruments to make music?

What is a piano, if not a very complex mechanical device, or machine, for producing sound? What's a violin or clarinet if not a machine that makes use of mechanical and acoustic principles to produce sound? What do you call a computer, being manipulated by a musician to make music?

(Thoughtful pause) The other evening I was watching some TV variety show. A band—complete with guitars, bass, keyboards, singer—was performing live. Among the usual players was a DJ [disc-jockey] who was manipulating, playing, his turntable and mixer. The DJ was creating a very easily identifiable rhythmic element, which blended very well with the rest of the group. Seems to me that he was a musician and the turntable and mixer his instrument.

I think this has been an ongoing dilemma for electronic/computer music—the confusion and controversy about what constitutes a musical instrument and, by expansion, a musician and finally, our definition of what is music.

What sort of working environment is the Computer Music Studio for students?

I would say that our students have a very functional and comfortable working environment. Since we keep the number of students small, each student gets plenty of time in the studio. They get plenty of encouragement and, when appropriate, criticism from me.

Why should students who aren't going to become professional musicians or composers learn to compose electronic music?

I believe that the most meaningful and profound thing we do as human beings is make art. You don't have to do it for a living to be enriched by the experience.

I would like to see *everyone* making art so that they, too, will know what it feels like to do this out of passion, what it feels like to make music, to experience a piece of yourself exploding from the inside out, as a part of you.

How important is it to be skilled, then?

Well, my basic notion is that musicality exists primarily in the mind, and the ability to manipulate [a given musical instrument] is optional. . . . Ultimately, nobody teaches you to be creative. So I try to help my students create a toolbox full of individual techniques that they can use to forge their uniqueness. Teachers are only effective when they've made themselves obsolete. That's especially true of making art.

When you look back on your career, in which works do you find the greatest joy?

I think any time one looks back on one's output to celebrate its existence, and not to mourn its nonexistence, it's being a little *too* narcissistic. The trouble with narcissism is that it's necessary in a small amount, to continue in the face of mass disinterest. After all, you have to believe in what you do.

Sandroff asks the final question of himself—

So, your next question is, why do you do it? Well, you do it because you love it, you

"I believe that the most meaningful and profound thing we do as human beings is make art."

and consumed within academe. For the most part, a scholar's audience is other scholars. Artists, however, have to keep one foot in the wider artistic community, which includes the public and all the agencies, organizations, and individuals who sponsor, produce, perform, license, publish, and exhibit the artist's output. For example, as a composer I have to cultivate musicians and performers. Otherwise my works would have no vehicle for exhibition. If I were a painter I would need a gallery, a playwright, a theater company, etc.

Do you have graduate as well as undergraduate students studying computer music?

Yes. There are undergraduate students from just about every discipline on campus. Graduate students are mostly composition majors. Some incorporate computer music into their final composition while others concentrate on some theoretical aspects of computer music for their minor field.

believe it's meaningful, and you are compelled to. There is one piece I wrote some time ago, which I've always believed was a masterwork—there's that narcissism. It's too embarrassing, so I won't tell you the title. No electronics or computer, just a solo, conventional instrument. When I'm feeling down about things—myself, my career, my artistic output—I just switch on this piece and as I listen, I say to myself, "Well at least you did that, man!" And I feel better. □

feminist leaders plan for the

future



ON CAMPUS

ON FEBRUARY 28, 2004, THE CENTER FOR GENDER STUDIES held a day-long conference, "Back to the Future: Generations in Feminism." Ten renowned feminists, some from the heyday of second wave activism and others for whom those days are history rather than memory, put forth their visions of the future of feminism and debated its relationship to the past. If there was ever any question of whether feminism remains relevant to generations of feminists, the age-diverse audience of over 500 people answered with a resounding "yes."

The conference was held in the Max Palevsky Cinema and offered three panels and a final roundtable discussion, during which the speakers addressed the audience for twenty minutes and took questions from the audience. On the first panel, **Aihwa Ong**, professor of anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley, reflected on the need for feminists to tailor their interventions to the specific needs of women—in particular, migrant workers in the U.S. and factory workers in the industrializing world—who do not necessarily aspire to the autonomy that liberal societies embrace. She was followed by **Judith Halberstam**, professor of English at the University of California at San Diego, who gave an insightful and humorous reading of *Finding Nemo* to ground her call for a non-oedipal model of generational transmission. Literary critic from the City University of New York

Graduate Center **Nancy K. Miller** extended Halberstam's reflections on memory and history, concluding that the model of cloning in stem-cell research, used to heal rather than replicate human beings, might be a way to think outside the fraught mother/daughter paradigm. Finally, **Kate Millett**, author of the groundbreaking *Sexual Politics*, returned the panel to questions of global feminism and anti-interventionist politics by drawing on the example of women in Afghanistan and American feminism's less than committed activism on their behalf.

The second panel was devoted to media studies. **Sabrina Craig**, program director of the Women in the Director's Chair International Film and Video Festival, reflected on the history of feminist film festivals. Based on a discussion of the WIDC festival's difficulties in the wake of 9/11, Craig asked the audience to imagine future forums for feminists to gather and talk to each other. One of the best-known feminist critics of television, Professor **Lynn Spigel** of Northwestern University, discussed generations of feminist criticism of the media, noting that the media critic has been a staple of feminist imagination from Betty Friedan to Carrie Bradshaw of "Sex and the City." Finally, **Michele Faith Wallace** shared family photographs of three generations of feminists in her family, from her grandmother, a fashion designer, to her mother, the highly esteemed artist Faith Ringgold, to herself, the author of a classic work of black feminism from the 1970s, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*.

The last panel brought together **Sharon P. Holland**, a professor of English and African American Studies from UIC, **Gayatri Spivak**, one of postcolonial studies' most admired theorists and author of the now canonical essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and **Dorothy Allison**, the award-winning author of *Bastard Out of Carolina* and an influential activist. Holland gave a lively talk that argued for a historically specific idea of consent, long a central feminist concern. Spivak reflected informally not only on the ethical perils of Western intervention in so-called third world debates over gender roles, but also revealed the autobiographical context of her famous essay: the death of her great-aunt. Finally, Allison led something of a revival meeting, asking the audience to remember the novels and poetry that had made them feminists and to recommit themselves to the questions of justice that had originally motivated them to dissent. The final roundtable took questions from the audience and then gave each speaker a chance to answer those questions they found most relevant to their own work.

While an exciting and revitalizing day for participants, the conference may have raised more questions than it answered. As feminists, it suggested that we balance our desire for continuity with the need for innovation. One thing the conference clearly showed is that there is a need for and interest in this reflective soul-searching and discussion of possible futures. In that spirit, the Center for Gender Studies announced several avenues for continuing the process: archival projects including a history of women at the University of Chicago, growing from the ongoing collection of oral histories from alumnae (<http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/cgs/historyofwomen.htm>). Further conferences will build around the theme of "generations," including one next spring on medical and biological breakthroughs that are changing the experience of aging and the life course, including the pill, Prozac, synthetic hormones, and Viagra. □

By Deborah Nelson, Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature and the College, and Allyson Wendt, Ph.D. student in the Department of English Language and Literature

SALAO

A NATIVE OF CUBA who came to the Midwest as a small child, Achy Obejas has spent her adult life in Chicago, writing for the *Tribune*, *Sun-Times*, and other newspapers while also publishing novels and short stories. In 2003, Obejas was appointed Springer Lecturer in Creative Writing in the Department of English and the College. Her smooth, rich prose conveys long and intimate connections with multiple communities and cultures, along with the subtle understanding of human nature that such connections bring. She is recognized as one of Chicago's most insightful and passionate storytellers. Her books include *Days of Awe* (2002) and *Memory Mambo* (1996).

THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT comes from Obejas's forthcoming novel entitled *Salao*. The main character, *Usnavy*, is a loyal Cuban supporter of the Castro regime who, despite a life of economic hardship, refuses to join his friends and family in resentment. One night, he is at home asleep with his wife Lidia and daughter outside of Havana when his old friend Obdulio pounds at his door, offering his family a chance to escape by raft to America. *Usnavy* refuses, but agrees to give his friend's family rope and baby formula for their journey. Together, they ride for Cojímar, the port from which the rafts will depart.

Because there was no transportation in the middle of the night—the bus that ferried bikes to the city stopped sometime after dusk—and because non-motorized vehicles were strictly prohibited through the Havana Tunnel, they'd had to go around the bay, adding even more time to their journey. *Usnavy* wore a lock and chain around his waist to tie up his bike but Obdulio had clipped to his bike a nifty, lightweight U-shaped lock, solid steel and made in the U.S., guaranteed theft-proof. (No doubt a gift from his exiled brother, *Usnavy* figured.) >>>



They entered the cozy fishing village just as a silent parade of young men and women made a line to the shore. Carrying inner tubes and wooden planks, in the moonlight they looked like rows of giant ants hauling Lifesavers and toothpicks. Watching it all from the protected confines of elegant Las Terrazas—one of Ernest Hemingway's old haunts—were foreign tourists, their giggling like bubbles in the air, and journalists too, TV camera lights flooding the landscape. (Also somewhere in the restaurant: Gregorio Fuentes, Hemingway's old boat captain and now something of a grinning mummy, propped up for the tourists' delight.)

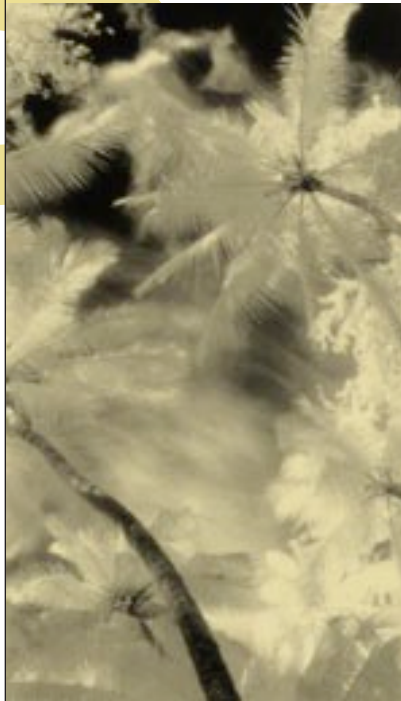
Near the rocky shore—Cojímar is all dog's teeth, a snarling bank of coral and junk—groups of people hammered away at their rafts, tying ropes around pieces of rubber, metal kegs and plastic jugs for buoyancy. There were no surfboards anywhere, no windsurfers pretending science or recreation. This was all out in the open.

A distinctly different group stood apart from the builders, waiting, not so much for the rafts to be built but for other, northern sailors. These folks, dressed as if for holiday travel—some carrying suitcases, others plastic bags or bundles wrapped in newspapers, others nothing at all—gazed at the black waters, watching for the flicker of faraway flares, ready at a moment's notice to leave behind even those very satchels that now seemed so precious, and leap onto whatever gleaming white yacht or slick flat sailboat kissed the shore. Although some had flashlights, and others had hurricane lamps lit by who knows what for fuel, everyone was featureless except for their eyes: large white orbs, slightly startled by the sudden bursts of light.

On this night, the town sloped down to the sea but Usnavy dreamed of plateaus and rugged mountain ranges instead. In his mind, this could be Katanga or Shaba, an impenetrable forest full of wild geese and ostriches, buffalo and lions. He envisioned not rafters but fields of coffee, and cotton; rubber trees, coconut and plantain; timber from cedar, mahogany, iroko and redwood. The staring eyes were peacocks and pelicans, herons and other wild birds.

While the work continued on the beach, no one said a word except the local fishermen, who held tightly to their rolls of lines and gaffs, nets and tattered masts. Their own boats securely put away or anchored under guard, they sat vigilantly on the seawall, their arms across their chests, sucking on cigars and cigarettes, and passing judgment on the work before them. One guy tapped a long hardwood stick on the ground, another held a machete against his hip in a not so subtle warning

That he loved Obdulio and his family was not the matter; that he loved them so much that he put them above everyone else—that was the black smear on his soul now. How—he was asking himself, his hands deep in his empty pockets—how could he ever question anyone else?



He would never—not with a clear conscience, not without first confessing his own transgression—be able to ask that the others be mindful and disciplined, that they be selfless in their duties. He could see his co-workers shrinking from him, ashamed, shattered.

to potential thieves. Not far from them, a few boys rolled dice against the seawall, occasionally shouting with victory.

“That won't go, no,” said an old man in a red cap, pointing to a particularly chancy looking home-made dinghy. The others nodded agreement.

“That's unbalanced too—look at that,” a second fisherman said as he singled out another one. “They'll roll right into the water in that, you watch.”

“¿Qué va?” said yet another fellow, shaking his head in dismay at a throng of young men and women who were now lifting what looked like a white wooden kayak. They carried it to the water, where it swayed on the surface. As soon as one of the young men stepped into it, his weight took it down as if it were made of paper. A collective moan went up from the group, which quickly scrambled to recover what it could from the ocean and start again. The fishermen laughed and laughed.

Some of the rafts, of course, did float. Some precariously, others effortlessly. Usnavy could hear the dip and push of their efforts, even as the moon sank from sight.

In a clearing, Usnavy finally saw the boat being crafted by Obdulio's family, which was dependent on four large industrial inner tubes—as usual, Usnavy didn't want to know where they'd gotten them—which Obdulio's nephews secured even tighter with the long length of rope Usnavy had procured for them. Like the others, Obdulio's nephews didn't speak, only nodded their appreciation. Obdulio's daughter thanked him for the powdered milk with a quick and embarrassed peck on the cheek. The baby was fast asleep on her shoulder.

Usnavy moved quickly away from them. He did not want to look at the rope, he did not want to consider the powdered milk. Before he'd gathered them up, the rope had belonged to the workers of Cuba, the milk had been for the island's children. (He really believed this; his heart twisted in anguish because he so believed this.)

That he loved Obdulio and his family was not the matter; that he loved them so much that he put them above everyone else—that was the black smear on his soul now. How—he was asking himself, his hands deep in his empty pockets—how could he ever question anyone else? How could he ever seek out the answers to other missing items at the bodega—rice and soap and cooking oil that was sometimes reduced by half from arrival to dispensing? What about the blankets that someone would no doubt steal for Rosita? He would never—not with a clear conscience, not without first confessing his own transgression—be able to ask that the others be mindful and disciplined, that they be selfless in their duties. He could see his co-

workers shrinking from him, ashamed, shattered.

Or worse: What if they suddenly included him in their schemes? What if his crime automatically implicated him in every other petty theft at the bodega? What if, once discovered, he was expected to cover for everyone else so that they'd cover for him? Usnavy shuddered.

He thought of Lidia for a moment, confused about what her expression would be. His stomach flipped, made him a little seasick. He stepped back from the water.

"In Miami," said Obdulio, now beside him and gazing out at the gloom before them, "maybe I'll finally learn to drive a car."

"You could learn to drive here," Usnavy said, thinking how it had never really been essential. Until recently, buses had been plentiful, distances all seemed attainable. At the end of her cab route, Lidia—herself a bus driver's daughter—had always come home energized, ready for more. (She would have been a bus driver herself, if only she'd had the opportunity.)

Usnavy himself had learned to drive long ago, back in Oriente, when he was only 15. It was a strange feeling, all that power in his hands, and none of it ever truly his: Each time he drove, it was with a burly American who'd sit next to him, or who'd frolic with a local in the back seat while he toured the back roads aimlessly.

"Nobody's stopping you," Usnavy finally said.

Obdulio sighed. "Yeah, but what for? And in whose car? I'll never get to own a car here. Neither will you, my militant friend."

"You think you'll get a car there? Do you have any idea how much a car costs?" Usnavy asked.

"No, but my brother . . . he has a car and, god willing, I'll get to drive it."

"Seems like a stupid reason to leave . . ."

"C'mon, Usnavy . . . don't you have any aspirations? Don't you want a place to live that's made for humans instead of laboratory mice? Don't you want your daughter to have her own room? Don't you want a little privacy with your wife?"

"This is my dream," Usnavy said, annoyed.

He stepped away again, this time to watch as another group labored over planks and tubes but Obdulio moved right along with him. Usnavy wanted to say something—anything—so they wouldn't go. He wondered how many would disappear like his own father, gone without a trace into the blue. What would happen if everybody did like them—what if nobody stayed? But his tongue was stuck, buried at the bottom of his sticky mouth like a sunken caravel anchored by barnacles.

Obdulio persisted. "C'mon . . . when you look at that crazy lamp of yours—do you realize it's the

only thing you have of value, my friend? Don't you see anything in all that light and color? In that jungle? Don't you see any hope at all?"

Usnavy took a deep breath. "Obdulio, I am here because you are my friend," he said. "Now I will ask you to be a friend to me and stop this crap. I'm not leaving, now or ever."

Obdulio shrugged. "Fine," he said as his nephews began to drag their raft to the water. It eased in with squeaks and whines, bouncing on the soft waves with the weight of each new person. Usnavy took off his shoes and socks and stepped into the sea to help, the smell of saline almost overwhelming him. He held onto the raft and steadied it as they loaded up, all the while feeling the sharp rocks under his feet and ticklish weeds wrapping themselves around his ankles. The local fishermen looked on, nodding approval at the fine work. Finally, it was Obdulio's turn to board.

"Look, your wife and daughter . . . Usnavy, you need to get over your saintly devotion, your ridiculously selfish virtues," Obdulio said, one foot on the gravely sand, the other on the shaky vessel. "If you're going to stay, for god's sake, at least do something for them . . . get some dollars. If you sell that lamp—it's a monstrosity—it must be worth at least a few hundred—maybe even a thousand dollars!—think of what you can do, you can start your own little business on the side, you can buy things Nena and Lidia only dream about."

Obdulio's daughter took his hand to help him sit, and with a bereft Usnavy waist deep in the water, the raft pushed off.

"Good luck," Usnavy said, waving weakly.

"Good luck to you, my friend," Obdulio shot back.

The raft glided away, pulled north by the currents. Initially, its shadow clung to the shore, black figures thinning, then turning into gold strings reaching back to the island. As he watched, Usnavy discerned the arch of flying fish in the distance, like pebbles skipping across the surface. He felt something collapse in his chest. This was it, he realized with a start, this was the last time he'd ever see his lifelong friend.

In a moment, Obdulio's raft had vanished into the bright halo of dawn. □

FACULTY FOCUS

POEMS BY SRIKANTH REDDY

Srikanth Reddy is the William Vaughn Moody Lecturer in Creative Writing in the Department of English and the College.

Corruption

I am about to recite a psalm that I know. Before I begin, my expectation extends over the entire psalm. Once I have begun, the words I have said remove themselves from expectation & are now held in memory while those yet to be said remain in expectation. The present is a word for only those words which I am now saying. As I speak, the present moves across the length of the psalm, which I mark for you with my finger in the psalm book. The psalm is written in India ink, the oldest ink known to mankind. Every ink is made up of a color & a vehicle. With India ink, the color is carbon & the vehicle, water. Life on our planet is also composed of carbon & water. In the history of ink, which is rapidly coming to an end, the ancient world turns from the use of India ink to adopt sepia. Sepia is made from the octopus, the squid & the cuttlefish. One curious property of the cuttlefish is that, once dead, its body begins to glow. This mild phosphorescence reaches its greatest intensity a few days after death, then ebbs away as the body decays. Let us read by this light.

Loose Strife with Apiary

Watched a man watch a man. One man made smoke out of nothing by scraping two stones. Another kept time using nothing but stones. One man made love, another made pain with a stone in each hand. Somebody take out these stitches, I'm ready to open my eyes. So this is the new world. Just like the old, only brighter. Word is the governor's wife scattered loosesrife in the barnyard thinking it chicken feed & the wetlands turned purple overnight. We make ready vectors for smallpox & language. Books on magnetic tape, books on bookkeeping, on being, on coping & beekeeping—I could have told you, all it takes is virgin meadow & nerve. Come let me show you the recycled cosmos inside my apiary. A veil on a peg. Queen deep in the sweetness.

Reddy's two prose poems originally appeared in *VERSE* volume 19, numbers 1/2.

[Nuveen Visiting Filmmaker: Errol Morris]

fog at doc

What does one see in a documentary film? The question brings to mind old newsreel footage, spliced together to triumphal music, or perhaps the staccato voices of long dead reporters. Maybe one imagines the talking heads of retirees, as they reminisce from comfortable chairs about their youthful affiliations with radical activist groups or rock bands. Often, viewers are inclined to grant these films a measure of credibility, which would be withheld from his or her storytelling colleagues. What else could anyone document, besides some form of the truth?

ERROL MORRIS, director of the Academy Award-winning documentary *Fog of War* (2003), has several ideas about what else. On December 3, as a Nuveen Visiting Filmmaker, Morris discussed how this question of cinematic truth has driven his groundbreaking—indeed, shattering—contributions to the genre.

Morris's documentary films "run counter to the traditional clichés about the genre at almost all levels of cinematic expression," said Professor of English and Cinema Studies Miriam Hansen, in introducing his lecture. "With their stunning visuals, experimental sound/image relations, their rich use of music . . . , their mixing of reenactment and document, their unorthodox editing, his films have called into question the very distinction between fiction and nonfiction film."

Much of Morris's talk focused on dissolving this distinction. "It puzzles me," he claimed, "that anyone would confuse truth with film. Truth is something you pursue and never arrive at. . . . The whole idea that you can read truth off a piece of celluloid in and of itself is a very dangerous notion."



Morris's lecture, drawing an audience of 200 in the Max Palevsky Cinema, was the first of two components to his day-long stay as the Nuveen Visiting Filmmaker. A seminar for graduate-level Cinema and Media Studies students took place the following morning.

The possibility of using Nuveen gifts to the Humanities Division to fund a series of prominent filmmakers' visits was raised by Lorna Ferguson, Vice-President of Nuveen Investments. Faculty in Cinema and Media Studies readily picked up on the suggestion. Several more filmmakers of all genres will be brought to campus to deliver public lectures and interact with advanced film students in a seminar setting.

The series enhances the expanding film and video culture at the University of Chicago, which can also be seen in new courses in documentary filmmaking by the Committees on Cinema and Media Studies and Visual Arts, and the sizeable number of film and video productions by the student-run group "Fire Escape."

"This was a great opportunity for film scholars and student filmmakers to meet with one of the most creative documentary makers of our time," says Ron Gregg, Programming Director of the Film Studies Center and Lecturer in the Committee on Cinema and Media Studies. "I had the impression that Mr. Morris really enjoyed the level of engagement he found here. We thank Nuveen Investments for enabling this to happen."

Morris used clips from the not-yet-released *Fog of War* as well as earlier projects to demonstrate the ways in which it is possible to manipulate "facts" on film. But he injected light touches, explaining "my three-minute rule: that if you just shut up and let people talk, within three minutes they will reveal how crazy they really are."

It is astonishing that the man who has created several great documentary films should feel such ambivalence about the capacity of his chosen medium to evoke—to document—the truth. And yet, to hear him speak, one cannot help suspecting that his passion, and very likely his genius, is located within this ambivalence.

Morris's Nuveen lecture was followed by a sneak preview of *Fog of War*, two weeks prior to its release in New York and Los Angeles. Once the preview had been screened, Mr. Morris lingered onstage late into

"It puzzles me that anyone would confuse truth with film. Truth is something you pursue and never arrive at. . . . The whole idea that you can read truth off a piece of celluloid in and of itself is a very dangerous notion."

—Errol Morris

the night taking questions from an eager audience. This film preview was the third from Sony Classics to occur on campus in the past three years, preceded last year by Pedro Almodovar's *Talk to Her* and Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. □

CHICAGO HUMANITIES FORUM



D O W N T O W N

Downtown Lectures Bring Scholarship to the Public Stage

How can irony change the soul? How do we, as individuals, present our many faces to the world? Recent speakers at the **Chicago Humanities Forum** have addressed these questions at the downtown Gleacher Center this year. This program, now in its fifth year, brings alumni and friends of the University together with University faculty speakers, their colleagues, and students for an early evening of discussion and hors d'oeuvres, overlooking the cityscape and the Chicago River.

"Some might say that a humanities institute like ours is not the best place for carrying out the University's wish to reach a wider public audience," observes **James Chandler**, Director of the Franke Institute for the Humanities, which sponsors the Chicago Humanities Forum. "After all, the Franke Institute is dedicated primarily to research in the Humanities. Such a commitment might seem to inhibit rather than enable the effort to 'go downtown' as series founder **J. Paul Hunter**

used to say. "But that is just the challenge we seek to meet—how to make the stakes of precisely our best thinking and highest levels of research clear to nonacademic seekers after knowledge."

This year's Forum series began in October with an innovative program and two exceptional speakers. **Don Michael Randel**, President of the University and a musicologist, joined **Daniel Barenboim**, Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, in a dialogue about "Music and Transformation: Beethoven, Schoenberg and Beyond." Their discussion illuminated how classical composers—such as Beethoven—had extended traditional musical forms to their limits, so that modern composers have forged new forms that challenge both musicians and their audiences to perform and hear novel meanings in music.

In February, **Wendy Doniger**, professor in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, took a different and amusing approach to her presentation, "The Mythology of Face-Lifts, or, Looking For the Face I Had." After delighting her audience with tales of magical transformation from ancient mythology, she compared these with similar stories found in 20th-century Hollywood movies. The stories' evident parallels illustrated ways in which modern medical technology permits us to bring some of our most universally expressed desires for youth and beauty to fruition. These outcomes, Doniger cautioned, can bring personal and social consequences that we are perhaps not yet ready to confront and acknowledge.

In March, philosopher and psychoanalyst **Jonathan Lear** asked us to consider an alternate conception of irony in a talk entitled "How Can Irony Change the Soul?" Rather than meaning the opposite of what we say, Lear asked whether sometimes speaking in irony also consists of meaning *exactly* what we say—but perhaps with a meaning which the hearer may not fully register without further thought. Drawing from ancient and modern philosophy and the observations of practicing psychoanalysts, Lear showed how this conception of irony illuminates one way in which the human psyche shifts over time.

The Chicago Humanities Forum challenges its guests to encounter, reflect on, and discuss issues in the humanities that engage us in diverse media—fiction, photography, film, music, poetry, or painting—situated in locales around the world during a range of eras. From "supplicating strangers" in ancient Athens to "naming the impossible" in contemporary religious discourse and from "hate speech and the first amendment" to "compassion and the limits of patriotism," the Forum brings University faculty members to audiences at the downtown Gleacher Center for occasions that extend the humanities discourse in public life.

During the academic year, from October through May, alumni and friends gather for these early evening events on selected Wednesdays from 5:15 to 6:00 p.m., with a reception afterwards.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to attend the Forum, please call Mai Vukceвич at 773-702-8274, or send an email message to franke-humanities@uchicago.edu. More information can also be found online at <http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/institute>.

Margot Browning, Associate Director of the Franke Institute for the Humanities, contributed to this article.



the humanities and the
problem of **partisanship**


 BY KENNETH WARREN

Kenneth Warren is the William J. Friedman & Alicia Townsend Friedman Professor of English, also serving on the Committees on African & African-American Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities, and the History of Culture, and in the College.

On October 25, 2003, he delivered the keynote address for the twenty-fourth annual Humanities Open House, entitled *The Humanities and the Problem of Partisanship*. The following is excerpted from his lecture.

... There is something in humanities thinking that obliges us to attend as much to how we go about reflecting on an issue as we do to what side we take on an issue. There would be, then, a habit of mind that could be described as humanistic as well as habits of mind that would be decidedly nonhumanist. As described by F. C. S. Schiller, "A *humanist* philosopher is sure to be keenly interested in the rich variety of human thought and sentiment, and unwilling to ignore the actual facts for the sake of bolstering up the narrow abstractions of some *a priori* theory of what all men must think and feel. . . . The humanist, accordingly, will tend to grow *humane*, and tolerant of the divergences of attitude which must inevitably spring from the divergent idiosyncrasies of men."

Broad rather than narrow, tolerant rather than bigoted, disinterested rather than interested, the humanist would then seem to be the ideal figure for a plural and diverse society no longer guided unequivocally by the unexamined truths of previous societies and civilizations. (But it should be noted before anyone gets too carried away here, that Schiller, who wrote these words at the dawn of the twentieth century, was also a supporter of eugenics and a founder of the English Eugenics Society—another indication, if one needed one, that espousing humanist views carries with it no guarantees that one will come out on the right side of issues of moral import.)

Nonetheless, the habits of mind associated with humanism do stand out starkly against those habits of mind associated with the other key term of my title, partisanship. The latter, of course, is the habit of mind of the partisan, who is defined as "One who takes part or sides with another; an adherent or supporter of a party, person, or cause; *esp.* a devoted or zealous supporter; often in an unfavorable sense: One who supports his party through thick and thin, a blind, prejudiced, unreasoning, or fanatical adherent."

Partisans, one presumes, would be found in political parties and not in, say, English departments; or to be more precise, it might be the case that while one might be a partisan outside of one's role as an English professor, one would not be a partisan *as* an English professor, at least not in the way that would matter to anyone other than one's fellow English professors. >>>>

the humanities and the problem of partisanship

I'll come back to this momentarily, but first I want to say that while my choice of topic was determined partly by the course that I was teaching this past spring, it was also determined by my not particularly earthshaking observation that many thoughtful people at present feel quite keenly that much of contemporary politics, as well as the reporting on that politics, is quite blatantly partisan, and that this partisanship means that there is very little in the way of thoughtful debate about issues of grave import: going to war, setting budgetary priorities, determining environmental policy. Rather, sides are drawn up according to rather thinly disguised interests and then words and symbols are deployed, not to probe the soundness of the position one has taken up, but rather to make sure that the other side is routed to the extent it is possible to do so. The print and broadcast media routinely spend as much if not more time on the spin that our two major parties are likely to put on an issue than they do in trying to determine which of the competing policies is better designed for something like the public good.

To draw the contrast more straightforwardly, the ideal terrain of the humanities is the mind not yet made up; while the domain of partisanship is that of the mind already made up. Buttressing this contrast with an invidious analogy, we might say that the mind not yet made up is like an unmade bed—messy, but in its messiness still the site of activity, if only the activity of restfulness. By the same token the made bed is a sign that activity has ceased. You can't make up your bed while you're in it—and perhaps you cannot likewise make up your mind while you are in it.

When one looks at the words associated with partisans—zealous or blind; biased, prejudiced, one-sided—it doesn't require that one take too large a leap to say that the partisan may be out of his mind in the sense that a partisan is no longer using his mind for its own purposes but is instead allowing it to be used for some other purpose. The unmade bed is for you; the made bed is for someone other than you.

This analogy would suggest further that the task facing the humanist when confronting the partisan is that of unmaking her mind by putting her back in it, by getting the external cause out of it. Now, it might be argued that I've come to this conclusion more as a result of a commitment to a figure of speech rather than as a description of what we actually do in the humanities. That is, when we think of humanistic learning in terms of getting people to read and reflect on a greater number of ideas and texts, it would seem to be more accurate to describe the process as one of

putting more things and ideas into someone's mind rather than as one of ejecting something that already happens to be there. Transforming the single-minded into the many-minded might seem to be a better way of phrasing what the humanities do.

And I'm inclined to accept the criticism, but perhaps only up to a point. What makes me want to hold on to my original trope is that even if we identify the humanities with the many-minded rather than the single-minded, there remains, at the center of all this process of exposing and bringing in for consideration, *you*, your mind that is, and not some cause using your mind, going about the task of weighing, reflecting, comparing and the like . . .

. . . I keep tiptoeing up to the question of the academy's, or more specifically, the humanist's responsibility in regard to the partisan battles that embroil most of society at the present moment without diving straight in. I do so not because the matter seems particularly murky, but because the answer seems a little too mundane and perhaps simple-minded. The humanist's role in regard to matters of partisan interest can be determined only on a case-by-case basis. Both history and common sense tell us that on some issues one side pretty much gets it right and the other pretty much gets it wrong. There may always be more than

To draw the contrast more straightforwardly, the ideal terrain of the humanities is the mind not yet made up, while the domain of partisanship is that of the mind already made up.

one side to an issue, but this fact does not mean that all sides have equal merit. So that there may be times when the prevailing views within the humanities contrast starkly with the views that prevail within one of the major political parties. But I'm being unnecessarily coy. More directly, what are we to make of the sense that the views of professors in humanities departments generally and English departments specifically seem to be more at odds with the views of the political right rather than those of the left?

I'll say at the outset that while some of the data commonly brought forward to explain this fact—the liberal to left affiliations of many humanities professors—may have some low-level explanatory power, I'm not very persuaded that they tell us much. There has been a spate of articles recently lamenting the loneliness of conservative intellectuals within

literature departments feeling condemned to silence because they feel that open expression of their political views will open them up to contempt and condemnation from their left-wing peers. And I won't gainsay that some number of individuals may indeed feel that way. But what may partly be at work here is that we are at a moment when the policies being pursued by the party in power constitute a direct threat to the conditions that enable the humanities to flourish in our institutions of higher learning, and that part of the discomfort felt by conservative intellectuals stems from the difficulty of reconciling a belief that humanistic thinking ought to prevail more broadly in the life of the citizenry when you have an administration in power whose policies are making it more difficult for more and more individuals to attend college or even to get the kind of primary and secondary education that would enable them to benefit from a college education. . . .

. . . Even as conservative a cultural figure as T. S. Eliot wrote during the interwar years that the "man of letters at the present time should be vigilantly watching the conduct of politicians and economists, for the purpose of criticizing and warning when the decisions of politicians and economists are likely to have cultural consequences." Those of us in the

humanities are at the very least charged with reflecting on and commenting on what for the lack of a better word we can call culture, and it would seem that at the very least we should have something reasonable to say about the likely consequences of certain policies and attitudes on that realm.

And I'll start with some points that I'll take to be axiomatic at the present moment, acknowledging, since I've quoted him, that Eliot would not agree with these axioms. The health and relevance of the humanities depends on their broad diffusion throughout our society, and their diffusion depends on making quality education at all levels, from preschool to college, not only available but affordable. The health of the humanities depends on a society based on free and open inquiry and where the right to dissent is affirmed and protected. □

WHAT
MATTERS
TO ME
& WHY

Has a more impossible question ever been asked? It is impossible, first, because the answer risks being totally uninteresting. What matters to me is quite probably not unusual—things like family, friends, ethical, aesthetic, and political values—good art and literature, the good life, the ideal community—in which case it will not be news to anyone else, and thus will not matter. If the emphasis is on what matters *to me* as a peculiar and specific individual (summer days at the beach building castles in the sand), then why should it matter to anyone else?

These impossible questions are, however, at the very heart of the humanities, which is always about the question of value—what matters—and of explanation, critique, justification—*why* something matters, how to *make* something matter

look for in the debate is some evidence of passion, some sign that it *matters* to one of my co-editors that we accept (or reject) a particular essay, and that the reason is compelling or interesting.

Teaching students and editing a journal are two things that matter to me a great deal. I spend a lot of time on both, and worry constantly about getting them right. But then there is that other area, to which I suppose this question is primarily directed, namely, what matters to me as a scholar? What has awakened my own passion for learning and writing?

descriptions, scenes, etc.) that festoon poems, novels, essays, and drama. As a consequence, I have carved out a career niche as an “iconologist,” a student of icons and images across the media. Although iconology has an ancient pedigree, going back at least as far as the Renaissance, it is not a recognized field in the humanities, and it keeps me from being settled very comfortably in any particular department, discipline, or specialty. Although my professional career began with a Ph.D. in English literature, and my primary appointments have usu-

w.j.t.mitchell



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by writing about it, reframing it in a way that reveals why it matters. Or, most profoundly, asking who is the “me” or “you” or “we” to whom something matters—which is to ask, quite precisely, “who am I?,” “who are you?” I think most professors ask some form of this question whenever a graduate student approaches them with a dissertation topic. Does the topic matter, and why and to whom? If a student cannot answer this question about his or her work and self, that student had better set about looking for the answer immediately. I also ask this question every time I look at a new article submitted to *Critical Inquiry*, the journal I have edited for the last twenty-five years. Does the author make it clear why his or her topic *should* matter to me? This is more than merely being “interesting” (the faintest praise ever uttered). It is a question of conviction and compulsion, a matter of passion. If an essay doesn’t matter to me in this stronger sense, chances are it won’t matter to anyone else, though it is possible to be quite wrong about this. That is why, when my editorial board argues over whether to accept an article for publication, what I

I have always been fascinated by pictures, from the moving images of film and television, to the shadowy realm of dreams and fantasy, to galleries of painting and sculpture and decorated churches, to cartoon strips in the newspapers, to the “fair trains” of literary imagery (metaphors, descriptions, scenes, etc.) that festoon poems, novels, essays, and drama.

The answer in one word is *images*. I have always been fascinated by pictures, from the moving images of film and television, to the shadowy realm of dreams and fantasy, to galleries of painting and sculpture and decorated churches, to cartoon strips in the newspapers, to the “fair trains” of literary imagery (metaphors,

ally been in literature departments, my dissertation was on the poetry, painting, and engraving of William Blake, so from the very first I had a “double discipline” as a scholar of verbal and graphic arts. I am now a member of both the English and Art History departments at the University

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RECENT JOB PLACEMENTS FOR HUMANITIES GRADUATES Looking for other Chicago alumni at your institution or in your area? Curious about where last year's class of humanities graduates got their jobs? Here is a list of recent graduates, with thesis or dissertation titles and job titles, who have accepted full-time employment that exercises their graduate training.

onward and upward

DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY

MARIAN BLEEKE

"Situating Sheela-na-gigs: The Female Body and Social Significance in Romanesque Sculpture." Visiting Assistant Professor, School of Art and Design, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

KAREN CARTER

"L'age de l'affiche: The Reception, Display, and Collection of Posters in fin-de-siècle Paris." Assistant Professor, Department of Communications and Visual Arts, University of North Florida.

BONNIE CHENG

"Facilitating Life out of Death: Sixth-Century Funerary Monuments and the Negotiation of Cultural Traditions." Assistant Professor of Art History, Oberlin College.

DANIEL CONNOLLY

"Imagined Pilgrimage in Gothic Art: Maps, Manuscripts, and Labyrinths." Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Art, Utah State University.

RAYMOND HERNANDEZ-DURAN

"Reframing Viceregal Painting in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Politics, the Academy of San Carlos, and Colonial Art History." Assistant Professor of Art History, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

CECILY HILSDALE

"Diplomacy by Design: Rhetorical Strategies of the Byzantine Gift." Visiting Assistant Professor and Postdoctoral Fellow, History of Art Department, University of Michigan.

DANA KATZ

"Painting with Violence: The Representation of Jews in the Italian Renaissance Courts." Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Washington University at St. Louis.

SONYA LEE

"Nirvana Imagery in Medieval Chinese Art." Assistant Professor, Department of Art History, University of Southern California

DAWN ODELL

"The Soul of Transactions": Illustrated Travels and Representations of China in the Seventeenth Century." Assistant Professor of Art History, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

MATTHEW SHOAF

"Image, Envy, Power: Art and Communal Life in the Age of Giotto." Assistant Professor,

Department of Art and Art History, DePaul University.

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

YIQUN ZHOU

"Kin and Companions: Gender and Sociability in Ancient China and Greece." Assistant Professor, Honors College, Valparaiso University.

COMMITTEE ON CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL STUDIES OF SCIENCE

DANIELA BARBERIS

"The First Année Sociologique and Neo-Kantian Philosophy in France." Whiting Postdoctoral Fellowship, Franke Institute for the Humanities, University of Chicago.

KU-MING (KEVIN) CHANG

"The Matter of Life: Georg Ernst Stahl and the

Reconceptualizations of Matter, Body, and Life in Early Modern Europe." Research Fellow, Institute for History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.

SCOTT ROLSTON

"ALK Among the Arches: Alfred Louis Kroeber's Impact within Americanist Archeology." American Embassy, Bangkok, Thailand.

TRACY TESLOW

"Representing Race to the Public: Physical Anthropology in Interwar American Natural History Museums." Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Cincinnati.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE

JEE HYUN AN

"'There Was A Whole Lot of Grayness Here': Modernity, Geography, and 'Home' in Black Women's Literature,

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of Chicago and serve as an affiliated member of the Cinema Studies program and the Committee on Visual Arts. My teaching invariably converges on the problem of images—of "Space, Place, and Landscape"; of religious objects like totems, fetishes, and idols; or of even more general fields such as "Visual Culture" and "Theories of Media." In all these courses, the question of the image looms as central.

But why do images matter to me, and why should they matter to you? Fortunately, the second question rarely arises. People don't seem to require much persuading that images matter a great deal, that they are (as the saying goes)

"worth a thousand words," that they often overwhelm our powers of discourse, of criticism and explanation. What matters to me is getting to the bottom of this question, figuring out why images seem to matter so much, and even more crucially, why some images seem to matter *too much* to some people. This has taken me very far afield: into religious studies, where the worship (or the prohibition) of images is so central; into politics, where the creation of the right image has become the essential ingredient to success; into the arts, sciences, and media, where images are produced and circulate in global networks; into psychology, where the role of images in mental life—in per-

ception, fantasy, the unconscious—is explored; into semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, where the question of how images signify (by likeness or contagion) is raised; into philosophy, where questions of epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics seem invariably to engage with forms of representation, so fundamentally that Gilles Deleuze remarks upon the way philosophy seems invariably to turn into an iconology; or, finally, into literature, where images abound and where, as John Updike puts it, you know a story is finished when you "get the picture"—or it gets you.

I'm sure my fascination with images has something to do with a Catholic boyhood, and all the

1919–1959.” Instructor, Language Educational Institute, Seoul National University.

MARTHA BOHRER

“Reports from the Field: Natural History and the Rural World in Romantic Literature.” Adjunct Professor of English, North Central College, Naperville, Illinois.

ANDREW HEBARD

“Everyday States: The Institutional Poetics and Literary Territories of American Sovereignty, 1870–1910.” Britain Postdoctoral Fellowship, Department of Literature, Communication, and Culture, Georgia Institute of Technology.

HANA LAYSON

“Injured Innocence: Sexual Injury, Sentimentality, and Citizenship in the Early Republic.” Assistant Professor of English, Northern Illinois University.

JEAN MA

“Time without Measure, Sadness without Cure: Hou Hsiao-hsien’s Films of History.” Assistant Professor, Department of Film and Electronic Arts, Bard College.

RICHARD PETTENGILL

“Mediatization and Reception in Peter Sellars’ ‘The Merchant of Venice.’” Assistant Professor of English, Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, Illinois.

ROBERT SPADONI

“The Uncanny of Early Sound Film: Classic Horror Cinema

and the Return of the Medium-Sensitive Viewer.” Assistant Professor of English, Case Western Reserve University.

COMMITTEE ON THE HISTORY OF CULTURE

R. SCOTT HANSON

“City of Gods: Religious Freedom, Immigration, and Pluralism in Flushing, Queens—New York City, 1945–2000.” Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of History, Philadelphia University.

HEATHER HINDMAN

“Stability in Motion: Expatriate Women in Kathmandu, Nepal.” Assistant Professor, Department of International Studies, Denison University.

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS

CHRISTOPHER R. CELIS

“Linguistic Measurement of Proximity of Harm.” Assistant Professor, Department of English/Communications/Theater Arts, Arcadia University.

DAISUKE HARA

“A Complexity-based Approach to the Syllable Formation in Sign Language.” Assistant Professor, Aichi Medical University College of Nursing, Japan.

JOANNA LOWENSTEIN

“Artificial Hearing, Natural Speech: Cochlear Implants, Speech Production, and the Expectations of a High-Tech

Society.” Post Doctoral/Research Associate, Exemplary Services Division, Center for Persons with Disabilities, Utah State University.

SYLVAIN NEUVEL

“Metamorphology: A Word-Based Account of Polysynthesis and Other Multivalent Morphological Relations.” Postdoctoral Fellowship, Fonds Québécois de la Recherche sur la Société et la Culture.

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

MARK CLAGUE

“Chicago Counterpoint: The Auditorium Theater Building and the Civic Imaginations.” Assistant Professor of Musicology, University of Michigan School of Music; Associate Director, American Music Institute.

AILEEN DILLANE

Lecturer in Ethnomusicology, University College, Cork, Ireland.

JONATHAN MALIN

“Metric Dissonance and Music-Text Relations in the German Lied.” Lecturer in Music Theory, University of Colorado at Boulder.

MARK VOLKER

“Twilight Soliloquies: A Chamber Opera in Five Scenes for Four Singers and Ten-Piece Ensemble.” Assistant Professor of Music, Colgate University.

DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

GAVIN BROCKETT

“Betwixt and Between: Turkish Print Culture and the Emergence of a National Identity, 1945–1954.” Adjunct Professor, Department of History, University of Northern British Columbia.

JESSE CASANA

“From Alalakh to Antioch: Settlement, Land Use, and Environmental Change in the Amuq Valley of Southern Turkey.” Visiting Lecturer, University of Chicago.

ROBERT HAWLEY

“Studies in Ugaritic Epistolography.” Visiting Lecturer, Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Michigan.

JUDITH PFEIFFER

“Conversion to Islam among the Ilkhans in Muslim Narrative Traditions: The Case of Ahmad Tegüder.” Lecturer in Arabic/Islamic History, Oriental Institute, University of Oxford.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

MIHAELA FISTIOC

“The Beautiful Shape of the Good: Platonic and Pythagorean Themes in Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.” Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Washington College, Maryland.

TIMOTHY ROSENKOETTER

“Transcendental Logic and Modality in Kant’s Theoretical and Practical Projects.” Franklin Fellow, Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Georgia.

BENJAMIN VILHAUER

“An Interpretation and Defense of Kant’s Theory of Free Will.” Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Claremont McKenna College.

DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

ROCHONA MAJUMDAR

“Marriage, Modernity, and Sources of the Self: Bengali Women, c. 1870–1956.” Collegiate Assistant Professor, University of Chicago.

LAWRENCE MCCREA

“The Teleology of Poetics in Medieval Kashmir.” Visiting Lecturer in Sanskrit, Harvard University.

DEBALI MOOKERJEA-LEONARD

“Unfinished Histories: Gendered Violence and National Identity in Women’s Writings.” Lecturer, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University.

NOTE: The information is reported by each department or committee and includes students who graduated from spring 2002 to summer 2003. If you or someone you know should be listed here, please contact your department. The Division is working to maintain accurate records of job placement.

early experiences of image magic—the statues of the saints, the stained glass, and (above all) the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which an “image of god”—the communion wafer—is literally consumed. These experiences may explain why I think of images as things that we consume, but also as things that consume us. Idols are notorious for demanding human sacrifices, and of course whenever we apprehend an image, we incorporate it into our bodies/minds—which may be why “taste” is such an important metaphor for aesthetic judgment. Images are uncanny things, combining presence and absence, a sense of something “being there” and not being there at

the same time. They are thus very strange entities when it comes to the literal matter of “matter”: that is, they seem to hover on the border between the material and immaterial, the spectral or ghostly, and the embodied. Perhaps their ambiguity with regard to matter in its literal sense is the reason they seem to matter so much—too much—and why human beings have so often found reasons to bow down before them, or to try (in vain) to destroy them.

Anyway, that is what matters to me and, I hope, a few others. My books are an effort to understand why, to analyze the reasons for my/our fascination with images. *Iconology* was an

attempt to think about the difference between words and images, and what difference that difference makes. *Picture Theory* tried to look at the way images reflect on themselves in “meta-pictures,” a form of theorizing *in* pictures *about* pictures. *The Last Dinosaur Book* studied the way a particular animal image has changed and circulated among the domains of art, science, and popular culture over the last century and a half. My next book (due out in the fall of 2004) is entitled *What Do Pictures Want? Essays on the Lives and Loves of Images*. Perhaps it will come a bit closer to answering the question of why images matter so much to me—and to you. □

Britain—both Empire and Commonwealth—holds a firm grip on imaginations throughout the University. From the Division of the Humanities to the Divinity School to Social Sciences, and even in the Law School, scholars of all stripes—likely still more outside the English department than within—commit themselves to the study of some aspect of British history. Yet, until recently, there has been no structure in place to encourage collaborative work among these similarly focused, yet broadly disciplined thinkers.

officio (English, Dean of the Humanities), and Kimerly Rorschach (Art History, Director of the Smart Museum of Art). Project assistant Eva Wilhelm coordinates the steering committee's activities.

This group of colleagues worked together through the summer and into the fall of 2003 to create a center that offers carefully planned lecture series and other programming, scholarships, and travel opportunities for research to both graduate students and undergraduates. As its profile gains

a center is born

NICHOLSON CENTER FOR BRITISH STUDIES OPENS

A recent and extraordinary stroke of good fortune has stimulated efforts in exactly this direction. In 1985, triple alumnus Robert Nicholson (AB'30; AM'31; PhD'38) left the University a generous endowment to be used for the advancement of British Studies through awarded fellowships. Regrettably, the endowment's terms were limited unacceptably in specifying potential fellowship recipients, and so remained unused for many years. On April 17, 2003, the Illinois Circuit Court's Chancery Division ruled that the University could make broader use of this endowment in order to launch what is now the Nicholson Center for British Studies.

A steering committee was formed shortly thereafter, with responsibility for the Center's program initiatives. Under the leadership of Steven Pincus, *chair* (History), the committee includes Dipesh Chakrabarty (South Asian Languages and Civilizations), Elaine Hadley (English), Philip Hamburger (Law School), Elizabeth Helsinger (English), Janel Mueller, *ex*

recognition, it is clear that the Nicholson Center is emerging as a hub for scholarly initiatives across the University that cultivate international understanding between the United States and Britain.

The Nicholson Center is a "virtual center." It has no building or other physical location. Instead, the Center makes its home on its home page: <http://british.uchicago.edu>. Here, one can find information pertaining to its many activities, including a schedule of this year's lecture series, which has included Harvard historian Robert Travers, Irish historian Luke Gibbons, Princeton literary critic Nigel Smith, and Art History's Barbara Stafford, who gave a lecture in April entitled "Sir William Hamilton's 'Shadow-Shews': Theurgy and the Media Origins of Art."

All agree that the Nicholson Center for British Studies faithfully embodies the spirit of its benefactor's bold original vision. The Humanities Division is pleased to welcome this new resource for interdisciplinary collaboration at the University of Chicago.

FACULTY FOCUS

Humanities Faculty Participate in NPR Forum

Chicago Public Radio (WBEZ) is host to **Odyssey**, a daily talk show that brings serious, widely ranging, academic discussions to a public audience. The University of Chicago is regularly represented in these conversations, and the following Humanities faculty and teaching staff members have appeared within the past year. The show's entire archive is available for listening at no charge at www.wbez.org. First click on "Programs," and then *Odyssey*.

Lauren Berlant, Political Rhetoric 08/11/03, Dissent and Democracy 05/07/03

Bill Brown, The Meaning of Craft 10/07/03

Martha Feldman, Declarations of Love 02/14/04

Tom Gunning, Nostalgia and Hollywood 07/11/03, Film Forum: Experimental Film 05/02/03

Elaine Hadley, The Victorian Culture 06/19/03

Sandra Macpherson, The Novel and Consciousness 06/06/03

Deborah Nelson, Anti-Communism in America 05/12/2003

Martha Nussbaum, Measuring Poverty 05/27/03

Thomas Pavel, The Novel and Identity Formation 11/04/03

Hank Sartin, Blockbuster Economics 07/25/03

Michael Silverstein, Language, Thought and Politics 02/18/04

Kenneth Warren, Race Narratives 11/25/03

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