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Fall 2007 Vol. XVIII, No 2

AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

THE F WORD: FOREIGN

By Monica J. Casper

A decade or so ago, I visited Paris for the first time. It was December. It was cold and wet and dark. All of France was on a general strike (something that would never happen in the U.S.), and so there was no garbage collection, Metro, or bus service. Parisians, even the canines, were frazzled.

We were too. I recognized perhaps five words of French (*merde*, anyone?) and was traveling with my then-partner, who understood even less of the language and who morphed as the days ground on into the Ugly American--speaking very loudly and slowly to everyone we encountered.

The Eiffel Tower was beautiful, the crepes delicious, and the art spectacular. (I adored the *Musée d'Orsay*.) But the entire experience was, frankly, miserable. It all felt so, well, *foreign*.

Yet I was not a novice traveler. I had been to England, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific. I do great in Spanish-speaking countries once I get my tongue back. I enjoy being a tourist, and I especially like veering off the beaten path.

In retrospect, what I found so strange about my inaugural trip to Paris was how much it made me feel so unlike my Self. It was an unfamiliar setting, I felt excluded by a language barrier, the landmarks were different, and the city itself wasn't working because of the strike. I

became a stranger to the known, to the comfortable, and to the navigable. An odd sensation, indeed, for a street-smart girl from Chicago. Being a foreigner, and engaging with the foreign, can be invigorating, illuminating, and instructive. Isn't this the point of Study Abroad programs, and indeed much of leisure travel? But it can also be frightening and disorienting, even when one has the privilege of consuming the "foreign" as a tourist.

It may be dangerous, too, especially for those with much less privilege. For example, what must it be like to be an immigrant to a country as large and diverse as the United States, with few economic resources, limited social connections, a language gap, and considerable anti-immigration sentiment?

What must it be like to be a Thai child sold into sexual slavery for the benefit of wealthy Europeans, in a staggering exploitation of the "exotic"? What must it be like to sell an organ for cash, a kidney perhaps that will be used by a person in another nation that you have no hope of ever visiting?

Clearly, our understanding of what "foreign" means is socially shaped. Borders, boundaries, inclusion, contagion, expansion, tourism—all are forged through relations of individual, institutional, and state power. In articulating who or what is foreign, we also narrate (and enforce) who *we* are.

I have always been struck by the vast differences between the U.S.-Canada border and the U.S.-Mexico border. I have many times driven between Seattle and Vancouver, enjoying pleasant encounters with border patrol agents on both sides and feeling welcomed to and fro by the lovely Peace Arch. It is such a friendly gateway between neighbors.

And then, of course, there is our other border. A region that is home to almost 12 million people, most of them—on each side of the border—living in poverty. This line of demarcation is heavily patrolled, a site of violence and death and fear and hope. This is a border, and a foreign population, that must be contained according to anti-immigration views in the U.S.

I do not wish to simplify an enormously complex issue. But I do think the disparities between our northern and southern borders, and their respective narrations of what or who is foreign and who is welcomed, can tell us a great deal about race, class, and who "we" imagine ourselves to be.

Foreign affairs may be captivating, but they are not always pretty, nor do they inevitably reveal our best selves, either as individuals or as a nation.

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NICOLE SEYMOUR

Ph.D. candidate in English and currently a dissertation fellow in the Robert Penn Warren Center for Humanities, was



the WGS newsletter co-editor for the past four years. Nicole's commitment to the quality and timely production of the newsletter every

semester contributed to its popularity on campus. She was flawless in the way she dispensed her responsibilities, and in the process made all of us in WGS look good. Thank you for all your hard work, Nicole. The newsletter is what it is today because of you. We wish you much success in writing your dissertation this year and in your professional life beyond Vanderbilt. We love you!

With much appreciation,
Everyone in Women's and Gender Studies



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The People to People Citizen Ambassador Program invited me, as well as other members of the American Association of University Women, on a 12-day trip to China, where we would meet with faculty, students, and staff of universities in three cities in China – Beijing, Xi'an, and Kunming. This trip was led by Professor Margaret Eisenhart (University of Colorado) and Professor Monica Bruning (Iowa State). Our first official meeting was with faculty and staff from Beijing Normal University (BNU). The faculty from BNU provided us with information that sounded all too familiar.

As in the United States, public goals and philosophy often do not match with reality. Currently, the Chinese government promotes equal rights for boys and girls, as far as education is concerned, but tradition still favors boys. This fact is particularly apparent in the differences noted between urban and rural education programs. Unlike the urban programs, the rural programs have more difficulty enforcing equal rights to education for boys and girls. Further, there are more resources for urban programs than rural ones, but the government is expending extra effort to improve educational resources in rural settings.

The theoretical model in place in China supports higher education for the children who learn best, but still only 40 percent of the 20 percent of students who proceed beyond the 9 years of compulsory education are girls and only 43 percent of master's degree students are women. Yet the Chinese faculty with whom we spoke asserted that women professors, who constitute 40 percent of the Beijing Normal University faculty, are "better" than men, because they are more accessible to their students. Most graduate students seek female professors for advice, because these professors believe that open communication with students is one of the most important steps to learning.

The China Women's University (CWU) was founded in 1949 in Beijing and is the only state-run university for women. It is affiliated with the All China Women's Federation that was formed following the Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995. The federation works closely with the national government and universities to address the issues of women's education in China. At CWU, women feel they have equal opportunity to succeed and a curriculum that incorporates gender awareness. Faculty research is targeted at gender issues and women's

the philosophical ideal of equality in educational and professional opportunities for women is asserted in China, but in reality, the educational institutions and practices are lagging behind.

One of the most poignant moments of the trip occurred when we were speaking with professors from Xi'an International Studies University. A professor of English, who had to leave the meeting early in order to take care of her five-year-old child, initiated her remarks with a reference to *Desperate*



THE GLOBAL

COMMUNITY OF WOMEN:

A BRIEF VISIT TO CHINA

BY SANDY STAHL

development, but the Women's Studies department was not established until 2005. The department focuses on advocacy and social change through its publications that highlight women's achievements and address issues of family violence and the need for social services.

Despite equity initiatives in China, prejudice against women in professional spaces persists. Women are the last to be hired and the first to be fired. While they get three months of maternity leave for the one child they are allowed to have, they still struggle to balance family and career. Many young girls are not aware of the issue of gender discrimination and therefore are not prepared to overcome obstacles in pursuit of their ambitions and dreams. There are too few women in the field of science and technology in China, just as in America. In summary,



4 roommates in a new dormitory at Xi'an International Studies University. 6 students are assigned to each room.

Housewives, the popular ABC drama. While she knows that *Desperate Housewives* is not an accurate portrayal of American women's lives, she seized on the notion of desperation and wondered whether the American women felt successful or whether we were dealing with challenges similar to hers. She asked us to share how we manage to combine traditional family expectations with a career. She was physically tired from the double shift, and mentally and emotionally exhausted from trying to be

professionally competitive. She also admitted to being depressed from the realization that having it all was virtually impossible.

The entire American delegation shared that at some point in our lives most of us have felt the desperation borne of exhaustion and frustration of working the double shift and competing in an arena originally designed by men and for men. Changes in institutional policy, community and professional networks, persistence, and some good luck are the means by which women in America and China manage the many roles expected of us. While some of us are still trying to achieve our goals, others have dropped out when they couldn't foresee that their efforts would bring them closer to achieving their dreams. Sharing these insights across the differences of language and culture, we recognized with a sense of communion that we are in the same struggle and worse that we are still addressing many of the same issues in a worldwide arena that we have been fighting for a very long time. ■

Susan Wiltshire's legacy for Vanderbilt and WGS

By Haley Swenson

This summer Professor Susan Wiltshire, a Women's and Gender Studies affiliated faculty, retired after 36 years in the Classical Studies department at Vanderbilt. Professor Wiltshire is the benefactor of the WGS Susan F. Wiltshire Essay contest which awards annual prizes to the best undergraduate and graduate student essays on topics related specifically to gender. But explaining her official ties to Women's and Gender Studies in 2007 does little to demonstrate how instrumental she has been in establishing women's studies at Vanderbilt, and even less to illustrate her tireless quest to improve gender equity at the university during her time here.

"When I came to Vanderbilt in 1971," Dr. Wiltshire said recently as she sat down with me to reflect on her experiences here, "not only was there no women's studies or any idea of having such, but my consciousness still hadn't been educated to the point that I understood the need for (a women's studies curriculum)."

In 1973, a few women students came to her and told her they wanted a women's studies course taught on campus in the upcoming semester.

When asked why she thinks the students decided to come to her, she explained it quite simply: "Because I was one of the very few women on the faculty."

"And of course, I'm embarrassed and ashamed that I didn't respond more positively then, but I just wasn't there yet. I think coming to Vanderbilt moved me right along on women's issues, sometimes with staggering speed," she continued.

She warned the students that getting something like that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

REFLECTIONS ON THE SYMPOSIUM ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

By Shubhra Sharma

On April 5, 2007, the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center, the Vanderbilt Police Department, and the Women's and Gender Studies Program organized a one-day symposium on healing and surviving violence. The symposium brought together faculty whose work focuses on violence against women, and students who have either experienced violence or are searching for ways and means to challenge violence as social practice.

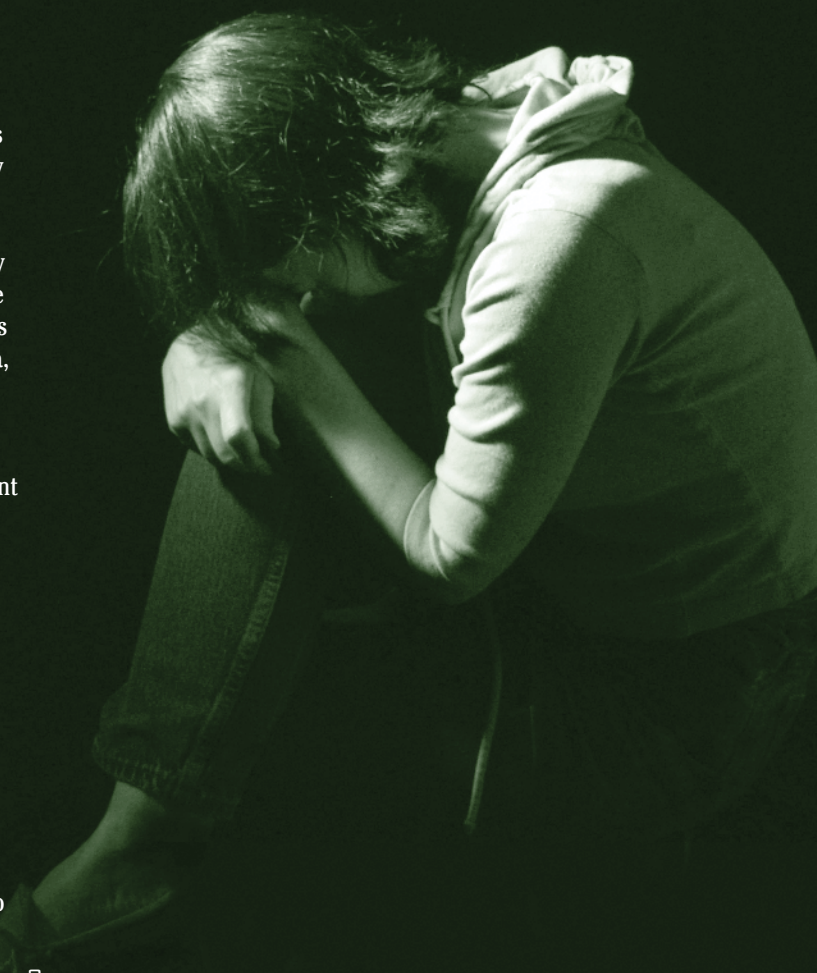
The morning session featured presentations by WGS Professor Charlotte Pierce-Baker and Professor Houston Baker (Department of English). The afternoon was devoted to breakout sessions in which participants interacted directly with faculty members, employees of the Women's Center, Vanderbilt police officers, and community healers. Some examples of the topics of the breakout sessions included healing through yoga, art, music, and activism.

The symposium was a success. It brought together many people from very different corners of Vanderbilt and Nashville to talk about an important issue. Many of my students were particularly struck by the honesty of the presenters/ participants and their peers in discussing the nature and impact of sexual violence against women. They had expected a boring information session. Instead, they heard heart-wrenching personal stories that were also portraits in courage.

One student wrote in an email to me:

"Hi Professor, I just wanted to email you to say thank you for allowing us to go to the symposium... I really learned a lot from the symposium about sharing what happens to you in your life, so that you can help others, and so that you can learn what to do in the future. Also, I went to the rape mock trial that (Vanderbilt Feminists) had on Thursday. It informed me a lot about a real rape trial. It made me more aware of rape on school campuses...I wanted to say thank you."

The April symposium showed us what an intervention like this, with such diverse support, can do to highlight the problem of violence against women. The symposium also showed us that to strike at the heart of violence we must have support from everyone—students, faculty, and the larger community. The symposium was our battle cry against violence. We are ready for the war against continued suffering. ■



AFFILIATED FACULTY NOTES

Houston Baker (English) has authored the book, *I Don't Hate the South: Reflections on Faulkner, Family, and the South*. Oxford University Press released the book in June, 2007.

Laura Carpenter (Sociology) was named an "Emerging Scholar" by the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality for her accomplishments in researching sexuality.

Katharine Donato (Sociology) edited a special volume of the *International Migration Review* on gender and migration and also coauthored two pieces in the volume. The volume is titled *Gender and Migration Revisited, Special Issue of International Migration Review*. The pieces she coauthored include "A Glass Half Full? Gender in Migration Studies" and "Mapping Gender and Migration in Sociological Scholarship: Is it Segregation or Integration?"

Vivien Green Fryd (History of Art) has written an article entitled, "Suzanne Lacy's 'Three Weeks in May': Performance Art as 'Expanded Public Pedagogy,'" which was published in a special issue of the *National Women's Studies Association Journal* in the spring. She chaired "American Art and Sexual Trauma," a Feminist Art Project at the College Art Association Annual Conference in February. She also delivered the Society for Arts and Humanities lecture at the University of Southern Indiana in April. Her lecture was titled, "Faith Ringgold's Rape Quilts."

Holly McCammon (Sociology) has written two forthcoming articles on the women's jury movements in the U.S. in the first half of the twentieth century. One will appear in the October issue of the *American Sociological Review* and the other will come out in the January issue of the *American Journal of Sociology*.

Robin McWilliam (Pediatrics) recently became President of the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Research (CEC). CEC is the largest organization in the world for professionals who work with children with disabilities.

Kelly Oliver (Philosophy) has written the book *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media*, which will be released by Columbia University Press in November, 2007.

Nancy Reisman (English) has been awarded a 2007 Tennessee Arts Commission Individual Artist Grant. Additionally, her short story "Another Kiss" will appear in the fall issue of *Subtropics*, a literary magazine from University of Florida.

Libby Rowe (Department of Art) will present her mixed media art work entitled *Pink: a study on being female* at the Society for Photographic Education, South Central Regional Conference in Arlington, Texas, in October. She is also chairing a panel on "Humor in Art" at the Southeastern College Art Conference in Charleston, West Virginia. Rowe will also be giving two artist lectures covering her use of the concepts of infertility and of seduction in specific pieces in the *Pink* series in Fort Wayne, Indiana and in Memphis, Tennessee.

Melissa Snarr (Ethics and Society) has authored the book *Social Selves and Political Reforms*, recently published by Continuum Press. Additionally, her article, "Oh Mary Don't You Weep: Progressive Religion in the Living Wage Movement," was published in the journal *Political Theology*. She is also the recipient of the 2007 Community Service Award from Vanderbilt Divinity School Student Government Association



Shubhra Sharma Honored at Vanderbilt Baseball Game

On April 22, 2007 I was invited to attend the Vanderbilt men's baseball game as "honorary faculty." Katie Feyes, academic counselor to the men's team, extended the invitation. I met Katie at the gates of the baseball stadium, and she walked me into the dugout where the Vanderbilt baseball team was gathering and preparing for their very important game against Tennessee State University. Here, I met with Matt, Pedro, Ryan, and Nick, my students from WGS 150: Sex and Gender in Everyday Life who play on the team, and Tim Corbin, their head coach. We

took pictures, and then it was time for me to throw the "first pitch." It was probably not my best throw of all time (I was nervous!) but the ball made it safely into Ryan's hands at the other end. As I walked back into the dugout, I realized what a wonderful moment it was for me and for the Women's and Gender Studies Program. I am thankful to my students, Katie Feyes, and Coach Tim Corbin not only for inviting me to the game but for receiving me so warmly. An autographed baseball from my students sits atop the table in my office and reminds me regularly of that special evening in April.

WGS THANKS TODD DODSON

Cheers to Todd Dodson, who, in the world of PCs, assists us with the "I" in ITS. Thank you for your unfailing attention to our macProblems, large and inane. Your cheerful disposition and sensible solutions have made our jobs and lives so much easier.

With much appreciation,
Everyone in Women's and Gender Studies



By Eryn Callihan

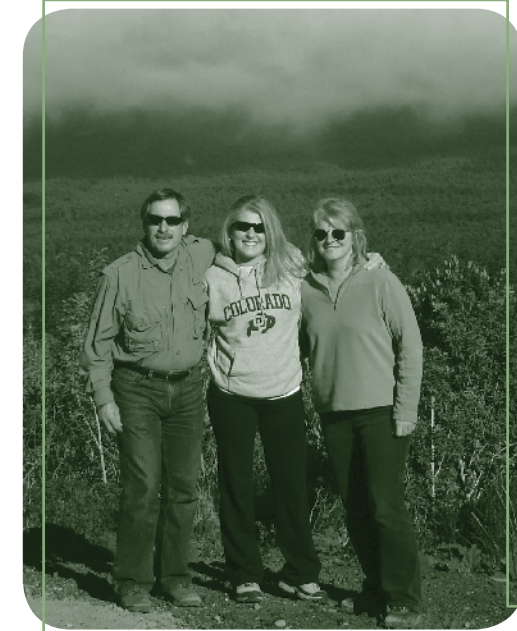
Time is a funny notion. One minute we are wishing it will pass quickly, and the next, we are hoping it will slow down in a last ditch effort so we can play catch up. Time has always been a bit of a dilemma in my case. Too often I find myself wanting to reverse time or, depending on my situation, stick it on fast forward and pretend as though I am not a part of it. In simple terms I, like many I suspect, find myself being in one place and wishing I were in another.

I first arrived in Chile in mid-February of 2007, ready to embrace the sun and the beach, gratefully leaving behind the snow and ice of Boulder, Colorado. Chile was all new: the smells, often of freshly baked empanadas and bread, the relaxed Chilean way of life, and even the very difficult Chilean Spanish language. While I expected a bit of culture shock, I was little prepared for the experiences that would fill the pages of my life over the five months that I called Chile my home.

It is difficult to melt my many memories and experiences down to a single page, as they are so intertwined, each memory dissolving into the next. No, all of Chile was not perfect. Speaking a different language, living with a new family, and being, for the first time, 5,000 miles away from the comfort of my real home, offered a whole new set of challenges. Even now looking back, I am still in awe over the complexity of learning the allegedly simple transportation system that is a pivotal part of daily life in Valparaiso. Between the constantly changing bus routes, micros, and the unpredictable taxi rides, I found myself, on many occasions, accidentally discovering new parts of the city. It was in this unfamiliarity that I was stretched to see new places and meet new people.

Sometimes I wish I had lived more for the moment while in Chile. Climbing the Volcano in Pucón, spending hours in the German cafes of Puerto Varas, laughing my way through muddled Spanish conversations—these are all things I miss. I was very lucky that both my sister and parents were able to share in my Chilean experience. Happy to try their language skills, my parents had the once in a lifetime opportunity to trek through Torres del Paine, Patagonia. While I was not able to join them in this adventure, their stories and pictures paint a magical place that someday I hope to experience personally. I often laugh when I think of our visits to famous local wineries, our "samplings" of sangria in the art district of Bellevista, and our tradition of enjoying Chilean Thai food and wine on Friday evenings. Who would have known that a Chilean by day, Thai by night restaurant could produce such great memories? Perhaps the most memorable of these experiences were the dinners with both my Chilean and North American families. Thanks to the copious bottles of Chile's famous red wine, and its national liquor Pisco, we somehow managed to communicate through a comic assortment of Spanish and hand gestures.

Chile gave me the gift of life-long friendships, a passion for traveling, and



a deep love for its culture. I realize that life is meant to be lived fully, the good with the bad, the laughs with the tears of frustration. It is all part of the lessons we learn and the people we become. Time is not our enemy; time allows us to enjoy life if we let ourselves live. In retrospect, Chile taught me this very lesson: to live in the moment in the best way I can. ■

LESSONS LEARNED IN CHILE



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Susan Wiltshire's legacy for Vanderbilt and WGS

By Haley Swenson

approved and into the curriculum would take at least two years. Yet to her surprise, in the next spring semester, Women's Studies 150 was offered for the first time at Vanderbilt.

A committee was formed to oversee the course and Dr. Wiltshire headed the committee for its first four years until 1976.

"Those were lean years. We didn't even have anyone qualified to teach the course. But we got the women and men whose fields might include a relevant segment to come teach a lecture," Wiltshire said.

None of the professors were trained in women's studies specifically, and getting support from administrators to expand the program was difficult. She recalls that in 1974, one administrator told her, "The time for Women's Studies has come and gone."

But her story is about more than the establishment of women's studies here at Vanderbilt. Certainly, the reluctance to invest in women's studies or take it seriously were problems she worked hard to fight; but this struggle was perhaps merely a symptom of a larger atmosphere of gender inequality plaguing the university administration.

Dr. Wiltshire was only one of seven tenured female faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences in 1981, and at the same time, the number of women in positions of power in the administration was steadily decreasing.

In Professor Wiltshire's narrative of her struggle for women's studies at Vanderbilt, it becomes clear how interconnected the lack of opportunities for women faculty and the lack of support for women's studies were.

For Wiltshire, the culmination of tensions related to gender

inequity came in 1981, when Dr. Elizabeth Langland was denied tenure. Dr. Langland was an expert on Victorian fiction and the chair of the committee on Women's Studies at the time.

Langland, Wiltshire, and other Vanderbilt faculty were shocked when the then Arts and Sciences Dean Jacqué Vogeli rejected the English department's recommendation to grant Prof. Langland tenure. Langland was already a well respected scholar in her field and even her own department had determined she was qualified for tenure, the first time the English department had recommended a woman for tenure in its history. Nonetheless, the Dean overruled the department's decision.

"What administrators didn't know was that the women faculty were already organizing," Wiltshire said. "In fact, the day we found out (about Langland's denial of tenure), we organized WEAV." WEAV, or Women's Equity at Vanderbilt, was organized by Vanderbilt faculty and staff to raise money to help fund a federal lawsuit against Vanderbilt. The lawsuit sought to challenge the grounds on which Langland was denied tenure. WEAV raised over \$60,000 for Langland's lawsuit!

In 1983, Langland lost her final appeal against the university. Despite the loss of a great scholar in Langland, who is now the dean of the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University, Wiltshire believes the publicity Vanderbilt got from the lawsuit and WEAV's actions created a major turning point in the history of faculty development and the Women's Studies Program at Vanderbilt.

On the day the suit was filed, Vanderbilt announced it would

open a daycare center for faculty members' children, a plan intended to lift some of the burden on women faculty with children. On the day Langland lost her final appeal, the university announced that it would appoint its first official Director of Women's Studies. Wiltshire believes the lawsuit prompted change in Vanderbilt's hiring practices as well, as Vanderbilt began to hire women as professors at the senior level for the first time. "It was clear that our actions in those years helped change the atmosphere at Vanderbilt," she said.

Wiltshire has seen immense change and progress at Vanderbilt and certainly with regard to the development of the Women's Studies program since she first arrived. "It's been such a joy for me to see the flowering of this important world of studies. When I retired on June 30 of this year, that was just one of many reasons I was so proud of Vanderbilt and so proud of where we are now," she said.

She remarked that on the day of a memorial service held for the first Director of Women's Studies, Dr. Nancy Walker, who passed away in 2000, Vanderbilt approved the Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies.

"I thought," Wiltshire said, "how appropriate it was that we took one more step forward as we said goodbye to a founding mother."

"I've had the great fortune of being at Vanderbilt for some of the most interesting years of its existence so far, and I'm sure there are exciting ones ahead," Wiltshire said.

Professor Wiltshire will continue to read, to write, and to learn in her retirement, as well as enjoy more time with her husband, Ashley, who also retired recently, and with her family and friends.



Spring '07 Graduation Events



In May, Monica Casper hosted the annual Senior Brunch to honor the Women's and Gender Studies majors of the class of 2007: Reagan Bush, Sara Beth McLellan, Hadley Zeavin, Sarah Dean, and Emily Baunach. WGS also hosted a reception for graduating seniors and their families.



WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES SPRING 2008 COURSE SCHEDULE				
COURSE #	COURSE TITLE	CREDIT HRS.	DAY/TIME	INSTRUCTOR
WGS 150-01	Sex & Gender in Everyday Life	3	MWF 10:10-11:00	Dicker, R.
WGS 150-02	Sex & Gender in Everyday Life-Service Learning	3	TR 11-12:15	Stahl, S.
WGS 150W	Sex & Gender in Everyday Life	3	TR 9:35-10:50	Sharma, S.
WGS 201	Women & Gender in Global Context	3	TR 1:10-2:25	Sharma, S.
WGS 242	Women Who Kill	3	TR 2:35-3:50	Fesmire, J.
WGS 260	Feminisms in Black and White	3	TR 4:00-5:15	Pierce-Baker, C.
WGS 261W	Gender & Law in Classical Antiquity	3	TR 4:00-5:15	Fesmire, J.
WGS 267	Seminar on Gender and Violence	3	TR 8:10-9:00	Manning, L.
WGS 271	Feminist Legal Theory	3	W 1:10-4:00	Fesmire, J.
<i>NOTE: Limited to Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors</i>				
WGS 288A	Internship Training			Casper, M.
WGS 288B	Internship Research			Sharma, S.
WGS 288C	Internship Readings			Sharma, S.
WGS 289	Independent Study			Casper, M.
WGS 292	Research Methods in WGS	3	M 1:10-4:00	Dicker, R.
WGS 298	Honors Research			
WGS 299	Honors Thesis			
WGS 302	Gender and Pedagogy	1	W 11:10-12:00	Dicker, R.
WGS 389	Independent Study			



By Julie Fesmire

Apparently, Italy was the destination of choice this past summer. It seems that everyone I ran into in Nashville either had a trip planned or knew someone who was going. I prefer taking trips like my niece, Maggie, did: spend a month in the same place in order to get a feel for the culture. She did a study abroad program in Firenze, Italy, taking both a language class and a history of the Mafia class. And she took day and weekend trips to various other cities nearby. What's not to love?

My husband, Paul, and I did the exact opposite this summer. Well, not twelve countries in seven days, but we were being more touristy than we normally are. Not surprisingly, I found that in Italy I preferred Siena to Florence, Cortona to Siena, Montalcino to Cortona. I loved Polvano. Any city that allows its name to be translated into English clearly caters to tourists and is not somewhere I want to be. For that we have EPCOT's World Showcase in Disney World.

Like many of you, I have a problem with Americans who have a pre-conceived image of what is Europe and expect that image to be offered up to them, in English, of course. I can't understand the man who runs through the Academia in Florence, as if with blinders, stopping only at Michelangelo's David, and then waiting impatiently as his companions look at the musical instruments, various sculptures, including Michelangelo's Prisoners, and then actually want to spend more than a minute with the David. Or the woman in Venice who leaves during the interval of a concert so that she can do more shopping before the stores close. Or the couple who refuse to try the local wine or house pasta in Montalcino: If we've not read about it in *Wine Spectator* magazine, it cannot be any good.



Well, surely not in my lifetime, but I do appreciate the dramatic flourish. So I agreed. How touristy could it be? I had successfully navigated through the streets of Siena, where crowds, obviously mesmerized by stand after stand of neighborhood flags, postcards, and plastic Davids, didn't even flinch when confronted by a moving Fiat. I had made my way through the hoards in Florence, plugged into their iPods, who apparently preferred to see the city in the screens of their cameras and cell phones rather than with their own eyes. But nothing prepared me for what I saw when our insanely crowded vaporetto (water bus) reached our stop at San Zaccaria. No wonder Venice is sinking! Look at all those people!

Okay, my turn to be overly dramatic. But the literature professor in me loves the irony of a city retooling itself as a tourist destination only to be crushed by the sheer weight of the tourists it attracts. Actually, the current population of Venice is a fascinating mix. At its peak, Venice proper was home to close to 200,000 people. By mid-twentieth century, however, it became apparent that the deterioration of the city's art treasures and buildings was accelerating. Many residents quit the historic city center and moved to the mainland for cheaper and better housing. Now there are approximately 60,000 permanent residents and an equal number of day visitors, most of whom are

tourists. The day visitors arrive by the shipload and travel in herds, not watching where they are going, clogging streets and bridges. Imagine being sucked into the middle of a slow-motion cattle stampede; it's terrifying.

And of course there is an alternative to joining the lemmings on their San Marco-Rialto trek. Wandering through the mazes of back streets, we wandered into several art

studios where people were creating beautiful masks for Carnevale (not the mass-produced commercial ones you see in the Rialto).

Rather than standing in a two-hour line to get into the Accademia or San Marco Basilica, we opted for the Basilica of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (Padre Andre would be proud).

It was the best of all possible worlds: Donatello, Bellini, Titian,

all in the setting for which the art was created. The Jewish Ghetto contained the more fascinating exceptions to the cityscape. Because the Jews were restricted to the area which once housed a foundry (geto), they expanded upward, building the city's only skyscrapers. And while everyone was queuing up at the Guggenheim, we wandered into the Biennale, a world's fair of contemporary art.

Rather than sitting in the San Marco Piazza listening to the dueling orchestras, we attended Musica a Palazzo's abridged production of Rossini's "Il Barbiere di Siviglia." All aspects were abridged: a four-person orchestra accompanied a four-person cast, who performed in front of a twenty-five-person audience (many of whom were pressed into service as additional characters). Rather than change

scenes while the audience sat patiently, the audience literally changed rooms.

As delightful as this performance was, it somehow reminded me of Julian Barnes' novel *England, England*, in which a wealthy entrepreneur creates an abridged version of England on the Isle of Wight. This Disneyland-like theme park is equipped with all the essential elements of Englishness in their idealized forms. It promises tourists an authentic experience: imagine being able to visit all of England in one day! In a post-modern world where reality is in danger of being superseded by simulacra, we need to vigilantly maintain the line between the replication of culture and the culture itself.

I would like to acknowledge the fabulous women of WGS 115F.01, who offered the most constructive of criticisms on an early draft of this essay. ■

To Tour or not to Tour...

I enjoyed immensely the British gentleman next to us in a Cortona bistro, who insisted on speaking Italian to a server who, picking up on his accent, answered him in English. I admired the couple next to us at dinner in Polvano. One of the men was clearly fluent in Italian, whereas his partner was more uncertain. And yet, unlike Paul and me, they continued to speak in Italian after their order was taken, with the one correcting the other's grammar. Well done!

Since we rented a car, we could easily wander off the usual path of tourist favorites. While visiting a monastery near Cortona, we were invited to attend the concerto del gruppo rock guidato da padre Andrea. It seems that the good padre was a relatively famous rock star in a former life. I loved visiting the smaller wineries. And even at the larger, more commercial ones, the emphasis was less on their international status, and more on the history of the area. For example, at Castello

di Bossi, near Castlenovo Berardenga, the manager was happy to give tastings but steadfastly refused to give tours of the facilities. Not only is it too hot, she said, but really, aren't the traditional processes pretty much all the same? She showed us through the beautiful and historic five-hundred-year-old home of the owners instead. We found the most wonderful woman in Tavarnelle val de Pesa who made fresh pasta by hand: spinach tagliatelle, tomato-herb linguini, whatever we wanted. With vegetables from the local coop and bread from the nearby bakery, we cooked some excellent meals.

Paul had to convince me to go to Venice. Yes, he said, it will be crowded, but Venice is one of the four unique cities of the world, once the most economically and politically powerful city-state. It's filled with great art and architecture, and is the setting for much of the literature you teach. And, he concluded, you must see it before it sinks into the sea.



Understanding Place and Identity through Tourism

By George Sanders

In Spring semester of 2007, the Sociology department at Vanderbilt offered a new course—Sociology of Tourism, Culture, and Place. Professor Shaul Kelner, created the class so that students could learn about tourism by *being* tourists. I was fortunate to be the teaching assistant for the class and to take part in all the professor's ingenious course activities. Students were encouraged to tote cameras rather than notebooks and were given an itinerary (made to resemble a tour brochure) rather than a syllabus. In lieu of in-class presentations, students gave a guided tour on one occasion and made a souvenir museum on another. Field trips were, not surprisingly, mandatory.

We saw the Country Music Hall of Fame, got an inside scoop on the campus

tourism initiative from Vice Chancellor Schoenfeld, took an African-American history tour of Nashville, went to the Parthenon, downtown Nashville, Belle Meade, the Jewish cemetery, and the Gulch, among other trips and activities.

While it sounds like fun and games, the class required a great deal of conceptual labor and proved to be quite challenging on a number of dimensions, not the least of which was "identity work" we all had to do.

More often than not, sessions were held outside our classroom. The first day of class was no exception to this practice. Just moments after distributing the syllabus/itinerary and making sure all 15 of us were present and accounted for, we departed for our first tour.

We weren't going far. In fact, it was a walking tour of campus led by the

official university historian, Lyle Lankford. Our tour guide was recovering from a sore throat that day and so we had to huddle closely in order to hear his narration. As we moved from one site to the next, we remained in a fairly tight cluster, making us all the more visible to the students and staff occupying more "natural" formations of ones, twos, and threes. And since it was the first day of classes, there were a lot more people out than usual, busily collecting themselves and accomplishing their tasks. Our leisurely amble made us stand out even more. We felt weird, awkward, and self-conscious.

Everyone in the class was in at least his/her third year as an undergraduate at Vanderbilt, having had plenty of time to get to know the campus. In spite of this, most of us learned more about this relatively small plot of land in an hour than in our previous years combined. In subsequent conversations we all agreed that while the tour fascinated and engaged us on one level, it alienated us on another. We felt out of touch with a place many of us comfortably refer to as "home."

Instead of being veterans of our environs, we experienced an uncomfortable sense of novelty and disorientation.

Because there were so many people walking about that day, we were frequently stopped by acquaintances wondering what we were doing. This only added to our sense of unease. On the one hand, it was like running into your professor at the grocery store, both of you with your cart full of provisions—what are you supposed to say? On the other hand it was reassuring, like you wanted to say, "Oh, thank God, you've recognized me," before turning to everyone else around you to add, "See? I really do belong here."

There's such comfort in belonging to a place. In being asked for directions, one is ascribed not just expertise but identity and authenticity. For many, there is a sense of pride at being associated with Vanderbilt, and longevity of stay seems to confer an authority to solidify this identity. During our campus tour we longed to be reconnected with our taken-for-granted spaces and lives. We weren't really tourists, after all. We were just being tourists for a class, right?

Our tour of campus exposed us, not merely to the sites that had become invisible through our functional mindsets, it exposed us as being transient—only here long enough so that we can be someplace else. For a time, we'd become the Other. Or the Outsider. Or even the Poser.

Mercifully, the anxiety that was so visceral on that day eventually subsided. We re-acclimated ourselves to our workaday realities and resumed creating some roots and allaying a few fears. To some extent we learned, like any good tourist, to be a little more comfortable with the idea that we simultaneously belong both here and elsewhere.



SAVE THE DATE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2007

4:30 P.M.-7:00 P.M.

LOCATION: BUTTRICK HALL, RM. 101

FALL 2007 EVENT
WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES
PROGRAM AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

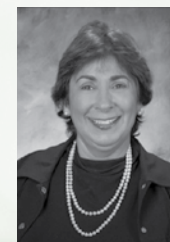
THE SHAPE OF WATER

Narrated by Susan Sarandon

Film Screening and Discussion by Kum Kum Bhavnani,
Feminist Scholar and Film Producer-Director

The Shape of Water in Kum Kum's Words:

"Four years ago I realized I had to make *The Shape of Water*. I had done my research, taught about the work done by women around the globe, written about the women in scholarly articles yet I still felt in my heart that their stories should be known by a wider audience. Their stories are important. And it is important that their realities are understood as the realities of those who are creating a new world, not those who are victims. That is why I have spent the last few years struggling to make this documentary."



"My documentary weaves together the powerful stories of Khady, Bilkusben, Oraiza, Dona Antonia, Vandana, and Gila who, through candor and humor, infuse their communities with a passion for change. The women are abandoning female genital mutilation (Senegal), tapping for rubber to protect the rainforest (Brazil), protecting the biodiversity of the planet (India), and opposing military occupations (Jerusalem)."

About Kum Kum Bhavnani:

Kum-Kum Bhavnani is a scholar, writer, and cultural critic who has worked periodically with broadcast media in the UK in the 1980s before coming to the USA in 1991. She created radio programs for her trade union organizations interviewing organizers such as Arthur Scargill (Leader, Mineworkers Union).

She was also the initiator and billed as researcher for Resist and Survive (30 minutes: directed by Dee Dee Glass and broadcast on Channel Four on 16th February 1983). That program followed three black women's groups in Manchester who worked on economic (employment co-operative), health (challenging white-defined notions of sickle cell anemia) and cultural/sexual (hair and sexuality) aspects of black women's daily lives in the UK.

The Shape of Water, narrated by the Oscar-winning actor Susan Sarandon, has been extremely well-received by a global audience and has won many awards including:

Reel Sisters of the Diaspora
Best feature Documentary Award (Brooklyn, March 2006)

DC Independent Film Festival
World Cinema Award (DC, March 2006)

San Francisco Women's Film Festival
Best Director, Documentary

2007 Hugo Television Awards Gold Plaque
Special Achievement: Music Score

2007 Women's International Film Festival, Miami
Best Documentary, USA

2006 Queen's International Film Festival
Queen's Spirit Award Best Documentary

National Association for Film and Digital Media Artists
2006 INSIGHT Awards of Excellence:
First Feature Film - Direction
Category: Original Score
Category: Editing
Category: Gender-Women
Category: Human Rights
Category: Post-Production
Category: Research
Category: Original Score

For more information on the film, please see:
<http://www.theshapeofwatermovie.com/index.html>