TABLEAU
THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | FALL 2013

IN THIS ISSUE | ADAPTATION | NEW FACULTY | SOCIAL SCIENTISTS OF MUSIC
The inherent value of humanistic research and instruction remains a subject of debate in the popular media. I imagine that many of you have felt compelled to defend your own fields of study—or the disciplines of your friends and colleagues—against those who worry about the irrelevance or obsolescence of the humanities.

Rather than lamenting this situation, I eagerly welcome the conversation as an opportunity to articulate and demonstrate the value of foundational scholarship and rigorous inquiry. My work at the University of Chicago is focused on supporting and strengthening humanities scholarship here and throughout the academy. The June 2013 report from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, aptly titled “The Heart of the Matter,” presents a compelling case for broad education in the humanities at every level. You can read the full report online at www.humanitiescommission.org.

The first sentence of the report’s executive summary captures some of the crucial elements in today’s discussion: “As we strive to create a more civil public discourse, a more adaptable and creative workforce, and a more secure nation, the humanities and social sciences are the heart of the matter, the keeper of the republic—a source of national memory and civic vigor, cultural understanding and communication, individual fulfillment and the ideals we hold in common.”

This aspirational assertion is applicable across all subjects in the humanities and humanistic social sciences, and each of the projects and scholars featured in this issue of Tableau bolsters some aspect of its claim. Our faculty members contribute to public discourse, examine the artistry and impact of media, and make literary works accessible across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Our students conduct creative, meaningful research while our alumni nurture appreciation of the classical legacy in a new generation and help to preserve our cultural heritage and to support innovative scholarship. Their work takes place along with many other projects and pursuits that are sustained by the generosity of our most dedicated advocates.

Humanistic scholarship allows us, as human beings within a diverse and shared culture, to mark our progress through history, to understand our collective past, and to chart our future. The humanities are timeless—and as the transitions from one moment of modernity to the next become ever more accelerated, the social value of the humanities has never been greater.

With best wishes,

Martha T. Roth
Dean of the Division of the Humanities
How book series and their faculty editors shape, define, and defend their fields.

BY SUSIE ALLEN, AB'09

The hunt for the next great manuscript

The process begins with “some bird-dogging of good manuscripts,” explains Chandler, the Barbara E. and Richard J. Franke Distinguished Service Professor in English and Cinema and Media Studies and director of the Franke Institute for the Humanities. “You want to be on the lookout for really promising work that fits within the series.”

Such searching gets easier, he says, “the longer you’ve been around and the more people you know.” In fact, presses often look for scholars with years of experience and a robust roster of contacts to edit a series. In other cases, scholars propose their own series to oversee.

The ability of book series to protect and shape fields is especially pronounced in smaller fields, says Ando, the David B. and Clara E. Stern Professor in Classics. “The interest as editors was in thinking about postcolonial politics in an interdisciplinary way,” she says, “with a special openness to humanistic perspectives.”

By providing a stable home for scholarly conversation, book series can help to protect more established fields against changes in academic trends and fashions. As some English departments in recent years moved toward dividing literature by chronological periods rather than by movement, for example, Romantic studies seemed endangered. Many scholars have told Chandler that Cambridge Studies in Romanticism “helped defend the field of Romanticism against the squeeze,” he says.

The ability of book series to protect and shape fields is what makes editorial work so essential, says Chandler: “More generally, the profession just won’t function if no one agrees to do it.”

Defining and defending fields

Book series benefit the wider scholarly community by “making the disciplinary fields or terrains sharper and clearer,” explains Gandhi, a professor in English whose interests include sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama, Indo-Anglian literature, and postcolonial theory.

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It is nearly always pleasurable, even exhilarating, to watch one’s peers at the top of their game.

—Clifford Ando

Inspiration and collaboration

Editing a series provides a welcome opportunity to collaborate with coeditors, press editors, and authors. For Gandhi, such shared labor is “insuffi-
ciently encouraged in the traditional humani-
ties, and was a driving factor behind her com-
mitment to Postcolonial Politics.

Similarly, De Armas says his partnership with Iberian coeditor Robert Davidson, a University of Toronto scholar, has been “the perfect combina-
tion, since he specializes in contemporary Iberia while I work on Renaissance and early modern. We both enjoy interdisciplinary studies—he is particu-
larly interested in architecture, while I work more with art history. The partnership has proven ex-
tremely successful.”

Collaborating has also shaped De Armas’s research on the literature of the Spanish Renais-
sance. Editorial work influences “your own per-
ceptions of trends,” he says. “And knowing what is being said helps me to construct my own argu-
ments in my books and essays.”

For Ando—who explores law, administration, and cultural change in the Roman Empire—the ben-
efit is more abstract: It lies “at the level of inspira-
tion, derived from watching creative and intelligent people wrestle with questions that I recognize as meaningful to the world that I too study.”
ADAPTATION

by Carrie Gokus, AB’91, AM’93

A student’s sen-cus Manutius, Usher discovered something he had never seen before: a poem on Biblical themes, composed entirely in language taken from Homer. It was a cento (pronounced with a hard “c”), from the Greek word for stitching: a type of poem consisting of passages taken from other authors. Eudoxia Augusta had crafted this particular cento in the fifth century.

In 1999, collaborating with the composer John Peele, he wrote the libretto for the opera Voces Vergilianae. The story of Dido and Aeneas is told as intertextual commentary on the whole poem,” he says. “The Dido and Aeneas episode is really what the whole poem is about—westward expansion, Rome’s march to world domination and all the vic- tims that are in the way, Dido being one of them.” He’s working on another libretro about the Roman emperor Nero with the same composer, using ancient Greek and Latin texts. Selections from this work-in-progress were performed in concert this past March; the full opera will premiere in Salem, Oregon, in 2016. Usher also has written a cento for children, PDM, a picture book about po- etry stitched together from the lines of famous poems: “Some poems come in on little cat feet! Some wander lonely as a cloud! And some beat boldly on a big bass drum! And tell even death to be not proud!” In addition to his academic and creative work, Usher, a trained car- penter, built his own farmhouse in Shoreham, Vermont. He and his wife, Cateline, homeschooled their three children: the oldest, Isaiah, and listen to selections from the opera Neron Kaisar at tableau.uchicago.edu/usher.

Kids love to say the word ass. Here’s the chance for them to do it in a legitimate context.

—Mark Usher

As Usher studied the poem, he realized the Aldus version differed from other versions, and all were incomplete. He identified what seems to be the definitive manuscript in a catalog of the libraries of Mount Athos in Greece, home to more than 20 Eastern Orthodox monasteries. But the catalog had been compiled in 1890, before a major fire. If the poem manuscript had survived, it would be bound with others, so Usher had to physically search for it. With a fellowship from the University, he traveled to Greece, not knowing if it was a fool’s errand. In a Hollywood-like moment, the li- brarian, Father Theologos, “cracked this big book, dust goes every- where, and we found the manuscript,” says Usher. “Then a younger monk came by and threw it on the photocopier.” Usher’s second book was a critical edition of the text, Homeric Centos: Eudoxia Au- gustor (1999), published just a year after Homeric Stitchings.

Usher no longer works on centos, but he writes them. In 1999, with the Ushers about life on their farm —Mark Usher

Usher knew no one in children’s publishing, but he sent his manuscript to five or six publishers. Three years passed before it emerged from the slush pile at Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Usher had all but forgotten it. “I didn’t realize until after the fact how lucky I was,” says Usher, whose academic publications include A Student’s Sen- cus (2006) and Homeric Stitchings: The Homeric Centos of the Em- press Eudoxia (1996). “Compared to getting a children’s book pub- lished, getting an academic book published is easy.” Wise Guy: The Life and Philosophy of Socrates came out in 2005 and received posi- tive reviews in Publishers Weekly and Kirkus Reviews. A few years later, work on another academic article—this one about Diogenes’s quotations from Homer—inspired Usher to write another picture-book manuscript. In a biography told entirely in limericks, Usher portrayed Diogenes, the founder of the Cynic (Greek for “dog-like”) school of philosophy, as an actual dog. Ush- er’s editor liked the story, but not the limericks: “Some of them were rude, some were a little too sophisticated,” says Usher, who published a revised, prose version of Diogenes in 2009—the same year his article “Diogenes’ Doggrel” appeared in Classical Journal.

His most recent children’s book, an adaptation of Apuleius’s The Golden Ass for older readers, came out in 2011. The comic novel had long been one of Usher’s favorites. “Kids love to say the word ass,” he says. “Here’s the chance for them to do it in a legitimate context.” Usher hoped the book’s title would incite controversy: “It would get so much attention if it were banned from libraries.” But so far no luck.

Usher was working on an article about what Socrates might have looked like. In the Republic, Socrates is described as “a snooty-nosed kid.” Usher, the father of three sons, was struck by how childlike Socrates was: “Asking annoying questions, not letting things go. Plus he was against all the adults. I thought, this is a character that kids would like.”

Usher—who has a doctorate in classics—has written a book about centos and a dictionary of homericism. “In 2006, I decided to go off the grid for a few years and try my hand at a poetry book,” he says. In 2009—the same year his article “Diogenes’ Doggrel” appeared in Classical Journal—Usher published a revised, prose version of Diogenes in 2009—the same year his article “Diogenes’ Doggrel” appeared in Classical Journal. His most recent children’s book, an adaptation of Apuleius’s The Golden Ass for older readers, came out in 2011. The comic novel had long been one of Usher’s favorites. “Kids love to say the word ass,” he says. “Here’s the chance for them to do it in a legitimate context.” Usher hoped the book’s title would incite controversy: “It would get so much attention if it were banned from libraries.” But so far no luck.

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Usher—an assistant professor at the time—had never written a pic- ture book before, but he had spent countless hours reading them aloud to his children, using the books of Peter Sis as models, and with his youngest son Gawain, then four, in mind, he wrote a simple biography of Socrates. Usher recounted the philosopher’s imprisonment, for ex- ample, like this: “Then they sent him off. In jail Socrates was sad. Nevertheless,” he said, “it’s still better to suffer a wrong than to commit one.” Sisbooks supply more detailed information for advanced readers or parents. The structure echoes “the classical form of text and com- mentary,” says Usher. “As a classicist, that’s your stock in trade.”

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Photography by Joshua Smyth; illustration by Michael Chambers

Read an Interview with the Ushers about life on their farm and listen to selections from the opera Neron Kaisar at tableau.uchicago.edu/usher.

In the 2009 book Diogenes, Mark Usher depicted the Greek philosopher as a dog who wanted to be his own master. 
New faculty members joined the department this fall—read their backgrounds, research, and teaching at tableau.uchicago.edu/newfaculty.

Daniel Morgan

Jacqueline Stewart

D. N. Rodowick

"Nowhere Else in Film" thought about all deeply and rigorously as at the University of Chicago, and nowhere else does film studies occupy such a central position amongst older disciplines," says Robert Bird, emeritus chair of Cinema and Media Studies. Three new faculty members joined the department this fall—read their biographies above.

Jacqueline Stewart, who returns to teaching at UChicago from Northwestern, is known for her work on the Frick Collection and its relationship to Gauguin’s work. She is teaching a course on the “Art of the Frick: The Frick Collection and its Patrons in the Gilded Age.” Stewart joined UChicago in 2006 as a professor in the Department of Art History and African and African American Studies.

D. N. Rodowick is the Glen A. Lloyd Distinguished Service Professor in Cinema and Media Studies, with a primary focus on film history and theory. Previously he was the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor and chair of visual and environmental studies and directed the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard. He held prior faculty appointments at King’s College, University of London, the University of Rochester, and Yale, where he founded the film studies program. He earned a PhD in communication and theater arts from the University of Iowa and an MA in communications from the University of Texas–Austin; he also did graduate work in cinema in Paris. He spent several years as an experimental filmmaker and video artist before his doctoral studies. He has two forthcoming books—An Elegy for Theory: The Senses of Theory and An Elegy for Theory: Philosophy’s Artful Conversation—and published others including The Virtual Life of Film and Reading the Figure, or, Philosophy after the New Media.

Read more about faculty members’ backgrounds, research, and teaching at tableau.uchicago.edu/newfaculty.

New hires build on strength in Cinema and Media Studies.
An advanced degree in ethnomusicology sounds enticing: not only does every discipline accept an evening at a nightclub as research. But consider some of the requirements of the PhD at UChicago: a reading knowledge of three languages, sight-reading and singing exams, a public recital, not to mention two-plus years of coursework, comprehensive exams, and a dissertation proposal and defense.

Ethnomusicology is defined as the study of social and cultural aspects of music and dance in local and global contexts; it combines training and approaches from music and anthropology. The rigorous well-roundedness of UChicago’s ethnomusicology graduate program—offered in the Department of Music—helps to make it distinctive, says Philip Bohlman, the Mary Werkman Distinguished Service Professor in Music. “It might not be obvious to an ethnomusicologist studying Indian music why he or she needs to learn how to play piano,” Bohlman says, but in the end, students frequently tell him, “I’m so happy I had to learn these things in such a fundamental way.”

Fieldwork takes ethnomusicology students to unusual venues: drag shows (top), jazz clubs, Israeli independence festivities, and pole-dancing performances (right).
Four alumni find homes as humanists in the nonprofit sector.

For many graduate students, a master’s degree is the first step toward an eventual doctorate. But others—such as Pauline Evelland, AM’68—know from the start that their time in the academy comes with an expiration date. After graduating from Tufts in 2005 with a major in art history and a minor in Latin, Evelland went to Tunisia on a Fulbright fellowship, where she took a year off before pursuing a master’s thesis on ancient Roman mosaics that grew out of that experience. After completing her MA, she went to Italy on a Fulbright, and her interest in Latin, architecture, and art history led her to do research in Tunisia on the ancient city of Dougga.

She left for the University of Chicago with a master’s degree in art history and a minor in Latin. She worked for Christie’s in her hometown of New York City, but continued her work in ancient art with an internship at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She credits her success to influencing mentors beginning in graduate school as well as her own willingness to be flexible. Evelland originally considered an academic-style career in a museum, “and I thought that was the only career path I could take,” she says. “But I know now that there are lots of things that can get you to interesting places.”

One such place is the Templeton Foundation in Philadelphia, where Christopher Strawbridge, AM’98 (Middle Eastern Studies), has worked for nearly six years. Strawbridge had been a financial consultant during grad school and for a nonprofit before that. “I wanted to get back to the nonprofit world because I was interested in mission,” he says. “I thought that was the only career path I could take,” she says. “But I know now that there are lots of things that can get you to interesting places.”

The business world has room for humanists too—as MAPh alumna Beth Gallagher, AM’08, who points out, “human beings work at all these huge multinational companies,” and people like her connect them with the world beyond downtown Chicago. She enjoys “providing the vehicle for my colleagues to get involved—

The Dedmon Visiting Writers program unites the scholarly and the creative. For more on these alumni, please visit tableau.uchicago.edu/mission.

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David Tod Roy finishes his translation of a once-banned Chinese classic.

Crowning nearly 50 years of scholarship, David Tod Roy, professor emeritus in East Asian Languages and Civilizations, has published the final volume of his monumental translation of _The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei_. The late sixteenth-century novel, written anonymously, is considered a masterpiece of Ming-era Chinese literature.

Since Princeton University Press released Roy’s first volume in 1993, scholars have praised his masterful translation and painstaking research. Along with extensive annotations, Roy has provided the first complete European-language version of the intimate novel, which chronicles the rise and fall of a corrupt middle-class merchant, his six wives, and his concubines. This past spring and summer, Roy, 80, spoke about his lifelong affair with the _Chin P'ing Mei_ in interviews and at a workshop series with graduate students. We excerpt his reflections here.

**An Unusual Upbringing:** My parents went to China as Presbyterian missionaries in 1930; I was born in 1933 in the Drum Tower Hospital in Nanjing. We stayed in Chengdu from 1938 to 1945. It was bombed during the Sino-Japanese war, so the school that my younger brother [J. Stapleton Roy, US ambassador to China, 1991-95] and I attended closed down. We were tutored by faculty members from universities in the city and didn’t have any formal schooling between 1939 and 1945.

Later we went to boarding school at the Shanghai American School. The civil war in China was ongoing, and every few weeks the Communists went to China as Presbyterian missionaries, regardless of the political situation. Instead of fleeing as the Communists, they decided to see if their purpose was to communicate their faith regardless of the political situation. Instead of fleeing as the Communists, they decided to see if their purpose was to communicate their faith. Roy remembers visiting a city in China to attend a service and walking past a Chinese market where “The next 560 characters are deleted.” He was inspired by his example to undertake a translation of the _Chin P’ing Mei_.

**Discovering a Classic:** As a teenager I developed an interest in traditional Chinese fiction. I found out that the _Chin P’ing Mei_ contained many vivid descriptions of sexual activity; it also gave detailed descriptions of every aspect of daily life—costumes, eating, funeral celebrations, political corruption. But I was a teenager, so I was excited by the prospect of reading something pornographic, their purpose was to communicate their faith regardless of the political situation. Instead of fleeing as the Communists, they decided to see if their purpose was to communicate their faith. Roy remembers visiting a city in China to attend a service and walking past a Chinese market where “The next 560 characters are deleted.” He was inspired by his example to undertake a translation of the _Chin P’ing Mei_.

**Censored Book:** There were many expurgated editions of the novel where the sexual passages had been deleted. You would read along in Chinese and all of a sudden it would say, “The next 560 characters are deleted.” I learned that there was an English translation done by Clement Egerton in 1939. I got it from the University of Nanjing library, but to my disappointment, he had rendered the sexual passages into Latin.

In 1950 I found an unpurged Chinese version in a secondhand bookstore in the Confucian Temple area of Nanjing. During the Communist era, many people got rid of books that were considered dangerous to own, so there were rich pickings to be had at bookstores.

**From Research to Translation:** From 1950 on, I continued to be a student of the _Chin P’ing Mei_. In 1967, when I came to the University of Chicago, I chose to teach the _Chin P’ing Mei_ in Chinese, but only one student signed up. I ran that seminar for two years, covering one chapter each week, and it further enhanced my fascination with the book.

The novel is loaded with poetry and songs; few, if any, were written by the author. I started doing research on these unidentified passages and, after a few years, decided to research the sources in detail. At the same time, Anthony Yu (the Carl Darling Buck Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus in East Asian Languages and Civilizations) had begun his own translation of the novel, which chronicles the rise and fall of a corrupt middle-class merchant, his six wives, and his concubines.

**How It Fell to Finish, After 30 Years:** It felt great, mainly because I could thumb my nose at the people who said I would never finish (laughs). Unfortunately, I was diagnosed with ALS around the same time as I completed the work, so I associate my accomplishment—of it can be so bold as to call it that—with my decline.

**Once Forbidden:** Various Chinese governments banned the _Chin P’ing Mei_ since it first appeared. Mao Zedong’s diary indicated that he was an avid fan of the novel and thought it was a profound work, but he didn’t want his citizens to read it. Now the book is available, but it’s not always easy to obtain. Since Mao’s death there has been a flood of scholarship on Chinese literature. This is the first novel to deal with everyday life in detail and with ordinary, believable people who might be your next-door neighbors—although you might not like having them as neighbors. It’s the first to have such a carefully planned, symmetrical plot and an elaborate rhetorical structure.

**Why It’s a Masterpiece:** The _Chin P’ing Mei_ is pathbreaking with many features that are unprecedented in Chinese and world literature. This is the first novel to deal with everyday life in detail and with ordinary, believable people who might be your next-door neighbors—although you might not like having them as neighbors. It’s the first to have such a carefully planned, symmetrical plot and an elaborate rhetorical structure.

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David Tod Roy’s five-volume translation of _The Plum in the Golden Vase_ includes exhaustive research of sources that the novel borrowed from other works. In his office, Roy created a giant card file (left) indexing each line of poetry, parallel prose, and proverbial sayings in the book.

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**From Research to Translation:** From 1950 on, I continued to be a student of the _Chin P’ing Mei_. In 1967, when I came to the University of Chicago, I chose to teach the _Chin P’ing Mei_ in Chinese, but only one student signed up. I ran that seminar for two years, covering one chapter each week, and it further enhanced my fascination with the book.

The novel is loaded with poetry and songs; few, if any, were written by the author. I started doing research on these unidentified passages and, after a few years, decided to research the sources in detail. At the same time, Anthony Yu (the Carl Darling Buck Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus in East Asian Languages and Civilizations) had begun his own translation of the _Chin P’ing Mei_.

**How It Fell to Finish, After 30 Years:** It felt great, mainly because I could thumb my nose at the people who said I would never finish (laughs). Unfortunately, I was diagnosed with ALS around the same time as I completed the work, so I associate my accomplishment with my decline.

**Once Forbidden:** Various Chinese governments banned the _Chin P’ing Mei_ since it first appeared. Mao Zedong’s diary indicated that he was an avid fan of the novel and thought it was a profound work, but he didn’t want his citizens to read it. Now the book is available, but it’s not always easy to obtain. Since Mao’s death there has been a flood of scholarship on Chinese literature. This is the first novel to deal with everyday life in detail and with ordinary, believable people who might be your next-door neighbors—although you might not like having them as neighbors. It’s the first to have such a carefully planned, symmetrical plot and an elaborate rhetorical structure.

**Why It’s a Masterpiece:** The _Chin P’ing Mei_ is pathbreaking with many features that are unprecedented in Chinese and world literature. This is the first novel to deal with everyday life in detail and with ordinary, believable people who might be your next-door neighbors—although you might not like having them as neighbors. It’s the first to have such a carefully planned, symmetrical plot and an elaborate rhetorical structure.
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