

# Letters

THE SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES  
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## “Conceptualizing Diaspora, Reconceptualizing Europe: Black Europe, or Diaspora Studies in Europe”

An Interview with Lucius Outlaw and Tracy Sharpley-Whiting

“Conceptualizing Diaspora, Reconceptualizing Europe: Black Europe, or Diaspora Studies in Europe,” the 2007–2008 Fellows Program at the Warren Center, will focus on the newly emergent field of Black European Studies that has entered into conversation with various disciplines, periods, and methodologies within the academy. By engaging black diasporic presence throughout Europe and the relationship between black historical positions—as conquerors, slaves, and colonial subjects, for example—the Fellows will enter into a larger conversation about race, identity, and origins. Lucius Outlaw, professor of philosophy and Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education, and Tracy Sharpley-Whiting, professor of African American and Diaspora Studies and French, are this year’s co-directors. Professor Outlaw and Professor Sharpley-Whiting recently met at the Vaughn Home to discuss the program with *Letters*.

*Letters*: In your proposal, you focused on the concept of ‘Black Europe’ as an emergent sub-field of African diaspora studies. Could you say a little bit more about the idea of Black Europe and about the cultural context that has led to its growing importance?

SHARPLEY-WHITING: I think

we’ve been doing Black European Studies for quite awhile—it just wasn’t called that. We can go all the way back to Frank Snowden’s work on the engagement of race in Europe, specifically in antiquity, and the questions of blacks in Europe. I think that what has happened of late is that more scholars are coming together to create a sub-field of diaspora studies in which they collectively explore this idea of Black Europe. There’s also a growing population now of blacks in Europe, and so there has been a desire on the part of scholars to explore their experiences in Europe, how they differ from one another and how their experiences differ from the African American experience; because, of course, generally, when people think of Black Europe they often think about African Americans in France, which is a very different experience from those people who migrated to Europe from various colonies or who were born and raised in places throughout the continent. We’re hoping to look at these issues broadly—the African American experience as well as the Black European experience. I think it’s also important because the concept of black Europeans is also a relatively new concept, because race is an issue that’s very contested in Europe—in



Lucius Outlaw and Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting

### Inside

Conceptualizing Diaspora, Reconceptualizing Europe: Black Europe, or Diaspora Studies in Europe.....	1–6	Fellows.....	13
Admiral Robert Penn Warren and The Snows of Winer.....	7–8	2007-2008 Warren Center Graduate Student Fellows .....	14
“The Best things in Life are Free” The Humanities and Money Lessons from Erasmus .....	9–10	Newberry Library and Warren Center Join in Hosting Pre-Modern Race and Sexuality Symposium .....	15
What We Are Reading.....	11–12	Historian Charles S. Maier to Present Harry C. Howard, Jr. Lecture.....	15
2008-2009 Warren Center Fellowship Opportunities .....	12	“Between Word and Image” Fellows to Host Symposium ...	15
2007-2008 Warren Center Faculty			

“I’m also very interested in another direction of this project, which is the consideration of something called ‘Europe’ on something called ‘Africa.’ Because the developments of both are inextricably related—and this stretches over several centuries of development—you can’t understand one without understanding the other.”

Germany in particular the word is, well, *verboten*. In France, people don’t typically recognize ‘race,’ and so the idea that people would identify themselves as black French, black Germans, or black Europeans is radically different given particularly the French position that everyone is simply French. So these studies challenge the idea of what it means to be French, to be German, to be Spanish, to be Italian. Equally, scholars are also trying to challenge this notion of European-ness because, of course, these countries had been individual nation-states uninterested in forging a collective identity, but the Euro has put them in an interesting position by which they function as a kind of United States of Europe under the European Union. So the idea of what it now means to be European is also a very new concept.

**OUTLAW:** I’m very grateful that Tracy initiated this seminar project and invited me to join in, because it will give me a chance to learn and grow. So the fact that I asked her to begin is a key reminder that she brought me in on this. We want to take a look at the whole notion of this something called ‘Europe’ and how it has been constituted and reconstituted over time—traces of the notion of ‘union’ have put an entirely new set of pressures on this concept as various peoples who became nation-states now try to reimagine themselves as something more unified. Each of these renegotiations is pretty challeng-

ing and demanding—but then you throw into the mix something called ‘black folks,’ and you have to think of them as being pulled from the U.S., from various parts of Africa, and you have to consider that those positions are different. Folks from Francophone Africa are not exactly the same—though not totally dissimilar—from the folk from British Africa, or Dutch Africa, or Portuguese Africa. All of those con- struals of identity, history, culture, and politics are up for serious consideration as to what they mean and what their inter- actions mean. I’m also very interested in another direction of this project, which is the con- sideration of something called ‘Europe’ on something called ‘Africa.’ Because the develop- ments of both are inextricably related—and this stretches over several centuries of develop- ment—you can’t understand one without understanding the other. It’s, for me, a tremendous opportunity to learn and to do so in the presence of people from a number of different dis- ciplines. In some sense, I have this title of co-director when, really, I’m a disguised student.

**SHARPLEY-WHITING:** I feel like Lou is a natural partner in this because his work has always challenged the ideas of ‘Europe’ and ‘European-ness.’ And like he said: this notion of Europe simply could not exist without a notion of Africa. Most Euro- peanists simply don’t recognize that; Americans, of course, are enthralled by Europe and emu-

late all things European. What they assume to be European, however, is not necessarily European-derived—very simple things, even, like the ritual of high tea or drinking tea associ- ated with the British. There are no tea plantations in the United Kingdom, and yet this is some- thing associated with European high culture. I think there are all kinds of ways in which we are trying to unpack the idea of Europe and what it means—and I think Europe appears, in many ways, as a culturally impenetrable place, that people believe it can export ideas about technology and development to all of these distant places and not itself absorb and take from those places. Certainly we know Europe took raw materials, but it took more than raw materials and peoples; it equally absorbed other cultures, and so Europe is just as fluid culturally, just as mixed culturally, as the Caribbean, for instance.

**Letters:** Given these ongoing conversations about Black Europe, what gaps or issues do you hope the group will address? Considering the kind of mutual absorption you’ve been discussing, is this kind of study something we can only accomplish through interdis- ciplinary?

**OUTLAW:** Yes. There’s no way that any single purported disci- pline can appropriately handle all of the relevant questions and seek answers to them, because no discipline has the scope of conception or of method to pose and resolve all of the perti-

nent questions. Take, for exam- ple, the single issue of tea that Tracy mentioned before; with my training as a philosopher, I couldn’t trace that issue because I wasn’t trained to do it, and I would have to consult a food anthropologist to help me. I would have to say, “I need someone who knows something about trade, about colonialism, about enslavement.” Because, given a background in academic philosophy, I—and people like me—am miseducated to even begin to deal with issues like that. If you were to look inter- nally to academic philosophy, you couldn’t even begin to for- mulate these questions—the questions are not even there in the disciplinary literature base for me to get at the presump- tions. You have to generate the questions from outside the norms of the discipline to even get at them, much less begin to resolve them.

**SHARPLEY-WHITING:** I would love to get back to Lou’s point about this whole idea of Europe, its identity and what it means. I could explore, particu- larly, the relationship between France and the West Indies that were absorbed into France over- seas; they function as part of France, partaking in things like the national elections. So they are, in fact, ‘Europe,’ although they are located in the Caribbean. Already we have this messiness in which Europe is not as bounded geographically as we think it might be—this is something I’d like to push

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because I’m a person who was trained in French studies. Most French scholars don’t think of France in that context; there is still a metropole-former-colony paradigm. So what does this say about where Europe, or France, is—especially when you look at the Euro dollar and see such countries as Martinique, Guadeloupe on the dollar? This opens up discussions about the expanse of the European Union and about blacks’ condition and understanding of being Euro- pean even when they are, as I like to say, in the southern-most parts of France, that is, where the Caribbean Sea meets the Atlantic.

**OUTLAW:** This brings us back to a notion that gets a fair amount of play—particularly in the past decade, decade and a half—and that is the concept of ‘Eurocentrism.’ There is a particu- lar formulation that I hope we’ll work on and touch on in the seminar, because I’m sure that there’s a conception that covers a great deal of what we call ‘Europe’ and its component pieces, which becomes a funda- mental driving force of the expansion and migration of peoples out of Europe and other parts of the world to create these various empires and colonies, even into the Ameri- cas. At the center of Eurocen- trism are notions about race, and peoples, and a whole bunch of other stuff that has been driv- ing what we call ‘histories of identity.’ These histories have enormous consequences for large portions of this field of

study and for peoples of ‘Europe’—and some of those consequences are hardly what we would call progressive. They are constitutive, in some senses, of the very notion of what it means to be European. I think the U.S. is still playing these forces out in Iraq, so we need to explore some of this. These issues relate back to our body politic and certainly to our identity formations. Thus they call for revisiting identities and



Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting

identity histories. One of the ways in which I like to express this revisitation in academic philosophy is to look critically at the standard accountings of the history of origins of so- called ‘Western’ philosophy—supposedly Greece is the originary source, where there is a kind of emergence in one place, with no prior instance anywhere else on the planet, of a unique form of thought among human beings which

then spreads across much of Europe. This is an absurd notion, but it’s a notion that has been definitive of the identities of peoples of Europe and North America, and it has been repli- cated in universities. But what if we consider Greece and its relationship to a continent that we now call ‘Africa’? Once you look back and start retelling that story, the whole identity that has been lodged in that story of origins has got to be reworked. The result is equiva- lent to folks finding out that their father isn’t really their father. You had your identity tied to a father who looked a certain kind of way and had a particular skin color, and it turns out that your father has very different skin color, a very different kind of hair, and so forth. Thus, I think a lot of these interdisciplinary intersec- tions, explorations of these questions of origins, will be rather destabilizing to identities, histories, and supposed knowledge of origins. We may have to have some really serious counseling sessions before it’s all over!

**Letters:** The question of disci- plinary origins and interactions is an interesting one; it becomes even more interesting when we consider that this seminar is bringing together scholars from English, French studies, history, and philosophy. How do you see these specific disciplines interacting with this year’s theme of ‘Black Europe’? How do they aid each other?

**SHARPLEY-WHITING:** English

departments have always had a position on the cutting edge of cultural studies—but, of course, they’re also English depart- ments. If you’re trained in the languages, it aids you in moving across the languages and cul- tures in interesting ways; it’s dif- ferent if one doesn’t necessarily have access to those languages and that kind of comparative work. Those who are involved in the seminar have that interest in moving across cultures and languages, so I think it will be quite fruitful because, again, they’re all doing cutting edge of research. Most of that work has been done so far is in English and the Anglophone world, and that can limit accessibility and exchange when many scholars globally are writing in, say, French, or reading in French or in other languages. This will be a nice way to intersect and learn. History is also an extremely important discipline for me—I’m just delighted with the number of historians partici- pating—it’s one of those founda- tional disciplines that are absolutely critical to the enter- prise because we have to study how things change over time. At the same time, history is a kind of discipline where they’re trained methodologically in a certain way and are very fact- based. This will make things interesting because, in my field, French studies, we can draw assumptions; there’s a certain way in which we can make cer- tain inferences between culture and literature, we can draw out ideas. At times historians can be

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reticent about that—they will say, “where is it in the archive? I want facts.” I think it’ll be an interesting dialogue in that sense because there will be a lot of give-and-take. Some historians have recently begun to think along those lines and explore the ways that literature itself can inform historical analysis; that’s a very radical concept. We’ll be dialoging and talking across these disciplines, and many of us are already doing interdisciplinary work—many of us are already involved in black studies, so that by its very nature the seminar is an interdisciplinary project. For those of us coming from a black studies background, we are already deeply involved in this project of interdisciplinarity because we had to cross-train. We couldn’t just read within our disciplines; we’ve had to read across the feminist canon, we read historical texts, anthropological texts, economics, and that makes the work a lot richer.

**OUTLAW:** One of the interesting things about the seminar is that we’ve got a rather significant generational spread.

**SHARPLEY-WHITING:** A whole generation of historians to corrupt!

**OUTLAW:** We’ve got people from several generations, disciplines, and a number of sections of the country and the world. For most of us, choosing a career in the academy wasn’t so much a matter of pursuing a specific discipline as it was about looking into certain kinds of issues. And so, though we all had to get degrees to play this

life-game in the academy, we had to get degrees in disciplines that could help us look into those issues. So, while we pursued those issues on disciplinary bases, we’ve refused to be confined by the borders of those disciplines because our commitments were to issues, causes, people. And we’ve been very powerful critics of the disciplines of which we’ve been a part; we’ve been about asking questions and dealing with people and issues. We don’t have to make a case for interdisciplinarity because we’re cosmopolite intellectuals prepared to read across, through, under, over, and around all kinds of things. It will make things fruitful, but it also makes things unpredictable; that makes this a very exciting project.

**Letters:** The generational gap that you’re identifying doesn’t only occur in regard to the faculty. In your proposal, you mentioned that you plan to open seminars to graduate students pursuing work in African and diaspora studies at Vanderbilt. What influenced this decision? What do you hope that the graduate students will contribute to and carry away from these discussions?

**SHARPLEY-WHITING:** We’re actually proposing a certificate in diaspora studies at the graduate level, so we’re hoping that some of those students who may enroll in the course—it would be held in the spring and is called ‘Conceptualizing Diaspora’—will be able to interface with the seminar. Some of the reading will actually be pulled

from this seminar; we’re hoping that the two will dovetail nicely. Again, many of them may be Europeanists, and they’ll be thinking in new ways about blackness in Europe; I think that France is really the only country that really has a commitment to black studies, and it ultimately winds up being African American studies and is very African American centered. It’s very easy to get caught up in that dialogue, and I’m hoping our seminar will kind of explode that so that people can see



Lucius Outlaw

blacks in their diversity across the continent. I’m hoping that the students will just be able to take from that and find other linkages with their own work. We’d like to have the students participate if we have a conference or small gathering.

**OUTLAW:** If we think about what it means for graduate students, we have to think about what it means to have new concepts and discussions emerging about Black Europe. They seem

like new concepts, but they aren’t. It isn’t a box into which you can fit everything neatly, but more of a heuristic guide that allows us to deal with complexity. If you can get graduate students who are already becoming very skilled at taking very complex dynamic notions and figuring out how to concretize them for something in particular they want to look at without reifying it, you’ve got some people who will walk out the door with new and different intellectual skill sets that are marketable and applicable. Hopefully we can contribute to a generation of intellectuals who won’t have to be untrained to be retrained to do this kind of intellectual work. A lot of us, in some ways, had to free ourselves from very constricting notions about race, about ethnicity, about gender, about human nature, sexual orientation, about intellectual work. They can be free from the kinds of impediments that we ran up against and had to deal with before moving forward.

**SHARPLEY-WHITING:** Absolutely. As an interdisciplinary discipline, it’s important that the idea of diaspora studies looks beyond the interactions we typically discuss in terms of the Caribbean, Latin America, and places generally southward—putting Europe within that construct of diaspora brings something very different to the table and opens a different kind of dialogue. It’s important to recognize that Africa and the U.S. have a certain kind of centrality; but we should look to

other places where blacks have migrated to or been, or experienced forced migration. Europe has always had this very interesting relationship to black studies—again, very limited—so I think that it’s important to explore those tensions. It’s not always going to be kumbaya, and when I think about this I draw on my own experiences with black Europeans and their perceptions of us not as African Americans but as Americans; from this perspective they’re very European, they’re indeed French, German, or what have you. There’s a certain admiration, but a certain tension as well. America holds an important place in world affairs, and while there’s admiration we’re not exempt from accusations of imperialism. For graduate students I think it’ll be a whole different experience to explore these tensions as well.

**Letters:** Both of you have extensive experience directing programs in diaspora studies—here and elsewhere. How do you each see those experiences influencing your desires to direct this program and defining your goals for the year?

**OUTLAW:** Really, it’s a kind of easy, natural continuation. That is to say, for us old-heads and the second generation folk like Tracy, you get into this game and know that you’re immediately getting into a venture that requires a lot of politics. A lot of the work over the past thirty-five or forty years in this sort of second wave of black and African American studies is about figuring out what this is

about, and what we’re defining methodologically, conceptually, and pragmatically. These are matters regarding which we’ve had to fight about professionally in order to get recognition for doing something that more than a few in the prevailing disciplines said wasn’t worth being done, but should be. So this is a continuation of effort for me, with subsequent generations building on Tracy and my generations, and this is a multidisciplinary effort. It’s easier to do this when you have already-accomplished people involved, young folk, especially, who already have research projects up off the ground, and have begun moving into a different, more advanced stage of their work, and who are engaging these questions while considering “what’s going to be the next project?” For me, this seminar will be a very stimulating and fun context for raising issues that are very challenging and productive in the contemporary historical and cultural context. It’s no longer about legitimating what we do.

**SHARPLEY-WHITING:** I agree. My generation has benefited from the previous generation legitimizing the work that we do—they had to do the battling for the project of black studies, so, often, we take it for granted that people understand that it’s a worthy intellectual endeavor. From where Europeans stand, it is as well; in my position as a professor or as a director of black studies, I’ve always done European studies, black European studies, but it wasn’t until

much later that I began to interact with black Europeans and to recognize how important it is to really shine the spotlight on the way that this is an area of study that is as legitimate as studying the American black experience—to look at that experience globally. So what I recognize is that it’s a difficult question for them; the legitimacy question is a difficult one because you’re running up against old concepts of race. You have Germany, which has a history of being divided over the concept of race. The idea of difference in the study of race digs up a lot of nasty old history that, oftentimes, Europe would like, collectively, to wash away. It’s very easy for people to look at the United States and talk about racial tensions and “what we’ve done.” As a black person traveling in Europe, I hear all the time about slavery and racism, and how Europeans purportedly take a very different stand—“we don’t do that here, we don’t discriminate on the basis of race in Europe.” And yet you have this group of black Europeans who may not very well accept the term ‘black,’ but many of whom have had extremely marginalizing experiences; and it’s very important for us to know about those experiences, not just about black people, but intellectuals in general. The black presence in Europe is not a new phenomenon, and that’s something that troubles the concept of European-ness.

**OUTLAW:** Your mother and father aren’t who you think they are.

**SHARPLEY-WHITING:** Right! And you certainly wouldn’t be who you think you are without that other presence.

**OUTLAW:** Again, it’s as I was saying before regarding the U.S.; if most white people in this country really understood how powerfully penetrating the cultural creativity and contributions and appropriations of African peoples have been to who they are, they would really have to think about themselves very differently. The contributions and appropriations are so deep and wide that most white folks don’t know about all of this—just don’t know. And to come to know requires rethinking who one is. We would have to begin with a notion of whiteness that doesn’t include supremacy. Such rethinking is going to take a lot of work. The seismic shocks from doing so are not going to be mild. Rather, they will be powerful, and we will all have to get to it and through the shocks, which will be challenging. Very, very challenging.

**Letters:** How does this renegotiation relate to past renegotiations of identity and race?

**OUTLAW:** It actually makes me think about my very first trip to Europe, when I was an undergraduate, which would have been the summer of 1966—a pretty decisive period given the sit-ins and the Civil Rights Movement. It’s during this moment, while I was out in Scandinavia, that we get this first call for “Black Power!” In response, the U.S. and western Europe were having a hissy fit,

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asking “what does all of this mean?” For many in my generation of young black folks, it meant refusing to stand for the national anthem because we refused to identify with a racist U.S. It meant becoming disaffected with the U.S. However, when I got to Europe, Scandinavia, folks would greet us, “hello, Americans,” though all the while some of us were insisting, “no, no, that’s not what or who I am.” Having to deal with that kind of misrecognition is difficult; you have a sense of being distant from something while others identify you with

it. Pretty soon you have to come to terms with the fact that you are, indeed, shaped by that identity you seek to deny, with which you wish to disaffiliate. Years later, in 1974, I was a part of a U.S. delegation of African Americans who traveled to East Africa for the Sixth Pan African Conference. When the first planeload of delegates landed on the African continent, there was loud applause for being ‘back’ in the Motherland, and several people got off the plane and kissed the ground of Mother Africa (of course, they were kissing tarmac laid by Israelis,

which brings its own complications). However, two weeks later, when the plane carrying delegates landed at New York’s Kennedy Airport, there was even louder applause from many who were very glad to be ‘back home.’ In other words, there were a lot of people who, in a very short time, had come to terms with the fact that they were, indeed, Americans. On the way out of the country, they’d declared, “we’re against this racist U.S.” After about a week in Africa, some of the same folks had begun to say, “man, I sure wish I had a Big

Mac!”

*Letters:* Thanks to both of you for joining us, and for giving us an exciting glimpse into what promises to be a fruitful and unpredictable year. Your project shows promise for destabilizing notions of identity and having an impact on disciplines across the humanities and beyond the university.

## VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

### THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

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#### Statement of Purpose

Established under the sponsorship of the College of Arts and Science in 1987 and renamed the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities in 1989 in honor of Robert Penn Warren, Vanderbilt alumnus class of 1925, the Center promotes interdisciplinary research and study in the humanities, social sciences, and, when appropriate, natural sciences. Members of the

Vanderbilt community representing a wide variety of specializations take part in the Warren Center’s programs, which are designed to intensify and increase interdisciplinary discussion of academic, social, and cultural issues.

Vanderbilt University is committed to principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

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## Admiral Robert Penn Warren and The Snows of Winter

a tribute by William Styron

On April 10, 1975, the *Lotos Club*, one of New York’s oldest private literary organizations, paid tribute to Robert Penn Warren with a state dinner in honor of his soon-to-be seventieth birthday. Lionel Trilling, John Palmer, and William Styron gave remarks that evening. The draft notes for Styron’s speech were included in a large donation of papers Styron made to Duke University Library, and they were subsequently published in 1978 as a special edition pamphlet bearing the title “Admiral Robert Penn Warren and The Snows of Winter.” Styron later included the address in his volume *This Quiet Dust and Other Writings* as simply “Robert Penn Warren” in a section headed “Portraits and Farewells.” The essay is a touching illumination of the friendship between these two Southern writers, and a thoughtful reminder of the power of Warren’s most celebrated work, *All the King’s Men*.

I have been lucky to have known Red Warren well for quite a few years and to have been privy to certain personal matters known only between good friends. I am therefore aware of an interesting fact about Red’s early life that is not generally understood by less favored mortals. This is that, as a boy in his teens, Red’s simple but very red-blooded American ambition was to become an officer in the United States Navy. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the truth, not an idle fiction. Indeed, it was more than an ambition; it was a

goal very close of attainment, for Red had obtained his appointment and was all but packed up and ready to leave the bluegrass of Kentucky for Annapolis when he suffered an injury to his eye which made it impossible for him ever to become a midshipman.



Courtesy of Vanderbilt University Special Collections and University Archives.

Robert Penn Warren

There is irony in this, for it always has seemed to me that Red at least looks like a sailor. If you will glance at him now you will see it: that seamed and craggy face which has gazed, like Melville’s, into the briny abyss, that weather-wise expression and salty presence which have made him physically the very model of a sea dog; and, as a consequence, I have often become thoroughly bemused when speculating on Red’s career if he had gone off to

the Navel Academy. I would like to consider this prospect for a moment.

First, let no one underestimate the military mind; at the highest levels of command great brilliance is required, and for this reason Red would have been

what is known as a “rising star” from the very beginning. Thus I visualize the scenario—if I may use that awful word—like this. Number one in his class at Annapolis, Red becomes the first naval Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, where his record is also spectacular. He takes his degree in Oriental History, writing a thesis which is a revisionist examination of Genghis Khan, largely laudatory in tone. Later in my fantasy I see Red at the end of World War II, much deco-

rated, at the age of forty the youngest captain in the seagoing navy, attending the Naval War College at Newport, writing learned dissertations on the nuclear capabilities of the Soviet fleet. His recommendation is: Let’s press the button, *very softly*, before the Russians do. During the Korean War, a rear admiral now, he wins his fourth Navy Cross, is made commander in chief of the Pacific fleet, is on the cover of *Time* magazine, has a

tempestuous though necessarily discreet affair with Ava Gardner. Through the dull and arid years between Korea and Vietnam, Red Warren plays golf with Eisenhower, rereads Thucydides and Clausewitz, hobnobs with Henry Luce, Barry Goldwater and Mendel Rivers, and is appointed Chief of Naval Operations under Lyndon Johnson.

I don’t know why my fantasy brightens and becomes happy at this point. Maybe it’s because I see Red Warren miraculously turn a major corner in his life, undergoing—as it were—a sea change. He becomes a dove! After all, a great Marine general, ex-Commandant David Shoup, did this: why not Red in my fantasy? Now as he reverses himself, the same grand historical imagination which in his alter ego produced *All the King’s Men*, *World Enough, and Time* and *Brother to Dragons* is suddenly seized with the folly and tragedy of our involvement in Southeast Asia, so that on one dark night in 1966 there is a confrontation, many hours long, between the admiral from Kentucky—now Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—and the Texas President, two Southerners eyeball to eyeball; and in this passionate colloquy it is the *Kentuckian* who finally gains the upper hand with his forceful, humanitarian argument—founded upon the ineluctable lessons of history of which he is master—that this war can only lead to futility, disaster and national degradation. I even see the droplets of sweat on Lyndon

So by that fateful accident years ago, America lost a master mariner but gained a major novelist and poet, a superb essayist, a literary critic of great breadth and subtle discrimination, a teacher of eloquence, a sly and hilarious storyteller, and altogether one of the best human beings to break bread with...

Johnson's forehead as, after a grave long pause, he gives in, saying, "God damn yore soft-hearted hide, Admiral Warren, you've convinced me!" And immediately I see him getting on the telephone to McNamara: "Bob, git those advisors out of Vietnam! We're going to nip this here dirty little war in the bud!"

But this kind of wish-fulfillment becomes almost unendurable, and so in my mind's eye I bring Red's naval career to a merciful close, seeing him as grim and cruel reason dictates he most likely *would* be today—not basking in well-deserved homage at the Lotos Club but retired to the Pacific seaside at Coronado, cultivating prize asparagus or roses, writing letters to the San Diego *Tribune* about stray dogs, queers and the Commie menace, and sending monthly donations to Rabbi Korff.

So, by that fateful accident years ago, America lost a master mariner but gained a major novelist and poet, a superb essayist, a literary critic of great breadth and subtle discrimination, a teacher of eloquence, a sly and hilarious storyteller, and altogether one of the best human beings to break bread with, or join with in *spirituous* companionship, or just simply *be around* in this desperate or any other time...

I would like to conclude with a couple of brief reminiscences having to do with Red Warren which in each case are oddly connected with—of all things for two good ole Southern boys: winter snow. The first of these events occurred a long time ago

in New York City during the famous blizzard of late December 1947 (which many of you here doubtless still remember), when I—a young and aspiring and penniless writer up from the Virginia Tidewater living in a basement on upper Lexington Avenue—first read *All the King's Men*. I think it is absolute and unimpeachable testimony to a book's impact on us that we are

able to associate it so keenly with the time and the surroundings and the circumstances in which we read it. Only a very great work can produce this memory; it is like love, or recollections of momentous loving. There is what psychologists call a *gestalt*, an unforgettability of interwoven emotions with which the work will ever in recollection be connected with the environment. Somehow the excitement of reading *All the King's Men* is always linked in my mind with the howling blizzard outside and the snow piling up in a solid white impacted mass outside my basement window. The book itself was a revelation and gave me a shock to brain and spine like a freshet of icy water. I had of course read many novels before, including many of the greatest, but this powerful and complex story embedded in prose of such fire and masterful imagery—this, I thought with growing wonder, this was what a novel was all about, this was *it*, the bright book of life, what writing was supposed to be. When finally the blizzard stopped and the snow lay heaped on the city streets, silent as death, I finished *All the King's*

*Men* as in a trance, knowing once and for all that I, too, however falteringly and incompletely, must try to work such magic. I began my first novel before that snow had melted; it is a book called *Lie Down in Darkness*, and in tone and style, as any fool can see, it is profoundly indebted to the work which so ravished my heart and mind during that long snowfall.

Many years and many snowfalls later, I was walking with Red Warren one late afternoon on, of all absurd things, *snowshoes* through the white silence of a forest in Vermont—a rather clumsily comical trek which, had you told the young man on Lexington Avenue he would be making it in the future, would have caused him both awe and incredulity. Red and I were by this time fast and firm friends, bonded in a friendship long past the need of forced conversation, and as we puffed along in Indian file across the mountainous snowdrifts, each of us plunged in his own private meditation, it creepily occurred to me that we were far away from home, far away from the road, still miles away from anything or anybody—and that, worst of all, it was almost night. I had a moment of terrible panic as I thought that Red and I, having unwittingly strayed in our outlandish footgear off the beaten track, would find ourselves engulfed by darkness in this freezing wilderness, utterly lost, two nonsmokers with not a match between us, or a knife to cut shelter—only our foolhardy, vulnera-

ble selves, floundering in the Yankee snows. After the initial panic slid away and I had succumbed to a stoic reckoning, a resignation in face of the inevitable, it occurred to me that if I had to die there was nobody on earth, aside from perhaps Raquel Welch, that I'd rather freeze to death with than Robert Penn Warren: this noble gentlemen from Guthrie, Kentucky, whose humane good sense and lyric passion had so enriched us all through these many novels and poems and essays and plays, and whose celebration of the mystery and beauty and, yes, even the inexplicable anguish of life had been one of those priceless bulwarks against death in a time of too much dying. Just then I heard Red casually say, "Well, here's the road." And I was a little ashamed of my panic, but not of those thoughts, which also had included my heartfelt thanks to God that Red Warren never became an admiral.

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## "The Best Things in Life are Free" The Humanities and Money Lessons from Erasmus By Helmut Walser Smith

"The best things in life are free, but you can give them to the birds and bees. Money—that's what I want." So begins the hit song, first recorded by Barret Strong in 1960, then played by a number of groups, including the Beatles and the Flying Lizards. I remember the version of the Flying Lizards best, mainly because I sang it in a bus full of protesters headed to Washington to demonstrate a U.S. intervention in Nicaragua. This was in 1983. I know it was the version by the Flying Lizards because, for the first time, people brought boom boxes to demonstrations.

Why did we need money? I could not answer the question then, but I will try to answer it now—not, of course, for U.S. military policy, which then, as now, receives a great deal of money, but for the humanities, which did not and does not.

That humanists need money is not self-evident. In fact, money and contemplative scholarship have existed in historical tension. Of the three medieval orders—those who fight, those who work, and those who pray—we are closest to the latter, and the latter is supposed to be the farthest from the world and its goods. The humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries went some way to rectifying our distance from the world. Machiavelli, Erasmus, More—these men hardly shied away from wealth and power, and, indeed, they sought proximity to it. And power sought their

counsel. But this world was buried by the passions of the men who pray, and, in Europe, the principles of religious men rolled over the agendas of the humanists like an avalanche over saplings. This is a simplification, to be sure. Thomas More was a man of principle and a humanist; Philipp Melancthon was a reformer who understood compromise. Yet the catastrophic violence unleashed by the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries put an end to their world.

That world reemerged during the Enlightenment, when humanists again did not shy from the world and its allures. Locke, Hume, Voltaire, and Smith all thought about the world and the place of money in it. As a rule, they did not believe that culture flourished in a cave or in a monastery, but, rather, assumed that it burgeoned most fully in an age of luxury and refinement. Their vision, to be sure, was elitist, and in this sense they inherited assumptions from the humanists who preceded them. It is also true that subsequent eras have sometimes considered the most propitious condition of thinking to be solitude or the experience of persecution. But we cannot take these as counsels for considering the structure of a university. For counsel we can, however, look back to the humanists.

For anyone who needs to know why humanists need money beyond funding for basic research in archives and libraries, it suffices to read the

letters of Erasmus to his patrons. Erasmus, of course, needed money to live, "particularly because I am not even at liberty to live meanly, on account of my reputation, such as it is, for learning." But there were four further reasons he needed money. The first was to buy books—no small expense then. A lavishly illustrated *Chronology of the World* published in Nuremberg in 1493 cost the equivalent of five oxen, for example. Not all books were as expensive, and Erasmus exchanged much knowledge via the hand-written letter, print still being in its infancy. The second expense was for travel. "It is impossible for a fastidious man to go to Italy without a large sum of money," he complained. And, indeed, Erasmus traveled constantly, as it was in the exchange of intense conversation that ideas were born, horizons expanded, and reputations secured. Erasmus did not particularly enjoy travel; he complained about "all the time that must needs be spent on horseback in dull and unlettered gossiping." But at least on one occasion, while crossing the Alps, he amused himself by writing the *Moriae Encomium*, "In Praise of Folly." The third reason is that people came to him. Erasmus was the most sought-after man in Europe; to be a correspondent of Erasmus was a great honor, to visit him a still greater one. Even as the book revolutionized the exchange of ideas, those "flying carpets of knowledge" could not

completely replace the inspiration, charge, and challenge of actual encounter. This is no different today. Finally, Erasmus needed money to help his publishers, as publishing pathbreaking scholarship could be a publisher's undoing. In 1482, the immense cost of printing one of the first maps of the world sent its publisher into penury. The map showed Europeans north of the Alps where they were and what the earth supposedly looked like. Even if the maps betrayed a few errors (the Indian Ocean is landlocked, Scotland bends around the northern parts of Germany, and of course there are no Americas), its value as a contribution to knowledge was beyond doubt. But knowledge value is not always the same as commercial value, and this remains true today as well.

So why do humanists need money? Erasmus tells us it is to buy books, to travel, to host, and to publish. He also tells us it is to live, and, by living, he also meant working, and working meant reading and writing books and letters. Has this changed? Not really. Some institutions have favored gigantic, multi-centered, highly funded approaches to the creation of humanistic knowledge. Sometimes this is helpful—one thinks, for example, of the UNESCO project on the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This project brings together scholars from four continents, and they have collectively revolutionized our understanding of the duration,

## Books, “flying carpets of knowledge,” are wonderful to this end, but young scholars need to fly with them.

scope, and tragedy of that particularly heinous traffic in coerced labor. There are also highly funded interdisciplinary projects. The one I know best concerns the history of the German Bourgeoisie; it involved legions of scholars from history, sociology, and literature investigating the genesis, milieu, and career of a particular class in a particular time. It, too, brought forth remarkable works. But these projects are not the norm, and one must always calculate their opportunity costs—what scholars would have brought forth if left to develop their own paradigms. In any case, most humanists have needs closer akin to Erasmus's. They have a project—like Erasmus's translation of the New Testament from Greek into Latin—and they pursue it on their own, with some need for supplies (books), and some need to travel to people who can help them, and for those people to travel to the location of the person with the original idea. In cases where there is a disjuncture between the knowledge and the commercial value of a project, humanists also need extra money.

So far, the proposal is modest enough. But it is also the case that scholars now, like Erasmus then, have different needs at different stages of their careers, and any proposal to fund the humanities should reflect this fact.

As a young man, Erasmus often traveled to places like Paris, where he hoped to impress the esteemed Paul Gaguin with a book of his own

poetry and his tract *Antibarbari*; the attempt failed, and this was all the worse for the Paris humanists, as intellectual initiative now shifted away from the Seine and instead traveled up and down the Rhine. But the attempt was important, and we may see its importance mirrored in the support institutions now offered to young scholars who need to travel, both in their own countries as well as to other countries, where the networks are different, the scholarly cultures not the same, and the sense for what counts as an important contribution to scholarship differently understood. Books, “flying carpets of knowledge,” are wonderful to this end, but young scholars need to fly with them. This bringing of the word to different places is crucially important—as important as the more vigorously funded work of interdisciplinary research.

As Erasmus became a famous man, he did not have to travel to impress. People came to him. Basel in the 1520s thus became a vibrant center of intellectual life (and, not coincidentally, of commercial activity). By analogy, senior scholars in the humanities need the resources that will allow them to draw people to where they are. Conferences and workshops designed to create books are crucial ways that they shape their fields of knowledge. Erasmus's princely patrons knew enough not to dictate how Erasmus should structure his networks. But humanists nowadays are bound down by a series of

criteria that often have them more trying to meet guidelines than considering what problems are central and how to solve them. Interdisciplinarity should be encouraged, but it should not be an absolute criteria. Cooperation across schools should be furthered, but not by making it the precondition for funding. In economics, it is axiomatic that less advantage is created when you tell people how to spend their money. In the funding of intellectual life, the same principle pertains, perhaps with greater force. Erasmus still had to make his case to his patrons, and the same ought to hold now; funding should be competitive and decided upon by peer review. In the humanities, the possibility for further funding should not be part of the equation. Important should be the intrinsic quality of the proposal, supported in the case of senior scholars by a record of successful completion of works. Erasmus, after all, did not write to live; he lived to write, and where he wrote became a place of possibilities. Making this happen is what funding for senior scholars should be centrally about, but guiding innovation ends by constraining it.

What, then, would humanities funding look like?

1. Research funds. Modest, perhaps \$5,000 per year for the life of a project, with the proposal stating a publication date at the outset. This should be open across levels.

2. Expansive funding, especially for younger scholars, to bring what they have to say to

the attention of others in places other than the world.

3. Grants to senior scholars who are at that stage where they have a shaping effect on their respective fields of knowledge. These grants should be significant, not because senior scholars should have more money, but because of the considerable costs of bringing the world to them.

4. Publishing subsidies. In our own age, as in the time of Erasmus, publishing in the humanities is precarious business, and close correlation between commercial value and intrinsic value is by no means given. The word has always needed help, and, perhaps now, when the world is not so flat as we sometimes imagine, it needs more help than ever. Finally, because not all the world reads English, translation should be part of the general effort to fund the word.

So yes, “Money. That's what I want.” And it is in the best humanist tradition not to shy from it—to use it, in fact, to make the world of the humanities more present, international, and permanent. Does it require gigantic investment? No, and nor should it be measured against those fields that require such investments. Here we might reflect that in 1960, John Lee Hooker had already composed a version of our song, and had for a few years been singing it in the blues bars of Detroit—“I need *some* money,” Hooker more modestly sang.

## What We Are Reading

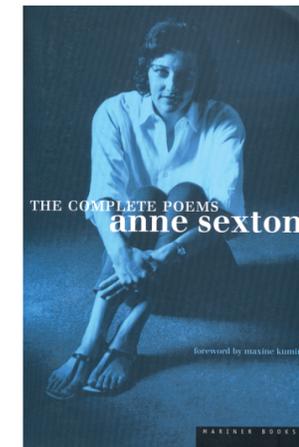
**L**ETTERS asks colleagues in the Arts and Sciences to share what books they've recently been reading or revisiting.

**Monica J. Casper, Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of Women's and Gender Studies:** Two of my current favorites are *Ethics of the Body: Postconventional Challenges*, edited by Margrit Shildrick and Roxanne Mykitiuk (MIT Press, 2005), and *The Complete Poems of Anne Sexton* (Mariner Books, 1999). *Ethics of the Body* is a collection of essays that use postmodern, feminist, and critical race theories to challenge conventional bioethics. Ranging across a variety of substantive topics—HIV/AIDS, genetics, addiction, intersex and reproductive technologies—the authors collectively assert that standard bioethics has failed to adequately grapple with, and thus to comprehend, the messy complexities of embodiment.

I'm reading Anne Sexton's poems for an entirely different set of reasons—mainly because I'm intimately attracted to troubled women's writings about self, body, trauma, psychic distress, domesticity, reproduction, death, and the travails of being female. When Sexton writes, in “Consorting with Angels,” “*I am tired of being a woman*” and complains about “*the gender of things*,” I feel a frisson of recognition and pleasure in my belly. Her beautifully frank language, which so offended her male critics, offers a thrilling tem-

plate for scholars like me who relish writing in a scholarly voice but who also want to tear down the walls of academic convention.

**Lynn Ramey, Associate Professor of French:** Sylvia Huot's *Postcolonial Fictions in the Roman de Perceforest* (Brewer, 2007) looks at a particularly difficult, poorly edited, multi-volume medieval text, “Perceforest,” and reads it in light of postcolonial theory. Her critical



analysis of the text is a fascinating reflection of current trends in medieval studies. Huot insists on continuity rather than rupture at the time of the Renaissance, finding medieval models for present-day concepts such as colonialism. In addition, this book is typical of a trend that seeks to find relevance in the medieval past as we struggle to understand our own problems of racism and nation-

alism. Definitely aimed at a specialist reader, *Postcolonial Fictions* pushes boundaries and forces medievalists to ponder on the direction and aims of their discipline.

**Edward Wright Rios, Assistant Professor of History:** I have been trying to get a handle on a pair of twentieth-century apparition movements in Mexico. In one case, an indigenous woman talks to Christ, and, in the other, an eight-year-old Indian girl visits with the Virgin Mary and an angel. In both cases, popular movements emerge around the seer, and the documentation is very spotty. Recently I read anthropologist Paolo Apolito's *Apparitions of the Madonna at Oliveto Citra* (Pennsylvania State U. P., 1998). Apolito was on hand as recent Italian Marian visions were taking place, and he produced a sensitive exploration of how complicated these kinds of events can be. Among the most interesting aspects he details is how a group around the seers creates a single coherent narrative and interpretation of the originally chaotic visions over time. Closer to home, I have been reading a Mexican version of the late post-revolutionary social-reform novel, Agustín Yañez's *Las tierras flacas* (1961). Heavy-handed and trying desperately to be hip, *Las tierras* paints a rural Mexico stubbornly resistant to the advance of modernity. If it were up to Yañez, Mexico would scrap the magic that the next generation of Latin American authors

would find so attractive. The author's portrayal of rural women as the keepers of a brutally primitive, miracle-obsessed, saint-cluttered, doom-and-gloom religiosity/medicine provides an excellent entrée into mid-twentieth-century Mexican debates.

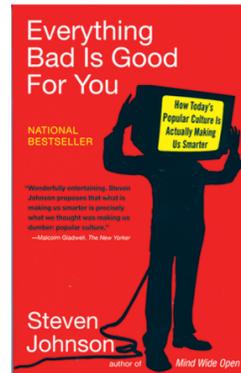
**John Sloop, Professor of Communications Studies and Associate Dean of Arts and Science:** Longaker, Mark Garrett. *Rhetoric and the Republic: Politics, Civic Discourse, and Education in Early America* (U. of Alabama Press, 2007). Longaker provides a fascinating account of the role that education served in the early United States Republic, especially in terms of the “rhetorical education.” After providing a thorough-going analysis of theories of pedagogy, as implied by and in “founding documents,” Longaker provides a materialist analysis of the preferences such theories implied. In the latter chapters, Longaker uses student lecture notes, classroom activities, lesson plans, reading lists, disputation exercises, and literary society journals to provide case studies of the early rhetorical education at Yale, Columbia, Pennsylvania, and William and Mary. Ultimately, Longaker not only provides a fascinating history, but he offers a materialist challenge to any idea of early education as united in its approach to republic civic discourse.

Johnson, Steven. *Everything Bad is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture is Actu-*

ally *Making Us Smarter* (Riverhead Books, 2005). A popular trade book I will always wish that I had authored. By combining neuroscience, media theory, and economic analyses, Johnson makes a convincing argument not only that popular mediated texts have been increasingly complicated over the last 50 years, but also that

their increasing complication encourages participants to think in more complicated ways. Countering Neil Postman's notion that mass mediated texts amuse and therefore simplify dominant modes of understanding, Johnson illustrates that the increasingly complicated plotlines of television shows, videogames, and internet dis-

courses have all worked to subtly complicate the ways people think, ultimately raising overall IQ levels. While I cannot claim that you won't continue to disagree with Johnson, you will feel convinced that the issue is far more complicated than you ever imagined.



## 2008–2009 Warren Center Fellowship Opportunities

The Warren Center will sponsor two fellowship programs in the 2008-2009 academic year: one for faculty members and one for Vanderbilt University graduate students.

The 2008-2009 Faculty Fellows Program will be co-directed by Monica J. Casper (Sociology/Women's and Gender Studies) and Vivien Green Fryd (History of Art) and will focus on the topic "New Directions in Trauma Studies." The seminar will explore the emergence of trauma studies as an interdisciplinary field of examination. In the wake of such recent large-scale traumas as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, everyday violence such as rape and incest, and historical catastrophes such as the Holocaust, it seems timely that scholars intellectually engage with multiple dimensions of human suffering and its repercussions and representations.

Although 'trauma studies' has emerged as an object of schol-

arly attention, little agreement exists about the boundaries, scope, and content of this new field. This seminar will turn a critical lens onto the 'fact' of trauma, lived experiences of trauma, stories and representations about trauma, and intellectual and pedagogical issues related to scholarly investigations of trauma. An interdisciplinary approach will greatly enhance this emerging area of scholarship to further understand the individual and collective experiences of trauma, to intervene in human suffering resulting from trauma, and to assist in preventing traumatic events. While psychological and clinical responses are critical to the alleviation of human suffering, so too are humanistic understandings of how traumas are represented and understood culturally, social science perspectives on how traumas and organizational responses to them may be patterned, institutionalized, and contested, and interdisciplinary perspectives on

how people and communities make sense of individual and collective trauma through literature, art, music, dance, spoken word, media, science, and other cultural forms.

The Warren Center will sponsor a Visiting Fellow with expertise in the area of study in addition to selected members of the Vanderbilt faculty. Information regarding the internal and external application process can be obtained from the Warren Center or its website, [www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw\\_center](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center).

The Warren Center will also sponsor an interdisciplinary year-long Graduate Student Fellows Program. Vanderbilt University graduate students in the traditional humanities departments or those whose work is of a humanistic nature are invited to apply for the six dissertation-completion fellowships. The fellowship provides a stipend of \$18,000 as well as a \$2,000 research fund. Students are not allowed to hold any other form of employment during the term

of the fellowship. Graduate Student Fellows are expected to complete and defend their dissertations before the start of the next academic year.

The Graduate Student Fellows will meet in weekly seminars at the Warren Center, presenting their work to the seminar and discussing texts of common interest. The Warren Center will also arrange for a number of visiting speakers to meet with the seminar during the year to provide opportunities for discussion of issues pertinent to scholarly life, such as the art of writing, successful strategies for publication, funding opportunities, grant writing, and workshops on delivering academic presentations. Each Warren Center Graduate Student Fellow will give a public lecture in the spring term. Fellows will also be expected to be active participants in the life of the Warren Center during their fellowship year.

## 2007–2008 Warren Center Faculty Fellows

TINA MARIE CAMPT is an associate professor of women's studies at Duke University with secondary appointments in the departments of history and German; she is also a visiting associate professor of women's studies at Vanderbilt. The author of over eleven articles and chapters on race in Germany, her first book was *Other Germans: Blacks, Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender and Memory in the Third Reich* (University of Michigan Press, 2004). Campt's forthcoming publications include work on diasporic hegemonies and popular culture. She is this year's William S. Vaughn Visiting Fellow.

DEVIN FERGUS is an assistant professor of history. An active graduate and faculty advisor, his work centers on black nationalism and black power in America from 1965-1980. His first book chapter, "The Black Panther Party in the Disunited States of America: Constitutionalism, Watergate, and the Closing of the Americanists' Mind" appeared this year in *The Black Panther Party in Historical Perspective* (Duke University Press); currently he has one completed book project and another—"The Ghetto Tax Since the Seventies"—in process.

KATHRYN T. GINES, assistant professor of philosophy and African American and diaspora studies, specializes in continental and African American philosophy as well as race and gender theory. In addition to authoring over five articles and chapters, her work includes a co-translation of Alain David's "Negroes" (in *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy*, 2003). Currently, she is guest

editing a special issue of *Philosophia Africana* with Ronald Sunstrom and has two manuscripts; the first, "Alexander Crummell and Anna Julia Cooper: Constructions and Constrictions of Race and Womanhood," is an analysis of race, gender and class in 19th century America, and the second, "Rethinking 'The Political': Racism, Colonialism, and Revolutionary Violence," offers an examination of black racial identity and political violence.

CATHERINE A. J. MOLINEUX is an assistant professor of history whose research interests involve race, slavery, and empire. The author of four articles, her most recent article, "Pleasures of the Smoke: Popular Representations of Black Virginia in Early Modern London's Tobacco Shops," is forthcoming in *William and Mary Quarterly*. Her current book project, "The Peripheries Within: Race, Slavery, and Empire in Early Modern England," examines early modern visual and literary representations of black slavery and their relationship to popular beliefs about race and slavery from the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries. Additionally, she is co-editing *The Theory and Practice of Atlantic History* with Natalie Zacek.

IFEOMA C. K. NWANKWO is an associate professor of English whose specializations include Latin American studies and African American studies. Her book, *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness, and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), offers a comparative study of people of African

descent in Cuba, the U.S., and the British West Indies following the Haitian Revolution. In it, she argues that fear fostered by the revolution determined and has continued to determine the ways African-descended peoples in this hemisphere relate to each other, as well as to other American populations. Her co-edited project "Rhythms of the Black World: Rituals, Remembrances, and Revisions" is under consideration.

MOSES EBE OCHONU, assistant professor of history, hails from Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. He has authored a number of articles and book chapters, including "Visionary Anthropology: Simon Ottenburg and the Transformation of Africanist Cultural Studies" (in *Igho Religion, Social Life, and Other Essays by Simon Ottenburg*, 2005). In addition to teaching classes on Subsaharan Africa, colonial experience, and foreign policy, Ochonou is also preparing his first book manuscript, "Colonial Meltdown: Northern Nigeria in the Great Depression."

LUCIUS TURNER OUTLAW is a professor of philosophy and African American and diaspora studies, as well as the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education. The 2002 Chancellor's Cup winner, he is involved on the editorial board of *Speculative Philosophy* and has authored numerous articles and book chapters in addition to *Critical Social Theory in the Interests of Black Folks* (Roman and Littlefield, 2005). This year he is the Jacque Voegeli Fellow; he is the co-director of the Warren Center Fellows' seminar.

T. DENEAN SHARPLEY-WHITING is a professor of African American and diaspora studies, women's studies, and French, as well as the director of the program in African American and diaspora studies and the director of the William T. Bandy Center for Baudelaire and Modern French Studies. In addition to having numerous articles, book chapters, and co-edited volumes to her credit, she is currently working on a book project: "Women of the Petit Boulevard: African American Women in Jazz-Age Paris." This year, she is the Spence and Rebecca Webb Wilson Fellow and will co-direct the Warren Center Fellows' seminar.

HORTENSE JEANETTE SPILLERS is a professor of English, and her work exists at the intersection of psychoanalysis and black feminist criticism; her specializations include the English 19th century novel. The author of numerous articles and book chapters, her books include *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2003). Spillers is also the member of a number of editorial boards, including those for *Black American Literary Forum* and *The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature*, and she is the author of a number of short stories, including "Isom" (*Essence*, 1975), the winner of the 1976 Magazine Award for Excellence in Fiction and *Belles Lettres*.

## 2007–2008 Warren Center Graduate Student Fellows

MICHAEL CALLAGHAN graduated *magna cum laude* with high honors in English and Anthropology from Vanderbilt University in 1998. A Ph.D. candidate in archaeology in the Department of Anthropology, Callaghan's research interests include the integration of economy and political organization in prehistoric civilizations, the acquisition and deployment of social power among prehistoric elites and non-elites, and the application of ceramic analysis to investigate social, religious, economic, and political aspects of prehistoric civilizations. Prior to his work at Vanderbilt's Holmul project, Callaghan served as ceramicist, Lab Director, and Co-Director of the Vanderbilt Cancuen Regional Archaeological Project in the Pasion River Region of Guatemala.

JOSH EPSTEIN is a doctoral candidate in the English Department, writing his dissertation on the relationship between modernist musical and literary cultures. His dissertation, "Sublime Noise: Musical Culture and the Modernist Writer," argues that modernists (Eliot, Stein, Pound, Forster, Sitwell) understood music as an aesthetic mediation of the various social, political, and technological noises of modernity. The project considers how social spaces such as the modernist

salon shape these figures' responses to sound. Engaging Adorno, Lukács, and other critics of modernist aesthetics, the dissertation reflects on the potential for interaction between literary criticism and the "new musicology." He is the George J. Graham, Jr. Fellow.

MEGAN MORAN is a doctoral candidate in history. Her dissertation, titled "Patriarchy in Practice: Women, Family and Power in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy," examines the workings of patriarchy in late medieval and early modern Italy by investigating women's interactions and relationships in family life. Her work explores how culturally constructed gender norms intersected with the lived experiences of women and men in the prominent Florentine Spinelli family; she is particularly interested in exploring the fluid and dynamic nature of patriarchy, specifically how both male and female relatives actively collaborated, contested, negotiated, and resisted various forms of patriarchy as they participated in family affairs.

GEORGE SANDERS is a doctoral candidate in sociology. His dissertation, titled "Late Capital: Negotiating the New American Way of Death," examines the distribution of capital in the funeral industry and the effects

that it has on the construction of meanings around memory, death, and ritual. In particular, he is interested in the use of amusement to conceal the expansion of the American funerary apparatus while it engages in its unique forms of cultural management. He is the American Studies Fellow.

NICOLE SEYMOUR is a Ph.D. candidate in English. She comes to Vanderbilt from UCLA, where she graduated *summa cum laude* with a B.A. in American literature and culture, and a minor in women's studies. She has taught several courses at Vanderbilt, including, most recently, "Queer Theory and Ecocriticism: Literary Intersections." In addition to those two areas, Nicole's research interests include feminist theory, nineteenth-century American literature, film, and contemporary literature. Her dissertation project is titled "Foreign Bodies and Anti-Bodies: Queer Bodily Transformations in Twentieth-Century Literature and Film."

DAVID M. SOLODKOW is a doctoral candidate in Spanish. His dissertation, titled "Ethnographic Writing, Racialization of the 'Other,' and Eurocentrism in Latin America: A Cultural Critique of Modernity" examines how Latin America was constituted, during the

Colonial period as an entirely new and original social experience, where a new ideological category ('race') determined the formation of social identities. His initial hypothesis states that, beginning with the European 'Discovery' of America, ethnographic writing has played an essential role in the production of new social and racial subjectivities. He uses the term 'ethnographic writing' to describe a series of mechanisms of representation (stereotypes, statements, tropes, syllogisms) whose primary function was the ideological, political and aesthetic construction of cultural and racial difference.

HEATHER TALLEY is a doctoral candidate in sociology. Her dissertation, "Face Work: Cultural, Technical, and Surgical Interventions for Facial 'Disfigurement'," relies on analyses of reality television (*Extreme Makeover*), biotechnological innovations (face transplantation and facial feminization), and charitable work (*Operation Smile*). She considers how the imperative to repair the human face is constructed and negotiated in each of the sites of intervention. Throughout, she examines the sociological significance of the human face.



## Newberry Library and Warren Center Join in Hosting Pre-Modern Race and Sexuality Symposium

On March 30, 2007, the Robert Penn Warren Center and the Newberry Library co-sponsored the interdisciplinary Pre-Modern Race and Sexuality Symposium in Chicago, Illinois. Drawing together scholars from across the United States, the conference was the product of the Warren Center's 2005-2006 faculty fellows' seminar, which had involved scholars from across the English, French, history, and Spanish and Portuguese departments. Organizers Leah S. Marcus (English, Vanderbilt) and Holly Tucker (French, Vanderbilt) put together four discussion-centered

panels intended to raise and address questions regarding the overlap between pre-modern race and sexuality, and pre-modern and modern vocabularies of race and sexuality.

Throughout the symposium, panelists invited attendees to reevaluate their most basic assumptions about race and sexuality; they also raised questions about whether time boundaries exist that limit our ability to discuss such concepts, and about the costs of periodization. Geraldine Heng (English, University of Texas), for example, asserted that our post-9/11 culture calls for a "long history of race" that might

recalibrate our present understanding of race and racial conflict. Her co-panelist, David Nirenberg (Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago), reiterated this idea. In his own presentation he pointed to methods of cultural reproduction that perpetuate racism; however, he also warned against the "tendency of the historical imagination to think of ideas and concepts as having a discrete origin in a particular people." A search for connections, according to many at the conference, should not be mistaken for a search for origins.

In this sense, the conference was a great success. The Warren

Center and the Newberry Library's joint effort was able to bring scholars, graduate students, and members of the Chicago area into a conversation about the important connections between race and sexuality. Such a conversation, in a concrete way, tied together with the fellows' original project of interrogating pre-modern cultures' interactions with contemporary discussions of race, sexuality, and subjectivity as well as the breakdown of modern understandings of difference.

## Historian Charles S. Maier to Present Harry C. Howard, Jr. Lecture

Charles S. Maier, Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History at Harvard University, will present this year's Harry C. Howard, Jr. Lecture. His title is "The Space of Nations: Territory and History Before Globalization." Maier, a renowned scholar of European social and intellectual history, is the author of *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors* (2006), and he has written and edited books on communism, the Holocaust, national identity, political economy, the politics of inflation, the Marshall Plan, and other themes. Together with William Kirby and Sugata Bose, Maier is collaborating on a global history of the twentieth century, and he is writing a history of modern territoriality. He has been the recipient of several distinguished fellowships,

including those from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. He served as director of the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies from 1994-2001, and again in autumn 2006. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1991.

The Harry C. Howard, Jr. Lecture Series was established in 1994 through the endowment of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Nash, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. George D. Renfro, all of Asheville, North Carolina. The lecture honors Harry C. Howard, Jr. (B.A., 1951) and allows the Warren Center to annually bring an outstanding scholar to Vanderbilt to deliver a lecture on a significant topic in the humanities.

## "Between Word and Image" Fellows to Host Symposium

On October 25th and 26th, the Warren Center will sponsor a two-day campus symposium organized by its 2006-2007 "Between Word and Image" Fellows and designed to coincide with a Vanderbilt Fine Arts Gallery exhibition co-curated by the Warren Center Fellows and the gallery's director, Joseph Mella. The exhibition, "More Than One: New Contemporary Prints and Multiples from the Vanderbilt University Fine Arts Collection," on view from October 4 - December 7, will showcase the gallery's recent acquisitions in the permanent collection and will highlight those which reflect the relation between word and image, a question the seminar group spent the year exploring. In addition, the Fellows commissioned local artist

Erika Johnson to create an original installation to be included in the exhibition. The concurrent symposium will feature a keynote address by Arthur C. Danto, Jonsonian Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Columbia University and art critic for *The Nation*; entitled "Before and After: Two Decades After the Sistine Chapel Controversy," the lecture will take place on October 25 at 4:10 in Wilson Hall 103. In addition, David Morgan, the Phyllis and Richard Duesenberg Professor in Christianity and the Arts at Valparaiso University, will present a noon lecture on October 26 in Buttrick Hall 123. Following the Fine Arts Gallery exhibition, Johnson's art work will be on permanent display at the Warren Center.

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