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Letters
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The Alien Forms of Race in Early Modern England

By Jean Feerick

When people ask about the nature of my research, I usually describe it as a project that investigates how race as a category of identity was instantiated in Western Europe during the early modern period. This response often invokes something of a puzzled expression from my interlocutors. "Hasn't 'race' always been around," they suggestively inquire? "Haven't there always been people of color and systems of discrimination to navigate those color lines?" "In what way can you say that race as a category of identity is locatable in time, that it has a history, a certain set of historical trajectories?" To many, the claim I make in a project I've provisionally titled "Out of England: Relocating Race in the Renaissance" is a counterfactual, something that basic commonsense argues against. Imagining a world before race as we know it seems for many a near impossibility.

In fact, despite the work of race theorists, scientists, sociologists, and others in repudiating the widespread cultural assumption that race is an empirically valid designation (as opposed to one that is socially "real"), race continues to be an aspect of identity that many take to be natural, one many believe we are born into and that constitutes an inseparable part of who we are as individuals. As an identity tag, it seems to stretch back into the distant reaches of time, an ascription that presumably has always been and will always be. As long as there have been people, this logic argues, there have been "races." But categories that seem natural and immutable, as the work of poststructuralist theorists has been demonstrating for years now, tend to be culturally specific even if purporting to be universal. In fact, the greater the aura of eternity, the greater should be our resistance, our skepticism in the face of a concept that, I would suggest, should instead be seen as catalyzing a social formation, distilling a rather specific cultural logic. Powerful transmitters of ideology, social categories like race tell us a good deal about how a society organizes itself. And, like the societies they make sense of, such categories change across time.

Jean Feerick

In my sustained reading in and around the cultural productions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England—in texts ranging from the literary, to the popular, to the loosely scientific—I have seen the category of race used in compellingly different ways than we use it today. Race, it seems, describes a different social configuration than what we have come to accept as normative. How, then, do we deal with this strangeness, the foreignness of the past, as evidenced even within a period that some would identify as the beginning of "modernity," the beginning of how we think today? Do we translate this strangeness of the past into forms proximate to our own, so that we see a version of ourselves in what has come before us? Such an approach predominated in traditional historiography, which tended to emphasize continuities of form between now and a distant past, weaving a history of ideas across vastly different periods. But more recently, poststructuralist theory has forced literary critic, historian, anthropologist, and ethnologist alike to acknowledge that in translating the forms of the past into contemporary terms we have been "reading through" and

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implicitly disregarding the "syntactical strategies" structuring the past. With regard to "race," we assume that there is some object called race "out there," which is invoked variously in different periods. To presume as much is to treat language as a transparent container of evidence about the past, as a "value-neutral instrument of representation," a move that poststructuralists identify as a gross misrepresentation of the operations of language.[1] An alternative approach might be to consider how any given object—even an "object" such as race—is constituted, not just described, by the different modes of discourse available at any given moment. What happens, that is, if we actually try to inhabit the difference of past discursive systems, rather than "unmasking" such difference by reading the past through the lens of modern systems of thought?

In bringing together a group of scholars who are actively investigating how such changes should be interpreted, the Warren Center seminar "Premodern Others: Race and Sexuality" has provided me with the ideal context in which to develop my ideas about how premodern paradigms of difference break with modern paradigms. As a group, our interests are connected in that we do not presume that the category of race is a transhistorical and immutable fact of biological and social life. Instead, each of us is engaged in various ways in testing the claims of literary scholars and historians who have argued that the tendency to subdivide the human race into groupings governed by phenotype may be a relatively recent phenomenon in Western history. Some of the arguments we are actively engaging suggest that the emergence of racial categories should be connected to the scientific "developments" of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, such as evolutionary theory and the drive toward biological taxonomies. In the seminar, we began our collective investigation into such claims by reading the work of historian George Fredrickson, who has suggested that as a subdivision of humanity, race in its modern association with phenotype and biological essence appears as late as the nineteenth century. I found myself particularly intrigued by Fredrickson's further claim that racial stratification necessarily follows on the heels of the massive social reorganizations carried out by the revolutionary struggles of the late eighteenth century. According to this argument, the European West had first to break with deeply hierarchical social structures before the logic of racial classification could take hold as a real social force. Although this may seem counterintuitive, in this account racial classification and the racisms that it spawns emerge as something of a "safety valve" for or a correction to the radical drive of egalitarian philosophies. Once "all" men were produced as equals, Fredrickson proposes, a theory had to be devised to systematically exclude some from full personhood.[2]

But what does race mean in a social system that does not claim to represent all men as equals, as was certainly the case in early modern England? What are the differences of kind that such a social system purports to describe? I agree with Fredrickson's suggestive point that any account of race in the earlier periods must take account of the vast divergences of social structure between then and now and ask how these alternative ways of imagining the social body shaped how difference was understood. Perhaps I can begin by directing our attention to aspects of identity to which early usages of the term race do not stand in relation. I find compelling and centrally problematic for those tracing continuities between then and now the fact that early usages of the term "race" do not privilege skin color or complexion in the way that modern racial paradigms do. Dictionaries record references to race in association with the human race, or to describe different breeds of horses, or to describe the connections among kin groups through bloodlines. But there is little evidence that race was put in syntactic relation to skin color. This is not to say that differences of skin color were not a part of English and European ethnographic accounts of distant lands. They were. But it is to say that skin color was not the central node of identity that it would become. As Roxann Wheeler has suggestively argued for eighteenth-century Britain, "White is not a term of subjective identification but an attribute."[3] In fact, early modern theories of color work against modern racial theories in compelling ways. For one thing, the period positions discussions of skin color within a larger discourse of the body rooted in Galenic humoralism. This model perceived the body as constituted by four fluids, called humors, which existed in different combinations in any person. Both one's internal complexion (also called temperament or disposition) and one's external color followed the qualities of the humor that dominated in one's body. Humors were nothing like static essences but rather fluids determined in part by one's environment, components of a bodily system permeated by a surrounding world. For this reason, humoral dispositions were thought to vary in accord with the qualities of the climate one inhabited.

Early modern complexions, therefore, need to be seen as abiding by a logic of alterability that contrasts in compelling ways with the logic of modern racial systems, which thrive on notions of biological determinacy. Earlier embodied theories observed a variety of factors that could change complexions, both internal and external. As Europeans encountered Native Americans, for instance, one of the prevailing theories used to explain difference of skin color looked to the widespread native practice of applying dyes and paints to the skin. This practice was seen as having the accumulative effect of altering the natives' collective color and suggests that differences in complexion were considered relatively superficial. But the complexions of Englishmen, it needs to be emphasized, were hardly immune to these same transformations. Although we might see them and classify them as a group of "white" European colonists, they by no means enjoyed such epistemological certainty. Indeed colonists newly transplanted to Virginia and even New England, not to mention the West Indies, wondered how their own complexions might be transgenerationally altered with the change of climate. This is a topic I explore more fully in readings of plays of the Jacobean stage, which, I argue, were imaginatively working through the various challenges that the colonization of Virginia, then actively underway, presented to the nation at large. I read both Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and Fletcher and Massinger's *Sea Voyage* as sustained engagements with how foreign soils and climes might renature the bodies of English people.[4] Part of the motive on the part of propagandists who argued that the climate of "New" England was comparable to that of "old" England despite substantial evidence to the contrary was to respond to such fears. English people from a range of subject positions—planters, dramatists, poets, and royalists—were involved in different ways in actively sorting through the implications of being displaced from English soil and the networks of power, prestige, and identity which that soil embodied.

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As this overview might suggest, this earlier, widely embraced understanding of embodied life presents a series of challenges to those who seek to trace notions of difference in this period to skin color. Firstly, skin color as theorized in a humoral model is not at all a permanent state. It varies with the humors, which in turn vary with climate, diet, and passion among other factors, sometimes profoundly. Secondly, the logic that enfolded early ideas of skin color does not abide by the oppositions upon which modern racial thinking thrives. Accounts of skin color in the period are observant of a range of different skin colors, including green and yellow, no less than black and white. Science and popular knowledge would need to undergo profound shifts before a modern taxonomy of difference rooted in skin color could carry the force of a racial system.

If, then, the Renaissance sits at a "racial crossroads" of sorts, not least because it is the period wherein colonization and the slave trade begin to take root, first, among the Spanish and Portuguese, and, subsequently, among the French, English, and Dutch, it is important to emphasize that profound ideological shifts would necessarily accompany the rise of those dominating systems. Rather than assuming that a modern ideology of race was already available to justify these systems, my research demonstrates the unevenness of the process that enabled it. If many critics of race search out its early manifestations in practices and analyses surrounding skin color, I follow a different trajectory, one that tries to return race to the signifying system to which it was conjoined in early modern England. If critics have tended to see race as axiomatically connected to skin color, I emphasize that usages of race in the period connect it to an embodied system rooted in blood,[5] the period's ultimate carrier of difference and the substance that justified the organization of society into its two basic kinds: elite and common members. This older idea of race organized the social body vertically, hierarchically, and in accord with ranks. If there is a crucial border that race-as-blood insists on, then, it is less that between an imagined collectivity within a state, as against a set of visibly distinct others "out there," than hierarchies internal to the state. That is, it is a border that articulates the distinctions between an elite body and a mass body, between those of rank, who enjoy the privilege and visibility of having a race and blood, and the nameless and unremembered many. *The Winter's Tale* encapsulates this logic of difference when it juxtaposes members of a "nobler race" with those of a "baser kind" (4.4.95). Moreover, if as modern readers we, following Iago, define Othello as a "black man," we should also observe and ask what it means that he describes himself with reference to his race, blood, and stature, as a man "of royal siege" (1.2.22). Such identifications rooted in blood, race, and lineage have much to do with this period's racial stories, even if they have been marginalized thus far by the histories we have told. In what way, I ask, were these older notions of race adjusted in the crucible that was colonization?

Such adjustments crowd the textual record on English colonization, although we will not necessarily detect them if we only consider race in relation to skin color. In texts across a range of genres that work through the implications of English migration to foreign climes and soils, intense discussion of the impact of such change on blood crowds the record. Insofar as we have imagined English colonizers as united in their whiteness, we oversimplify their positioning. Men, and then women, of a range of social ranks came to the colonies in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Those who stayed at home, again from a range of social positions, imagined what would happen to them and theirs over time. What their narratives tell us is that they hardly considered themselves united along an axis of skin color, as members of a white race. Instead, their sense of themselves as English is inflected by their sense of themselves as occupying a precise station within the social fabric that constituted England. Moreover, as they work through the displacements to identity that colonization enabled, I see evidence that this language of blood, which was the axis upon which identity at home was structured, begins to give way to new readings of the body, so that the values that blood embodies begin to shift.

You might wonder how English writers who were invested in the plantation effort expressed their imbrication in a system of race built around the symbolics of blood. Let me offer a few suggestive readings. Writing his romance epic *The Faerie Queene* largely from his "home" abroad in Ireland, Edmund Spenser urges colonists in his tightly woven allegory to pay strict attention to tempering the passions of their blood in attempting to subdue the Irish abroad. Blood, in this account, is the key to a whole system of difference. If the Irish are not legible as "other" through an optic that emphasizes skin color, they are othered through an elaborate system of distinctions that lodges difference in the qualities of blood. In portraying them as having impassioned and distempered blood, Spenser describes them through a language often used to describe commoners, people of "base blood" at home in England. A sign of an inability to self-govern, the turbulent and passionate blood that describes both individual Irish bodies and the Irish social body at large works to justify the conquest of the Irish. In his political tract on Ireland, this theme takes new form in his insistence that planters carefully supervise the upbringing of their children, so that young heirs do not have prolonged contact with the breast milk of Irish nurses. If we understand that in earlier theories of the body breast milk was homologous with blood—that it was literally blood in heated form—this might resonate with worry about how elite English blood is being remade in Ireland. His concern about how English offspring are nurtured, that is, obliquely registers a concern about social displacement, about how noble blood might be jeopardized through plantation in Ireland. For settlers like Spenser, this was no theoretical matter, since they had found an earlier round of English colonizers virtually indistinguishable from the native Irish. Spenser's attention to the details of embodied practice, I argue, functions as a defense against a similar degenerative slide.

We do not presume that the category of race is a transhistorical and immutable fact of biological and social life.

I read texts about English plantations in the West Indies as similarly worrying about what the alterations to blood that the new environment and the new cultural practices it elicited would involve. A settler for a short time in the late 1640s and early 1650s, Richard Ligon urged that planters carefully regulate the body's spirits—a term closely connected to blood. As a royalist gentleman, Ligon's sense of himself as English was entangled with his sense of himself as a member of an elite group connected through a semiotics of blood. It is not surprising to find his account of how the foreign air of Barbados is modulating his physical identity to be mediated through a discussion of how it is altering his properties of blood. For Ligon, properties of blood have everything to do with how much and what kinds of labor a person should perform. Insofar as planters allow their blood to become distempered through the consumption of hot liquors, they disrupt the hierarchies governing the plantation system and are reproved by Ligon, as by other visitors to the fledgling plantations. If dark skin begins to acquire its modern form in and through a plantation system based on the labor of slaves and indentured servants, Ligon's text reveals the extent to which this early period continued to draw heavily on another language of difference rooted in blood.

If I have thus far pointed to fears and worries about the malignant force of non-English milieus, my project also attends to arguments, dramatic and propagandistic, to the effect that plantation could serve as a purgative force, an activity with the potential to "quicken" bodies grown lethargic at home that, arguably, betrayed a decline from an originary British stock. Such an argument was often deployed in the context of settlement of Virginia. By grappling in implicit and explicit ways with perceived changes to blood, these writers worried about the remaking of a substance that was intimately connected both to their place within a social hierarchy (i.e., as elite, middling, or base men) and to their sense of themselves as English. They also were actively involved in rewriting that social body. If, as one fictional plantation account records, one could leave England with only a modest claim to blood and race, the crucible that was colonization enabled different emphases to be made. Barring a claim to elite blood, planters could describe themselves instead as having English blood or Christian blood in order to gain access to social power in these emerging polities.

In the language of tempered or distempered blood that is so prominent in texts of a colonialist nature, writers of the period begin to reorganize what blood and race could mean. Once Englishmen imagined planting themselves beyond the shores of England, I suggest, blood's meanings altered. Often not entitled to colonial lands by virtue of old systems of blood, planters found new ways of justifying their claims to colonial lands. They also struggled for a language that would demonstrate their proximity to those who remained in England. By actively establishing and attempting to abide by various physical regiments, they sought to identify themselves as properly English, as anything but alien. If, as modern readers, we allow ourselves to be guided by postcolonial theoretical models that presume the "hegemony of imperial systems of control," we overlook a whole species of moments that reveal the "precarious vulnerability" of the English colonizer as he sought to wiggle his way out of a longstanding racial system rooted in blood.[5] In part, I argue, English colonizers slowly succeeded in doing so by inventing a new system of race, one that sought to displace blood as the carrier of difference with the difference of skin color. But this new social system would be a long time in the making, and differences of blood would be entangled around it from the very start. How colonization forced the unraveling of an earlier social system rooted in blood so as to make way for a system of race structured around skin color is the process I seek to elucidate in the project supported by my fellowship at the Warren Center.

[1]For this phrasing, see Hayden White, "Foucault Decoded: Notes from Underground" in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Johns Hopkins UP: Baltimore and London, 1978).

[2]George M. Fredrickson, *A Short History of Racism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002).

[3]Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2000), 74.

[4]See Jean Feerick, "'A Nation . . . Now Degenerate': Shakespeare's *Cymbeline,* Nova Britannia, and the Role of Climate and Diet in Reproducing Races," *Early American Studies* 12 (2003): 30–71; and my forthcoming article "'Divided in soyle': Plantation and Degeneracy in *The Tempest* and *The Sea Voyage," Renaissance Drama* (summer, 2006).

[5]Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1995), 97.

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Race and Relief in New Orleans: A Hazardous Topography

Craig E. Colten, the Carl O. Sauer Professor of Geography at Louisiana State University, will give a talk at Vanderbilt University entitled "Race and Relief in New Orleans: A Hazardous Topography" at 4:10 p.m. on January 26, 2006. His talk will focus on the impact of New Orleans's environmental and social legacies on the human costs of Hurricane Katrina and the quality of the local and national response. Professor Colten is the author of *An Unnatural Metropolis: Wresting New Orleans from Nature* (Louisiana State University Press, 2005), an interdisciplinary examination of New Orleans's long battles with its environs. In the book, Colton traces the many modifications to the city's natural environment from 1800 to 2000. Each structural manipulation of the environment had an impact on the city's social geography as well. Colten's work introduces an important environmental perspective to the history of urban areas. Colten's other publications include *Transforming New Orleans and Its Environs, The American Environment, The Road to Love Canal,* and *Louisiana Geography.*

The program is cosponsored by the Warren Center and the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies as part of an annual lecture series that highlights work in the humanities or social sciences that has a direct effect on public policy.

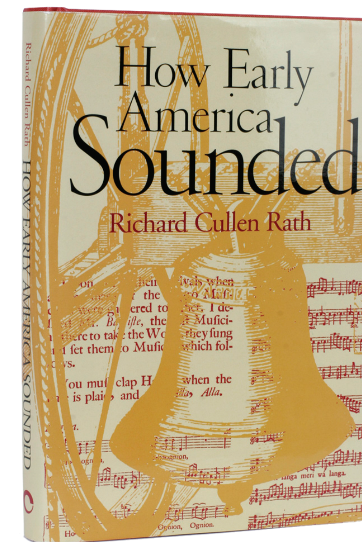
What We Are Reading

What books are our colleagues across the campus reading? *Letters* will be including in our pages a new feature in which we ask our colleagues to share with us their insights regarding two books that they have recently read or revisited.

William Caferro, associate professor of history: Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (1759–1767). This book changed me from a math and science person to a humanities person. I read it again and again, and laugh anew. It plays with the reader and with the whole novelistic form. It is learned but does not take itself seriously; it gives insights into human nature, but is utterly absurd; the presentation is digressive, the writing style discursive. It is, in short, the perfect prelude to an academic career. I have often wanted to meet Uncle Toby.

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston, 1944). There is to my mind no analysis of economic history that is more thought-provoking than Polanyi's. His take on the medieval economy, brief and succinct, raises profound questions about the structure and scope of financial matters then, and their connection to today. His stress on the importance of governmental policy, his suspicion of "free" markets, has encouraged me to look beyond the traditional explanations, beyond the all-consuming influence of scholars like Henri Pirenne. What is unique about the book is that it has made me reexamine not only the period I study, but the world I live in—the world of growing international trade associations and advocates of global free markets.

Barbara Hahn, Distinguished Professor of German: Wolfgang Büscher, *Deutschland, eine Reise* (Berlin, 2005). A journalist, Büscher traveled along the many borders of Germany, borders that have become entangled in a difficult, even murderous history. He simply asked who lives there, how they relate to people on the other side, and



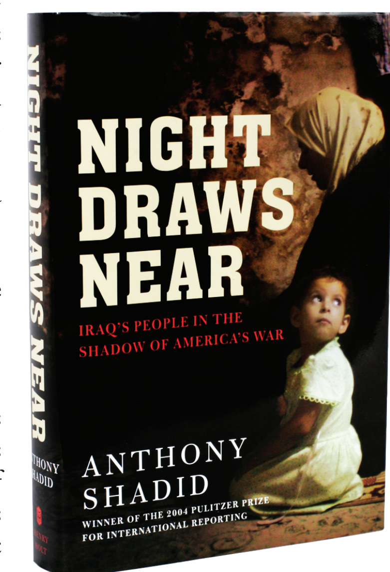
what border relations, when seen up close, are actually like. This is a personal book, full of encounters, but for that all the more illuminating.

Joachim Radkau, *Max Weber: Die Leidenschaft des Denkens* (Hamburg, 2005). Billed (falsely) as the first comprehensive biography of Max Weber, this is an infuriating book. A senior historian at the University of Bielefeld, Radkau both identifies uncritically with Max Weber and trivializes the drive behind Weber's thinking to compensation for his sexual impotence. Weber's intellectual problems, a defining moment of modernity, are thus psycho-banalyzed.

Gregg Horowitz, associate professor of philosophy: T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven, 2001). This book, like the one that follows, is concerned with why a version of the taboo on graven images has returned to the heart of artistic practices in the twentieth century. Why can't we make representational pictures anymore, Clark asks, in the pursuit of sensuous experiences? On almost every page, this immensely rich book forces one to think differently about what's in a picture.

Eric Santner, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago, 2001). Santner is perhaps the best literary reader of Freud today, and in this book, which brings Freud and Rosenzweig together in startling ways, Santner pursues the cultural significance of the taboo on graven images. The "psychotheology of life" is vivid in the space where images ought to be but no longer can be, or can be only in memory.

Catherine Molineaux, assistant professor of history: Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca, 2003). Rath asks us to hear early American societies—to listen to church bells, to the voices of Thunderbirds, to the percussive sounds of violins. Although the book tends to read texts as though they were direct transcripts of sound—rather than as discursive sites at which sound and its meanings were constructed—this is a valuable work that asks us to understand history as taking place in sound, about sound, and through sound.



Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire 1480–1630* (Cambridge, 1984). Revisiting this classic study of the first British Empire reminded me of the pleasure of narrative and the power of a good story. Andrews vividly depicts the overwhelmingly disastrous early voyages of English merchants, showing how the first British Empire was not inevitable, despite "the glory of Elizabethan legend and nationalist propaganda." The seamlessness of his story about a period full of confusion and uncertainty is a provocative experience in this postmodern era.

Cecelia Tichi, William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of English: John Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History* (New York, 2005). Barry shows prodigious research in disclosing the social history of a momentous event that was hastened by a mix of political ambitions, paranoia, ignorance, and disregard for medical expertise. I'm also an admirer of Barry's previous book, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (New York, 1998).

Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War* (New York, 2005). This work is an Iraqi journalist's effort—beyond the cocoon of the Green Zone—to reveal how the various peoples of Iraq have coped with Saddam and the U. S. invasion and occupation.

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Interdisciplinarity—*sic et non*

By Helmut Walser Smith

Sic et non—even to borrow the title from Peter Abelard must seem presumptuous, but the very point of Abelard's twelfth-century attack on the scholastic theology of his day, namely that it had devolved into stale citation of the church fathers, suggests something of importance to our own relationship to interdisciplinary work: namely, that it has similarly devolved. As if quoting the church fathers, we affirm the *sic,* and leave unthought the *non.*

The problem starts with the vague sense that because something is interdisciplinary, it is new, and therefore original. But let us admit—nearly seventy years of use has blunted the term's avant-garde edge. The *OED* lists the first use of the term in the December 1937 issue of the *Journal of Educational Sociology.* It still has a hyphen, and in fact it was not until after World War II that the term interdisciplinary gained wider currency, losing that dash of insecurity that marked the earlier spelling. In a 1957 issue of the journal *Family and Social Network,* we read "ten years ago interdisciplinary research was very much in vogue." The author, E. Bott, proved optimistic in his assessment that interdisciplinary research was a fashion, and like pleated skirts, a fashion already passed. He was wrong, and by 1970 the editors of the prestigious journal *Nature* allowed the steroid-charged word "interdisciplinarity" to enter its pages, while in the same decade academic guides, to follow the *OED,* "taught us…to discriminate knowingly between the seven brands of interdisciplinarity." But the history of the term does not end here. Not content with merely advancing knowledge, interdisciplinarity, now a quality rather than a qualifier, took on the wings of post-capitalist criticism. Against the colonization and commodification of language and thought, it has come to be, in at least one author's breathless prose, "an intrinsically critical movement in and of itself." And while our own usage of the term may be less charged, there is no escaping the aura that "interdisciplinarity" continues to emit.

Helmut Smith

This is what we hope for when, like people waving their arms to make shadows in Plato's cave, we expect to make progress by the mere invocation of the word. We appeal to it as an elixir in applications for grants, in requests for more positions, in descriptions of courses, and in the intellectual defense of our work. To gage the word's salience in our academic culture, imagine a course description that read, "This course will consist in linking a number of historical observations and inquiries to a series of half random trains of thought." Not just that our curriculum committee would have none of it, but that we would not dare to write it.

Yet this is how Jacob Burckhardt introduced his course, "On the Study of History," in the winter semester of 1868/9 at the University of Basel. As his course leavened what we now call cultural history, it surely seemed interdisciplinary. One of his colleagues, appointed to a Chair in Classics, certainly thought so, and even sat in on Burckhardt's public lectures, complaining only that the lectures of the "elderly, highly original" historian, while "profound," displayed "strangely abrupt twists as soon as they touch the danger point." That classicist was himself no stranger to critical thinking, or to thinking across disciplines, and now most people think of Friedrich Nietzsche as a philosopher, though not always a congenial one. Burckhardt, also, did not think of his course as particularly inter-disciplinary (let's put the dash back in), but assumed it part of the historian's ordinary work to read literature, examine painting and sculpture, peruse economic and political treatise, study maps, collate manuscripts, calculate supply and demand, take measure of class stratification, and learn foreign languages. This went without saying. In his "Culture of the Renaissance in Italy," Burckhardt adopted a similarly understated pose, cautiously adding "Ein Versuch," a mere essay, to his imposing title. Was it a lack of self-confidence, an unsteady disciplinary nerve that caused such apparent modesty? The opposite, I would submit, is true.

It is in our own strained appeals to interdisciplinarity that one may detect a loss of confidence—in disciplinary confidence to be sure, but more deeply and troubling in the value of humanistic inquiry for its own sake. This is a large claim so let me start with *terra firma,* my own discipline of history. Here there is a venerable tradition of intensively reading across fields. In the United States, it is often associated with the heritage of the Annales School of social history, whose founders, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, urged historians to read geographers, like Friedrich Ratzel and Vidal de la Blache; folklorists, like Marcel Mauss and Arnold van Gennep; and sociologists, especially Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. In Germany and England, travel beyond the disciplinary borders of history followed a different compass, but the trip was not taken for its own sake. Rather, the problem was to help historians understand popular mentalities, which had been ignored by a form of inquiry that saw history, in Sir John Seely's smugly Victorian phrase, as nothing but "past politics." In the Annales tradition, reading in other disciplines was a means to an end, not the end in itself. It is true that that wider reading allowed Marc Bloch, for example, to imagine a "broadened and deepened history," but it was always clear that it was to the discipline of history that he owed his allegiance. His *Apologie Pour L'Historie,* written amidst the ruins of France in 1941, dedicated to Lucien Febvre, and never fully completed before the Gestapo shot Marc Bloch on June 16, 1944, was, after all, a declaration of love.

> In the Annales tradition, reading in other disciplines was a means to an end, not the end in itself.

The point is less a proscriptive one than it is about inter-disciplinary thinking *avant la lettre,* and this, it seems to me, is important precisely because in an academic environment stamped by the ability of social and natural sciences to attract funding and generate programs, it is the traditional disciplines in the humanities, whether history, English, philosophy, classics, theology, art history, or the humanistic branches of the social sciences (not to mention some disciplines like linguistics, geography, and classical philology that are, quite literally, disappearing) who are forced to offer an "Apologie." But beyond the question of what happens to disciplines within institutions, there is still the problem of how disciplinary knowledge disappears within disciplines: professors of English who cannot scan the lines of a poem; professors of history who haven't the faintest notion of source criticism.

There are signs of a changing wind. Marjorie Garber, an English professor who is no stranger to inter-disciplinary work, has recently exhorted her colleagues to reflect back on what it is that they do well. In *A Manifesto for Literary Studies* (Seattle, 2003), she argues that "What literary scholars can offer to the readers of all texts….is a way of asking literary questions: questions about the way something means, rather than what it means, or even why." This is a start, the "no" that would give substance back to the "yes," and that would make it necessary to reinsert the dash into inter-disciplinary discussion. This is not a stogy position; it is not the irritated response of Carl Becker who, weary of the "new history" in 1925, "asked only that he (the historian) write a good book about something that interests him." Rather, it is a plea to put the disciplinary back into the discussion, and to develop an appreciative language for the ways of thinking and actual practice of philosophers, historians, and scholars of literature. The emphasis on practice is, moreover, not misplaced. Not the disciplinary boxes, but the tools they contained ought to be put on the table again. Bloch, after all, defended the craft of the historian, the *métier d'historien.* Subject matter, the thing to which the *métier* was applied, ranged as wide as his imagination, and he defined it as nothing short of the "the interrelations, confusions, and infections of human consciousness."

There are genuinely important reasons to pursue inter-disciplinary thinking, and this is precisely why the term's loss of meaning, its emptiness, concerns us. Those genuine reasons involve the new ways of looking at a problem that are generated from outside a structure, which a discipline can be, and the recognition that different disciplines often represent different ways of considering fundamentally similar problems. Disciplines also change over time, not only with respect to subject matter but also in regards to method, and some new disciplines, like film studies, have made innovations on both counts. Moreover, the view from the outside more clearly illuminates the limits of a disciplinary perspective. All of these are powerful reasons for reaching outside one's discipline. This is what Nietzsche did when he went to hear Burckhardt's lectures. But he went to hear a historian, and in the end it was not a historian but Nietzsche who fixed on the "danger point."

Professor Marc Galanter to Speak

On February 21, 2006, at 3:00 p.m. Mark Galanter, John and Rylla Bosshard Professor of Law and Professor of South Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and LSE Centennial Professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science, will present a lecture entitled "Lowering the Bar: Lawyer Jokes and Legal Culture." The lecture, cosponsored by the Warren Center and the Vanderbilt University Law School, will be held in the Law School's Moore Room.

Professor Galanter's latest book *Lowering the Bar: Lawyer Jokes and Legal Culture* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), is an exploration into lawyer jokes, which have become increasingly popular in the United States during the last twenty years. Galanter analyzes hundreds of jokes from Mark Twain classics to contemporary anecdotes about Dan Quayle, Johnnie Cochran, and Kenneth Starr. Drawing on representations of law and lawyers in the mass media, political discourse, and public opinion surveys, Galanter finds that the increasing reliance on law has coexisted uneasily with anxiety about the "legalization" of society. His book explores the tensions between Americans' deep-seated belief in the law and their ambivalence about lawyers. Professor Galanter is also the author of a number of highly regarded and seminal studies of litigation and disputation in the United States (including "Why the 'Haves' Come Out Ahead: Speculations on the Limits of Legal Change," one of the most-cited articles in the legal literature). His work includes pioneering studies on the impact of disputant capabilities in adjudication, the relation of public legal institutions to informal regulation, and patterns of litigation in the United States. Much of his early work was on India, and he is recognized as a leading American student of the Indian legal system.

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Spring Semester Seminars and Reading Groups

Following is a list of seminars and reading groups that will be hosted by the Warren Center in the spring semester. For more detailed information please contact the seminar coordinators or the Warren Center.

American and Southern Studies Friday Lunch Bunch. Faculty with an interest in American Studies gather monthly to lunch, enjoy each other's company, and hear a presentation on work-in-progress by a member of the group. Presentations have ranged across the spectrum of American and Southern Studies. Seminar coordinator: Dale Cockrell (Director, American and Southern Studies Program).

Ancient and Medieval Studies Seminar. The purpose of the group is to foster interdisciplinary study of the time periods embraced in its title, which means not only history but language and literature, chiefly, though not exclusively, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. The main focus will be on faculty and graduate student research. Seminar coordinators: Bill Caferro (history) and Tom McGinn (classical studies).

Black Europe/Black European Studies Reading Group. The reading group is committed to exploring intellectually Black Europe as an emerging field of study on the European continent and in Great Britain, as well as the particularities of the Black European experience. Seminar coordinator: Tracy Sharpley-Whiting (French and African American and Diaspora Studies).

Circum-Atlantic Studies Group. Now in its fifth year, this group meets monthly and will read and treat works-in-progress authored by participants. Participants' scholarship should be interdisciplinary in nature, focus on at least two of the following regions—Africa, Europe, Latin and Central America, the Caribbean, and North America—and treat some aspect of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, and/or postcolonialism. Seminar coordinators: Sean Goudie (English) and Jane Landers (history).

The Culture Seminar. This interdisciplinary workshop is designed to explore the dimensions of our expressive lives—including art, entertainment, and heritage. Investigating the dynamics of both new and old cultural forms and artistic movements, participants will pay particular attention to the processes by which culture is produced and consumed both within and across different contexts. Participants will attempt to take a fresh look at the artistic and creative impulses of our country with an eye to pulling out larger trends and issues to which both scholars and citizens should pay attention. Seminar coordinator: Steven Tepper (Curb Center and sociology).

Diabetes Work Group. The diabetes working group consists of scholars across the disciplines whose research involves the social aspects of diabetes. They will meet several times this semester to discuss common research interests and explore possibilities for collaborative research. Seminar coordinator: Arleen Tuchman (history).

Language Matters. How are language, identity, and conceptual development linked? What can child language acquisition tell us about theories of the mind? What cognitive and sociocultural dynamics are involved in adult second language acquisition? With participating faculty who work in psychology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and modern foreign languages, the Language Matters group will explore issues related to language and cognition. Seminar coordinator: Meg Saylor (psychology and human development).

Leadership and Citizenship. This seminar invites interested faculty to begin a conversation exploring the feasibility of establishing a 15 hour credit academic minor in Leadership and Citizenship. Given the ever-increasing interconnectedness of our world and the local, national, and international leadership opportunities available to students, this minor might serve as a link between classes exploring themes of leadership and citizenship, global religions and politics, ethics, service, health and competency in world cultures. Seminar coordinator: Mark Dalhouse (Office of Active Citizenship and Service).

Medicine, Health, and Society Workshop/Planning Group. This interdisciplinary seminar will meet monthly to discuss common concerns and hear talks by members and visiting speakers. Seminar coordinator: Matthew Ramsey (history).

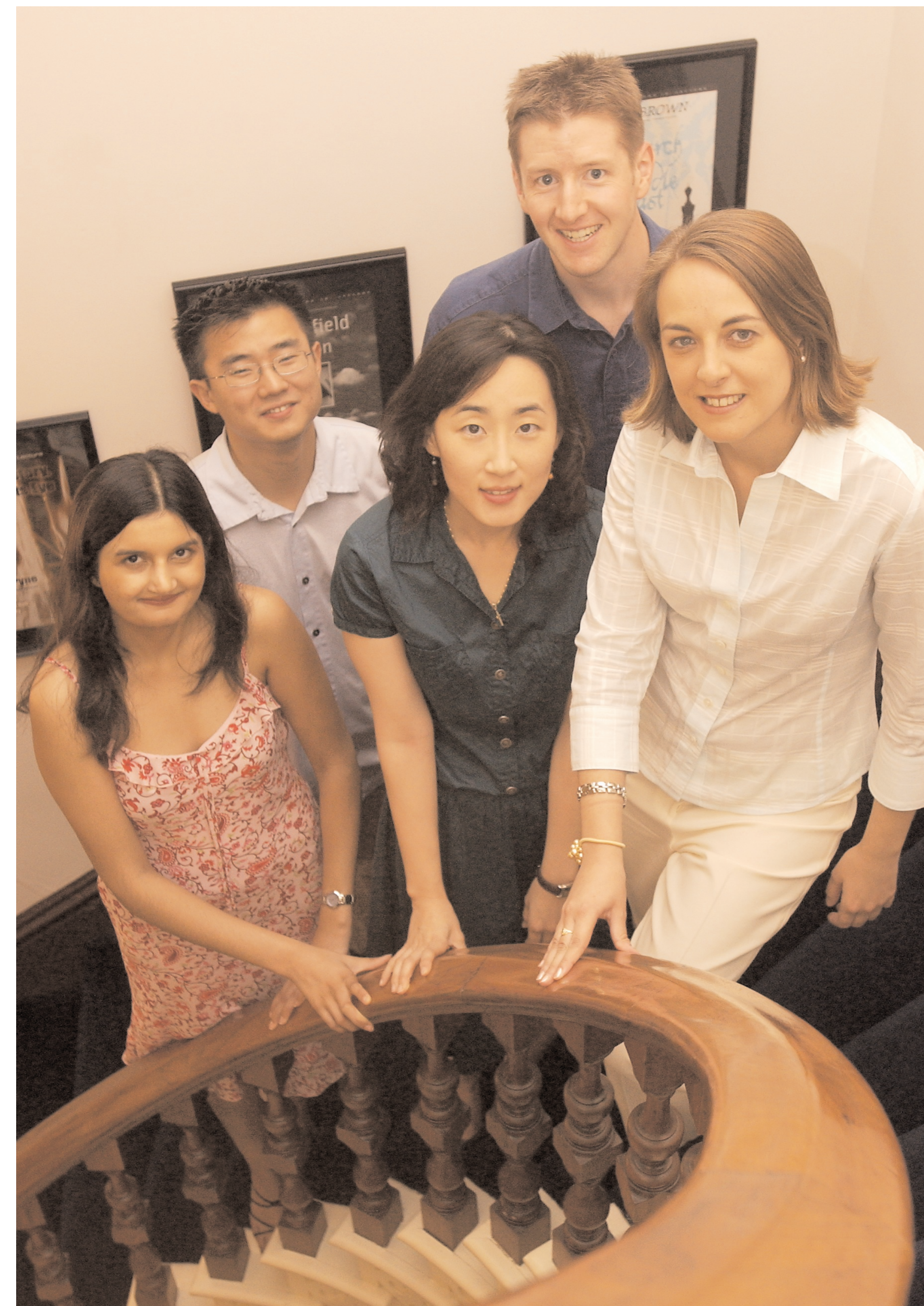
Nineteenth Century Seminar. This group focuses upon the history, art, literature, and culture of the long nineteenth century (ca. 1760-1914). Meetings will occur on a more-or-less monthly basis during the academic year to consider current scholarship by group members and others. Graduate students and faculty are encouraged to attend. Seminar coordinators: Natalie Champ (English) and Lauren Wood (English).

Queer Theory/Gender Theory Graduate Student Reading Group. This seminar, for graduate students, will meet to discuss emergent issues in queer theory and gender theory. The focus of the discussions will be the ways in which current issues are developing across disciplinary boundaries. Seminar coordinators: Rebecca Chapman (English) and Donald Jellerson (English).

Vanderbilt Group for Early Modern Cultural Studies. This is an interdisciplinary forum for faculty and graduate students with an interest in literature, history, music, art, and culture from 1400-1800. The group meets monthly to discuss ongoing research by a faculty member, recent publications in the field, or the work of a visiting scholar. Graduate students are particularly encouraged to attend and contribute. Seminar coordinator: Leah Marcus (English).

Women's and Gender Studies Seminar. This seminar highlights work being done on campus in the area of women's and gender studies. Seminar coordinator: Monica Casper (sociology and women's and gender studies).

Summer 2005 Warren Center Graduate Fellows



Standing on the Warren Center staircase are participants in the 2005 Warren Center Summer Fellows program (left to right): Beccie Randhawa (English), Steve Sungchu Lee (sociology), Hyeyurn Chung (English), Brian McInnis (German), and Carmen Canete Quesada (Spanish).

Contract and Domination: A Collaborative Debate on Social Contract Theory

On September 23, 2005, the Warren Center sponsored a presentation given by Charles Mills, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at The University of Illinois-Chicago, and Carole Pateman, professor of political science at UCLA, titled "Contract and Domination: A Collaborative Debate on Social Contract Theory." Pateman and Mills discussed the roles that race and sex play in social contract theory, which frames individual rights and obligations through the terms of a contract between the individual and society. Both speakers have challenged this theory through their work. In *The Sexual Contract* (Polity Press, Cambridge and Stanford University Press, 1988), Pateman argues that the sexual contract facilitates male domination over women. In *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1997), Mills argues that the racial contract allows for a determination of moral and political personhood through the category of race. Pateman and Mills are currently collaborating on a book project, provisionally titled "Contract and Determination."

Edward L. Rubin, John Wade-Kent Syverud Professor of Law and Dean of Vanderbilt's Law School, gave the opening remarks to a large audience of faculty and students from numerous disciplines. Pateman was unexpectedly unable to attend, but was present via speaker phone to answer questions. Her talk, "The Racial Contract," was delivered by Brooke Ackerly, assistant professor of political science at Vanderbilt. Pateman examined the issue of race through the lens of theories of land appropriation and colonization. In arguing for the necessity of new ways of thinking about reconciliatory acts on the part of colonial governments, Pateman argued that we must look to the past to understand current social injustices. As an example, she discussed the far-reaching impact of England's colonization of Australia (which began in 1788) through the "settler's contract," a situation in which settlers create an original social contract upon their appropriation of land that excludes natives from that contract as it simultaneously binds those indigenous people to its terms. In 1992, Australia's High Court issued a decision on the Mabo case, which overturned the justification of colonization through *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one) and recognized native title rights to land. As Pateman pointed out, however, Australia's government refused to offer an official apology for the social policies that harmed the Aboriginal people. Suggesting that symbolic as well as legislative acts of reconciliation must be in place to make social change, Pateman claimed that there is still much work to be done in the realm of the racial contract.

Charles Mills

Mills delivered a talk titled "The Sexual Contract," in which he illuminated an ongoing debate in the wake of John Rawls's 1971 *A Theory of Justice:* "Feminists and racial minorities in political philosophy have long complained that specific issues of gender and racial justice are inadequately (gender) or hardly at all (race) dealt with in the huge post-Rawls literature." Mills suggested a modification of social contract theory that would account for both ideal and non-ideal theory as a "device of representation." He delivered a complex proposal for synthesizing the work of feminist contract theorists Jean Hampton, Susan Moller Okin, and Carole Pateman, in order to develop what he termed "the domination contract," which "constitutes a device for theorizing the non-ideal realities of gender and race." This "domination contract" as a conceptual device, Mills argued, could then become a tool for identifying and rectifying gender and racial injustices: "By seeing society as a complex of group domination contracts (intersection of race, class, gender domination), we are sensitized from the start to the pressing problems of social injustice that in fact affect the majority of the population: social oppression is made central (as of course it has been) rather than marginal."

Mills and Pateman fielded questions on issues ranging from the problem of identity politics to symbolic versus actual acts of reparations to the differentiation between theory and practice. In their responses, they often engaged one another in debate over the question at hand, producing a discussion that was as lively as it was informative. Additional support for the talk was provided by the Law School, the African American and Diaspora Studies Program, the Women's and Gender Studies Program, the Bishop Johnson Black Cultural Center, and the departments of philosophy, political science, and human and organizational development at Peabody College.

2005/2006 Robert Penn Warren Center Fellows

Left to right: Lynn Enterline, David Wasserstein, Carlos Jáuregui, Katherine Crawford, Jean Feerick, Dyan Elliott, Holly Tucker, Leah Marcus, Lynn Ramey

Paul Freedman to Deliver Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture

Paul Freedman, Chester D. Tripp Professor of History at Yale University, will deliver this year's Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture on February 13, 2006 at 4:10 p.m. (location to be announced). His lecture is entitled "The Allure of Spices in Medieval Europe."

A distinguished medieval historian, Professor Freedman's books include *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford University Press, 1999), *The Origins of Peasant Servitude in Medieval Catalonia* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), and *The Diocese of Vic: Tradition and Regeneration in Medieval Catalonia* (Rutgers University Press, 1983). He also co-edited, with Caroline Walker Bynum, *Last Things: Death and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). His many honors and awards include the Haskins Medal from the Medieval Academy of America and the Otto Grundler Prize from the International Congress of Medieval Studies for *Images of the Medieval Peasant.* He has received many distinguished research awards, including grants from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 2002/2003, he was a Fellow at the New York Public Library's Center for Scholars and Writers.

From 1979–1997, Professor Freedman taught at Vanderbilt University, where he was the recipient of the Nordhaus Teaching Prize in 1989. He was a Fellow at the Warren Center in 1991/92, and served as Warren Center director from 1993 through 1997.

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 lectureship honors Harry C. Howard Jr. (B.A., 1951) and allows the Warren Center to bring an outstanding scholar to Vanderbilt annually to deliver a lecture on a significant topic in the humanities.

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The Inaugural College of Arts and Science Fellowship Awards

The Warren Center is pleased to announce the inaugural College of Arts and Science Fellowship awards. The 2005/2006 recipients are graduate students Kathleen Eamon and Brian McInnis. Designed to support innovation and excellence in graduate student research, the award offers the recipients a service-free year of support to enable full-time work on the dissertation. Each award includes tuition, a stipend, and a research budget, plus affiliation with the Warren Center.

The Arts and Science Fellows are integrated into the center's interdisciplinary scholarly community through participation in regular lunches, seminars, and special events. As the capstone to their fellowship experience, Eamon and McInnis will each present a public lecture during the spring semester, sponsored by the College of Arts and Science and the Warren Center.

Eamon is a doctoral student in philosophy. Her current research centers on cultural symbolism and political agency. In her dissertation, titled "Subject and Symbol: Practical Reason and Political Knowledge in Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Freud," she inquires into the possibilities and limits of political knowledge and practical reason, particularly how cultural institutions are symbolically structured and how political discourses and practices can contribute to their legitimation as well as to their destabilization, critique, and subversion. With regard to practicability, Eamon investigates the institution of marriage as a cultural symbol, examining the articulation and interpretations of marriage in different public discourses (legal, political, and religious). In 2004, Eamon participated in the Warren Center Graduate Student Summer Fellows Program.

McInnis is a doctoral student in German. His dissertation is titled "Reading the Moral Code: Theories of Mind and Body in Eighteenth-Century Germany." In it, he argues that around 1750 authors develop an anthropological discourse in Pietist, medical, and moral magazines. This development suggests an early turn in Enlightenment anthropological thought, some twenty years earlier than is currently assumed. In future research, he plans to study anthropological magazines of the late Enlightenment in the context of Karl Philipp Moritz's *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* (1783–1793). McInnis was also a participant in the Warren Center's 2005 Summer Graduate Student Fellows Program.

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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