

School of Humanities

Rice University ~ Spring 2004 Newsletter ~ Volume I, Number 1

Letter from Gary Wihl, Dean of the School of Humanities

As I begin my term as Dean of Humanities at Rice, I would like to express my personal thanks to the friends and graduates of the School who provide significant support through their gifts and endowments. Your recent gifts will help us to enhance and strengthen our activities and programs.

I am delighted to be joining the faculty and leadership of Rice at this time. Thanks to the great efforts of previous Deans Gale Stokes and Judith Brown, I assume the position of Dean as we are nearing the completion of a major capital renovation project of the entire Humanities corridor on campus. By the end of the academic year, most of the Humanities departments will be housed in beautiful new offices and classrooms in Herring Hall, Rayzor Hall, and the Humanities Building.

I am also pleased to announce the addition of a number of superb new faculty to the School, who will revitalize existing programs and bring new knowledge and research to the School's scholarly activities. In the area of French history and literature, two assistant professors are joining us. Daniel Cohen comes to us from Johns Hopkins, where he has been a visiting scholar. He obtained his Ph.D. from New York University in 2000. Daniel works on the status of immigrants and refugees in postwar France, considering issues of assimilation that have been overlooked

by traditional economic accounts. Louisa Shea just completed her doctorate at Harvard University where she won numerous teaching and dissertation awards. Louisa's dissertation examines the use of the ancient philosophy of cynicism across a spectrum of writers associated with the European Enlightenment, from Diderot and Rousseau to Wieland and Sterne.

The study of German history and literature will be enriched by three appointments. At the rank of assistant professor, Christian Emden comes to us from Cambridge University. Christian is a scholar of Friedrich Nietzsche, whose writings have influenced contemporary theories of classical tragedy, ethics, and rhetoric. Christian's research promises to build links to our programs in classics and philosophy. At the associate level, we are joined by Lora Wildenthal in history and Sarah Westphal in German studies. Lora obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1994, and she is the author of *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945*, published by Duke University Press. Her current research extends to the study of human rights activism in postwar Germany. Sarah Westphal obtained her Ph.D. from Yale University in 1983 and has taught at Duke University, McGill University, and for the last three years at the University of South Carolina. A medievalist by training, she is the author of *Textual Poetics: German Manuscripts, 1300-1500*, which is now a standard citation in major reference works on medieval German literature.

Moving off the continent, we have two new assistant professors, one in the Department of Art History and one in the Department of Hispanic Studies with a focus on Latin America. Shirine Hamadeh obtained her Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in



1999, and also has a Masters in Architecture from Rice. Her research questions the assumption that Ottoman architecture modernized under the influence of Western aesthetics, arguing instead that changes were part of a larger pattern of urbanization and the creation of public spaces for a new middle class. Kate Jenckes obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Oregon in 2001, and she too has a keen interest in how we define modernity. Focusing on the writings of Borges and the German critic Walter Benjamin, she discusses the image of history in Latin American culture, comparing images of the city, national identity, and biography.

The Department of English made two senior appointments this year. Associate Professor Justin Cronin is a creative writer whose fictional work *Mary and O'Neil* won the prestigious Pen Hemingway award for the best debut work in 2002. Justin's appointment buttresses the wealth of creative activity not only in the School of Humanities, but of course, more widely at this university. Cary Wolfe has been appointed as the Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Professor of English. The author of major works on Pound and Emerson and contemporary literary theory, Cary has

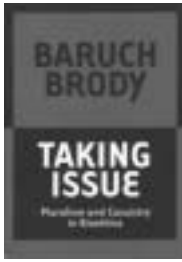
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also contributed to books on bioethics and systems theory. His newest book, published by the University of Chicago, examines the impact of animal rights on discussions of human race and gender.

Assistant Professor Peter Weyand has been a research physiologist at Harvard University and a research fellow in evolutionary biology at the U.S. Army Research Institute for Environmental Medicine and joined the Department of Kinesiology in January of last year. He has an outstanding record of involving undergraduates in lab research and has won major teaching awards. Unusual for a humanities school, Peter is a funded researcher who will collaborate with faculty in our Institute for Biosciences as well as contributing to our program in kinesiology.

President Gillis appointed four faculty to endowed professorships last year. With his appointment as the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in Humanities, Baruch Brody is actually acquiring his second endowed professorship. He already holds the Jaworski Chair of Biomedical Ethics and Health Policy at Baylor College of Medicine, where he has directed the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy since 1982. Baruch is the author or editor of six books on topics such as abortion, life and death decision-making, and the ethics of biomedical research. He is also principal investigator of the largest sponsored research program in the School of Humanities, a \$1,000,000 project on medical ethics supported by the Ford Foundation. I am particularly pleased to be able to recognize the significant contributions of the humanities to other areas of research in the university – in this case, the areas of biomedical research and jurisprudence.

Also in the field of philosophy, Steven Crowell becomes the Joseph and Joanna Nazro Mullen Professor in Humanities. Steve is the author of a major study of two of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. His book won the prestigious Edward Goodwin Ballard Prize for the best book in the field of phenomenology in 2001. Steve has not only written original studies of major philosophers, he has also led developments of his field as editor of the Yearbook of the Phenomenological Society and editor of Ohio University Press's Series in Continental Thought. In the brief time that I have been at Rice, I have also come to appreciate the breadth as well as the depth of Steve's scholarship, since he supports more generally work of colleagues in European intellectual history, Enlightenment and early modern philosophy, hermeneutics, and aesthetics. He is also a keen supporter of junior faculty in the humanities, a true sign of intellectual leadership in my opinion.

Helena Michie is appointed as the Agnes Cullen Arnold Professor in Humanities. Helena has won two of the most prestigious awards in the humanities, a Guggenheim Fellowship and a National Endowment for the Humanities summer research grant. She is the author of two books on representations of women during the Victorian period, an area that has been exceptionally productive and innovative within the broader field of literary history. Her work is widely cited, and its originality has been recognized by leading scholars in the field. She has been a leader within Rice in the development of women's and gender studies, and I hope that she will continue

to play a leading role as that program continues to evolve as a field of graduate study and research. Her current work focuses on representations of marriage in Victorian literature.

Susan Wood, Chair of the Department of English, is appointed as the Gladys Louise Fox Professor of English. Susan is a highly accomplished poet. She is the recipient of major national awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Lannan Fellowship. Her book of poems, *Asunder*, was one of five winners in the National Poetry Series in 2000, which was followed by the Texas Institute of Letters poetry prize in 2002. Her poetry has appeared in the volume *The Best American Poetry 2000*, edited by David Lehman; in *The New Yorker*, *Antaeus*, *The Antioch Review*, *The Southern Review*, and *The Paris Review* – in other words, in just about every major poetry journal in the nation. Her work has been praised for its emotional depth, ability to depict real life situations, and a rich humane imagination. The best way to appreciate the qualities of Susan's poems is to pick up a volume of her poems and read it for yourself.

Within the humanities, it is exciting to see that students are being drawn to new areas of study that have emerged recently within universities. Our Program for the Study of Women and Gender is growing at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In the near future, we hope to develop film and media studies. Our Department of Philosophy continues to provide one of the top programs in the country in medical ethics in collaboration with the Texas Medical Center. And, with the addition of some stellar young faculty, the Department of Linguistics is drawing hundreds of students to its introductory courses.

With regard to the scholarly achievements of the faculty, there is a wealth of material that simply cannot be included in this letter. If I were to include every journal article and conference paper, I would be writing a bibliography rather than a letter. This letter focuses on major publications that have appeared in 2003, honors and awards received by the faculty, and special mentions of major initiatives, events, or program accomplishments.

In the Department of Classics, Hilary Mackie published *Graceful Errors: Pindar and the Performance of Praise* with the University of Michigan Press, and Harvey Yunis edited *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece* from Cambridge University Press. Harvey's collection received a full-page review in the *Times Literary Supplement*.

In the Department of English, Lucie Fultz published *Toni Morrison: Playing with Difference* from the University of Illinois Press. Betty Joseph published *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* in the prestigious Women in Culture and Society Series from the University of Chicago Press. Caroline Levander co-edited *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader* from Rutgers University Press. Bob Patten's *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, co-edited with John O. Jordan, has appeared in its fourth reprinting, this one being the first paperback edition from Cambridge University Press. Cary Wolfe published *Animal Rites: American Culture, The Discourse of the Species, and the Subject of Theory* with the University of Chicago Press. Justin Cronin's prize-winning novel, *Mary and O'Neil*, has been translated into French under the title *Huit saisons*, with Mercur in Paris.

Faculty in the Department of English also received a number of major awards and honors last year. Jane Chance received a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship and a Mellon Fellowship from St. Louis University. Helena Michie was appointed as a visiting fellow at the University of Southern California Law School in February, which was followed by a visiting appointment at the University of

Kansas in June as the Holmes Institute Professor. Last July Susan Wood was honored with an invitation to serve on the faculty of the prestigious Warren Wilson MFA Program for Writers in Swanaoa, North Carolina.

In the Department of French Studies, Michel Achard co-edited with Susanne Neimeier *Cognitive Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, and Foreign Language Teaching*, published by Mouton de Gruyter. And Deborah Nelson-Campbell edited *The Journals of Tommie L. Hubbard: Madison County, Kentucky, 1898-1900*, published by the Jesse Stuart Foundation.

Jack Zammito, who is jointly appointed in the Department of German Studies and the Department of History, continues his analysis of the foundations of the sciences and social sciences with *A Nice Derangement of Epistemes: Post-Positivism in the Study of Science from Quine to Latour*, published by the University of Chicago Press. Ewa Thompson secured a grant from the Kosciuszko Foundation for the eighth consecutive year, enabling the Department of German and Slavic Studies to appoint a lecturer in Polish and Central European Studies.

In the Department of Hispanic Studies, Rafael Salaberry co-edited with Barbara A. Lafford *Spanish Second Language Acquisition: State of the Science* with Georgetown University Press.

The Department of History produced a number of books in 2003. John Boles co-edited with Bethany L. Johnson *Origins of the New South Fifty Years Later: The Continuing Influence of a Historical Classic* with Louisiana State University Press. Carl Caldwell published *Dictatorship, State Planning, and Social Theory in the German Democratic Republic* with Cambridge University Press. Michael Maas published *Exegesis and Empire in the Early Byzantine Mediterranean: Junillus Africanus and the Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis*, volume seventeen in the Classics and Christendom series from Mohr Siebeck in Tübingen. Carol Quillen produced a substantial revision of Petrarch's *Secretum* along with a letter



Matthias Henze,
Department of Religious Studies



Hilary Mackie,
Department of Classical Studies



Carol Quillen,
Department of History



Masayoshi Shibatani,
Department of Linguistics

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from Petrarch to Cicero, an excerpt from Augustine, and an excerpt from Virgil's *Aeneid* as *The Secret by Francesco Petrarch with Related Documents* from Bedford/St. Martin's Press. Allison Sneider assisted Ann D. Gordon in producing a major source book for women's history and U.S. political history entitled *National Protection for National Citizens, 1873-1880: The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Volume 3* from Rutgers University Press. Marty Wiener published *Men of Blood: Contesting Violence in Victorian England* with Cambridge University Press. Alex Byrd was awarded an ACLS/Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship for Junior Faculty and a visiting fellowship from the Shelby Cullom David Center for Historical Studies. He declined the offer of an additional Mellon Fellowship to work at the Huntington Library in Los Angeles.

In the Department of Kinesiology, newly-appointed Assistant Professor Peter Weyand won a major research grant in the amount of \$347,737 from the U.S. Army Medical Research and Material Command. The grant will support a method for the simultaneous assessment of anaerobic and aerobic fitness.

Robert Englebretson, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Linguistics, published *Searching for Structure: The Problem of Complementation in Colloquial Indonesian Conversation* with John Benjamins, Amsterdam. I am particularly pleased to report that Matt Shibatani was awarded a research grant from Rice's new Shell Center for Sustainability Studies in their first competition. Matt will use that grant to fund partially a postdoctoral researcher on the rapid disappearance of language groups from our globe as economic development intrudes further and further into the few remaining preserves of totally native cultures.

In the Department of Philosophy, Baruch Brody has gathered a collection of his essays into a volume entitled *Taking Issue: Pluralism and Casuistry in Bioethics* published by Georgetown

University Press. Sherrilyn Roush was awarded a visiting fellowship at the Center for Philosophy of Science at the University of Pittsburgh. Rachel Zuckert won two major fellowships last year: an ACLS/Andrew Mellon Junior fellowship and a research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In the Department of Religious Studies, Matthias Henze's edition of *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* has been translated into German, published by Göttersloher Verlagshaus. Jeffrey Kripal co-edited with Rachel Fell McDermott *Encountering Kali: In the Margins, at the Center, in the West*, published by the University of California Press. David Cook won the Thomas Robbins Award for Excellence in the Study of New Religious Movements for an article on suicide attacks in contemporary Jihad literature.

In the Department of Visual Arts, an etching by Karin Broker was acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Darra Keeton received a residence fellowship from the Yaddo Artists Retreat in Saratoga, New York, and John Sparagana was appointed visiting artist at Brown University during the month of October. Brian Huberman produced a documentary film about Holocaust survivors living in Houston. Geoff Wunningham published a book of photography, *Along Forgotten River*, funded with a \$100,000 grant from the Texas State Historical Association.

I would like to give special mention to events or initiatives involving faculty in the School of Humanities. Hamid Naficy's work on exile, diaspora, and national cinema was the focus of a three-day conference last June, sponsored by the University of Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis and the Dutch Film Museum. Professor Naficy currently chairs the newly-restructured Department of Art History, and he is leading the effort to establish a film studies program at Rice. Krista Comer, from the Department of English, organized a major four-day conference of the Western Literature Association featuring over sixty panels, including Chicano filmmakers and journalists. Also in English, Mark Ramont and Patricia Rigdon continue to sustain the Rice Players and the Hammond Hall theater on a shoestring,

producing innovative works such as Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* and Paula Vogel's *And Baby Makes Seven*. I would like to see student theater put on a steadier financial base in the near future. Mark Kulstad in the Department of Philosophy organized a major international conference on "The Young Leibniz" involving fifty papers. The conference took place under the auspices of the Leibniz Society of North America (where Mark serves as President), and the international G. W. Leibniz Gesellschaft.

Last, I want to mention one of my activities because it is relevant to some planning discussions for the School. Last fall, the Council of Graduate Schools in Washington, D.C., invited me to chair the committee to select the winner of the CGS/UMI Distinguished Dissertation Award. The committee, consisting of five graduate school deans, reviewed thirty-four nominations from graduate schools across the country in virtually every discipline in the humanities. After a lengthy selection process, the committee awarded the prize to Li Yu, a doctoral student from Ohio State University, for her dissertation titled *A History of Reading in Late Imperial China, 1000-1800*. Having recently reviewed a strong sampling of humanities dissertations in classics, religion, history, European and Asian literatures, and art history, I can say with some confidence that the humanities are definitely a source of excellent, path-breaking new scholarship. This experience bolsters my belief that the School needs to strengthen and develop doctoral research as one of its top priorities.

The School has remarkable scholarly strengths, and I have drawn upon only the most recent evidence of its collective academic depth.

Thank you again for your generous support and interest in Humanities.

With all good wishes,

Gary Wihl

SPECTRUM

Across Disciplines in Humanities

The study of humanities offers perhaps the broadest and most enriching range of study in higher education. This issue highlights how two scholars in the School of Humanities incorporate the study of psychoanalysis in their respective methodologies to enhance their research and teaching.

**Statement by Marcia Brennan,
Assistant Professor of Art History,
Rice University**

Like many disciplines in the humanities, art history draws on psychoanalytic methodologies in its analysis of works of visual art. Within modernist art history and film theory in particular, psychoanalysis has been especially useful in shedding light on notions of gendered spectatorship and the desiring gaze; issues of reflection and mirroring in the construction of the spectacle; the displacement of anxiety and desire through the device of the fetish; and the institutional and discursive structures in which conceptions of dominance, marginality, and subjective power are situated.

While these areas of inquiry are quite familiar, what is perhaps less well known is the extent to which the theoretical concepts of psychoanalysis – as well as discourses from popular psychology – have impacted both the

artistic production and the critical reception of modernist artworks historically.

In my study *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz and American Formalist Aesthetics*, I traced the ways in which the photographer and entrepreneur Alfred Stieglitz and his affiliated critics drew on early twentieth-century discourses on sex and the psyche (particularly those of Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis), in order to characterize the artists of their circle as producing a vital, nonrepressed American art. In particular, Stieglitz and his critics routinely described the often highly abstracted paintings of Georgia O’Keeffe, Arthur Dove, John Marin, Marsden Hartley, and Charles Demuth as transparent displays of the most intimate aspects of the self.

In a sequel study entitled *Modernism’s Masculine Subjects*, which will be published later this year, I examine the ways in which the

writings of popular psychology – among other prominent cultural discourses on gender, desire, and bourgeois subjectivity – impacted critical understandings of the art of Henri Matisse, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and the Post Painterly Abstractionists. In the year of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* – when social pressures on men to conform threatened cherished notions of masculine vitality, freedom, and authenticity – powerful critics often characterized modernist paintings as metaphorical embodiments of both idealized and highly conflicted conceptions of masculine selfhood.

Thus, in various ways, much of the allure *and* the controversy surrounding twentieth-century modernist painting can be traced to the belief that the artists’ gendered and corporeal structures, as well as their psychic drives, were creatively projected onto abstracted visual fields.

**Statement by Meredith Anne Skura,
Libby Shearn Moody Professor of
English, Rice University**

Psychoanalytic method has been useful to me in my current study of early autobiographical writing in English. For example, the recent discovery of Richard Norwood’s seventeenth-century journal promised a rare opportunity to learn about the private life of a man long known only in his public roles as navigator and surveyor of Bermuda. The trouble was that Norwood’s journal is different from the confessional memoirs on today’s best-seller lists. It concerns itself primarily with external events and

landmarks of spiritual development. Like other early autobiographical texts, it remains stubbornly reticent about feelings and fantasies – so much so that many scholars have argued that early writers like Norwood *had* little “private” life, or none that we can learn about.

Designed to tease out the implications of reticent speech, psychoanalysis provides a way into such texts. In reading these, my first assumption is that – like people – texts do not always mean what they say or only what they say. To supplement the literal reading, I reread the journal as I would read a Rorschach Test, looking at aspects of the text not usually

considered by other interpreters: the mere “noise” and marginal details, like Norwood’s use of movement and color in descriptions; the kind and number of people represented; the proportion of action versus evaluation; the tone and emotional import of the narrative, and so on. All of these can illuminate a writer’s attitudes, expectations, and biases toward what he describes, even in a seemingly objective, “neutral” record. They can show how his mental world is encoded in – even if not represented in – the text.

Second, I assume that texts not only say things but do things for the

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writer as he presents himself or herself to an audience. Writers often have other – and possibly conflicting – motives besides the primary overt motive of giving an accurate report of themselves, though they may not always be conscious of these motives.

Taking a hint from the psychoanalyst, I also read Norwood's journal as I would had he come for a psychoanalytic consultation and presented his life story as background. That is, I look not only at what he says, but why he might be saying it in this particular way, at this particular time, and in this particular format. To work towards understanding his motives, I ask, What does he emphasize? Repeat? Leave out? Does he frequently qualify or take back what he has just said? At what point in the story? Such interruptions to a smooth, objective flow can be signs of conflict between the text's ostensible purpose and story, and the other motives and stories that the writer may have tried to suppress or ignore. Psychoanalysis cannot lead magically to those other thoughts, plucking out murderous impulses or forbidden desires from behind the text.

However, like an experienced hunter, it can uncover the easily overlooked tracks and spoor that suggest that such a beast has passed through the territory.

It can therefore complicate a more conventional reading which takes Norwood at his word. Thus, Norwood says he decided to write his life story because he is getting old and wants to give an account of himself to God and earn forgiveness. To be sure, the text begins with a prayer, and tells a typical conversion story moving from Norwood's childishly materialistic dream about finding Eden on earth by the side of a magnificent rushing river, and ends with his mature realization that the only true happiness comes from giving up such dreams and devoting oneself to the Heavenly Father.

But a psychoanalytic reading can call attention to aspects of the narrative that counter this interpretation and suggest instead a battle against the effort Norwood describes and sanctions. Norwood keeps returning to images that point back to his initial Edenic dream and suggest an ongoing (and very reluctant) struggle against the river's exhilarating flow, even after he had officially given up his dream. He seems to associate the river with the energy of his own physical being, his own flowing, running body. The river's

importance calls attention to the many other strikingly kinesthetic images of falling, running, hanging, and tossing – often into or across water – and his struggles against them. These repeated moments suggest that Norwood was a man who always tried to restrain his flows. First, the flow of actual liquids out of his body, like the tears that betray him when he “is no longer able to contain [him]self.” Then, too, the flow of speech, from his childhood stuttering (“dragging in my speech”) to his careful, almost fussy, narrative style of qualification and categorization. Finally, the struggle between flow and restraint helps explain the journal's odd structure, which leads from opening prayer to climactic realization that there is no earthly paradise, but then goes on for another seventy pages in a more chaotic account that seems addressed to another human reader – not to God.

It is as though the journal gave Norwood a space in which both to retell his struggle in the narrative and to re-enact it by telling it. The act of writing then led Norwood to a new and different resolution for his old conflict. Clearly, the psychoanalytic method can be helpful in understanding the dynamics of self-scrutiny in an early modern journal as well as in modern forms of analytic dialogue.

ON THE MOVE with Sylvan (continued from page 7)

of receiving packages parachuted in by the Allies and his teary realization that – in partisan warfare – the enemies they captured had to be killed, I became intrigued.”

This experience led to her undergraduate honors thesis in History, titled “Mussolini is not always Right: Motivations behind Student Anti-Fascist Resistance in Mussolini's Italy.” She visited Italy over the winter break to conduct interviews with several aging veterans of the anti-Fascist Resistance in Italy. The interviews yielded intensely personal memories of what it meant for youths, often as

young as 16 or 17, to head to the hills to fight Mussolini and Hitler. “Sylvan's undergraduate thesis was remarkable,” says Peter C. Caldwell. “It was beautifully written and extensively researched – a model of good historical scholarship.” Sylvan will graduate with a B.A. in History in spring 2004.

After returning from Switzerland for a brief visit in Houston, Sylvan will travel to Asia using funds from one of the four Garside Prizes awarded by the Department of History last year. She will spend at least four months in China and Southeast Asia looking at the people's struggles for cultural and individual autonomy under authoritarian regimes, and she hopes to spend some time volunteering for a refugee or human rights organization.

Sylvan is currently leaning towards pursuing a career in human rights law and will begin the application process for law school this summer, although she is still interested in possibly pursuing a future in academia. “I loved my time at Rice, and I enjoy the university culture,” says Sylvan. “As a history major, I particularly benefited from Rice's excellent history faculty, who bring their subjects to life. Ideally, I would love to combine law practice with teaching and will be looking into joint J.D./Ph.D. programs.”





ON THE MOVE

with
Outstanding Humanities Senior
Leigh Sylvan

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Edited by Angela Wren Wall

In fall 2003 undergraduate History major Leigh Sylvan announced to friends and professors in the United States that minivans serving as public transportation in Kampala, Uganda, were remarkably efficient. According to Peter C. Caldwell, Chair of the Department of History at Rice University, Sylvan reports that “they are much more reliable than the Milanese transportation system, although a comparison with Italian services might not be saying much.”

The Wagoner Fellowship enabled Sylvan to translate her scholarly work into empirical practice – by studying development and humanitarian work in Uganda and in Switzerland during the 2003-2004 academic year. “By gaining a more complete understanding of how international agencies formulate policy and how development organizations implement work on the ground,” explains Sylvan, “I felt that I could make an informed choice about where I would like to work and what I would like to accomplish.”

Many people found Sylvan’s choice to study in such disparate locales perplexing. “Spending several months in each place affords me the opportunity to look at development and humanitarian assistance from both the grassroots and the higher echelons of policy-making,” continues Sylvan, “and provided an opportunity to evaluate policy decisions based on experience in the field – not just literary arguments.”

Sylvan spent fall 2003 in a School for International Training (SIT) program in Uganda, where she combined a course in development with an internship working with refugees. One highlight of the trip, according to Sylvan, was when the group was

granted the rare opportunity to attend a personal audience with Uganda’s president of nearly two decades, Yoweri Museveni, who expressed his opinions on Uganda’s development, need for access to trade, and AIDS crisis.

Sylvan also learned a great deal from working with and interviewing urban refugees in Kampala. “Many of the refugees with whom I spoke had suffered trauma and found it very difficult to make ends meet. Nevertheless, I was constantly impressed by the grace with which they endured their difficulties.”

The students’ interactions with locals also suggested that an inferiority complex existed among many black Africans. “It was troubling that many Africans with whom we spoke asked us for help, indicating that they held a higher regard for ‘Western’ advice than for local knowledge. For example,

“As a history major, I particularly benefited from Rice’s excellent history faculty who bring their subjects to life.”

despite our backgrounds as students from urban America, we were often treated as experts on issues as diverse as raising poultry and visa acquisition. We came to feel that the presence of prosperous, foreign development workers had inadvertently fostered dependency thinking among many locals, leading them to look outside for answers rather than at their own substantial resource base. As the semester passed, many of us became convinced that development practice needed to be a more empowering experience, enriching peoples’ lives



through a more dynamic interaction of internal and external resources.”

Currently, Sylvan is pursuing an SIT program in Geneva looking at international relations and social justice. “The academic program – which affords the opportunity to visit numerous international organizations – looks exceptional. As was the case in Uganda, the final weeks of the program will be dedicated to pursuing a topic of particular interest to me,” states Sylvan. “I plan to examine the phenomenon of human trafficking into the European Union and to evaluate the systems in place to combat it.” Sylvan also hopes to attain an internship, possibly lasting through the summer, with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or the International Organization for Migration.

Early on, Sylvan made international work a central part of her college career, having worked at Penguin Press in London, at the U.S. Embassy in Rome, and at Oxfam America in Washington, D.C. During a semester abroad in Milan, Italy, she discovered the Italian author Italo Calvino’s work on Italian partisans who fought Mussolini. Her professor’s father was invited to speak to Sylvan’s literature class about his experience as a partisan. “While still a teenager,” Sylvan recalls, “this man had left university and taken to the mountains to fight the Fascists and occupying Germans. While listening to his stories

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Humanities Study Abroad Course ~ Spring 2004



During the spring break, Bas Poulos, Professor of Visual Arts, and Caroline Quenemoen, Assistant Professor of Art History and Classical Studies, will lead twenty-one students through several of the most important archaeological sites in Greece as part of a Martel College course organized by Martel Masters Joan and Arthur Few.

The course's dual emphasis on visual arts and ancient art history requires students to place themselves critically within the western tradition of travel to Greece that began in the eighteenth century. Before going on this trip, students will have participated in studio classes introducing them to basic principles of drawing and lectures exploring the diverse literary and artistic works prompted by western travel to Greece. They will also examine the role of archaeology and Greek nationalism in shaping western perceptions of the ancient world.

Throughout the course students will keep a journal that includes both writings and artwork. While on site they will hear lectures, then use their journals to engage issues ranging from the differences between the Doric and Ionic orders to the poetics of ruins, from the relationship between culturally conditioned expectations and personal reality to the juxtaposition of antiquity and modernity. Nightly critiques will provide students with the opportunity to share their work, reflect on their experience, and – in the process – refine their understanding of their engagement with ancient and modern Greece.

Upon their return to Rice, these students will continue to work on their journals in preparation for a final critique followed by the opening of an exhibition of their work at Martel College.

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