

Fall 2007

## Kahn Chronicle: Fall 2007

Smith College, Kahn Liberal Arts Institute

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## IN THE KAHN SPOTLIGHT: DAVID LOWENTHAL & PETER STALLYBRASS



### DAVID LOWENTHAL

This fall as part of *Sustainable Houses, Homes and Communities* project for 2007-08, the Kahn Institute will welcome **David Lowenthal**, Professor Emeritus of Geography and Honorary Research Fellow at University College London. An American who did his undergraduate and graduate work at Harvard University and the universities of California (Berkeley) and Wisconsin, Lowenthal has been visiting professor at more than half a dozen U.S. universities, as well as several others internationally, in the fields of landscape architecture, political science,

environmental psychology, and geography. His publication history is vast and includes *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge University Press), his 1985 award-winning book about the development of nostalgia and our focus on material artifacts. Among his other books are *The Politics of the Past* (1989), *The Nature of Cultural Heritage and the Culture of Natural Heritage* (2005), and *Undiscovered Country: Reclaiming the Future* (forthcoming).

Lowenthal's visit promises to contribute immensely to the *Sustainable* project by virtue of his expertise in landscape architecture and the interplay of culture, history, and the built environment. According to Co-Organizing Fellow **Nathanael Fortune** (Physics), the Fellows are "particularly interested in how early American environmentalists have influenced our current thinking about sustainability. Professor Lowenthal's prize-winning scholarship introducing the activities and writings of the prescient 19th century American conservationist George Perkins Marsh on 'Man and Nature' and the influence of human activity on the natural world helped restart the modern environmental movement. He is uniquely qualified to connect where we must go with where we have been."

Dr. Lowenthal will present a public lecture entitled "Reclaiming the Future" to the Smith community on Tuesday, October 16 at 7:00pm in Graham Hall.

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### PETER STALLYBRASS

Another notable visitor to the Kahn this fall will be **Peter Stallybrass**, Walter H. and Leonore C. Annenberg Professor in the Humanities, and Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. Stallybrass will visit Smith to contribute to our short-term project, *The Meaning of Matter*, headed by Organizing Fellows Dana Leibsohn and Brigitte Buettner of the Art Department.

Stallybrass did both his undergraduate, and graduate work at Sussex University

in England, where he went on to become a professor. He came to the U.S. for the first time in 1978 to teach at Smith, while still commuting back and forth to Sussex. He took a permanent position at Dartmouth College in 1986, and in 1988 moved to the University of Pennsylvania, where he has been ever since.

Most of Stallybrass's early work was on literary and cultural theory, culminating in the publication of *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, co-written with Allon White in 1986. White's death in 1988 prompted Stallybrass to pen "Worn Worlds: Clothes, Mourning, and the Life of Things," a memorial lecture for his friend and colleague. This endeavor led to a collaboration with Ann Rosalind Jones (Esther Cloudman Dunn Professor of Comparative Literature at Smith) on *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, published by Cambridge University Press and awarded the James Russell Lowell prize by the MLA in 2001.

Stallybrass's body of work is particularly well-suited to *The Meaning of Matter*. In the words of Director of the Institute **Rick Fantasia**, "for a long while Peter has been pushing back against a heavy tradition in the humanities that biases symbolic expression over material forms and practices. His work is delightfully counterintuitive, revealing not exactly the power of 'matter over mind', but the mutually-constituting character of both. He is the perfect choice of a visiting scholar for the *The Meaning of Matter*."

Stallybrass will return to Smith to present a public lecture on Thursday, October 11, at 7:00pm in Seelye 106.



Peter Stallybrass  
(photo by Candace diCarlo)

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## IN MEMORIAM

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of **Stefan Bodnarenko**, Associate Professor of Psychology. Bodnarenko joined the Smith faculty in 1994, and was an Organizing Fellow on the 2005-2006 long-term Kahn project *Form and Function*. His research involved the complexity and precision of the connections that are made among the billions of neurons in the brain.

During his time at Smith, Bodnarenko was best known by students for teaching *Introduction to Neuroscience*, a course he imbued with his trademark enthusiasm and flair. According to President Christ, "he helped build the neuroscience program at Smith and contributed much to its distinction." The college flag was lowered to half-staff in his memory on February 12, and memorial services were held on February 17.

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## SHORT-TERM PROJECT FELLOWSHIPS FOR 2007

A call will go out early in the semester for Faculty Fellowship applications for the following short-term projects for the 2007-08 academic year:

### OPEN LABS / OPEN STUDIOS

Organizing Fellow: **Thomas Ciufo** (Artist in Residence for Arts and Technology)

### THE USES OF MEMORY

Organizing Fellow: **Nicolas Russell** (French Studies)

Project descriptions may be found on pp. 10-11, and more detailed scheduling information will be included with the call. Faculty with further questions regarding these project are encouraged to contact the Organizing Fellows.

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## PROPOSING A KAHN PROJECT FOR 2009-2010 (AND BEYOND)

Developing future faculty and student collaborative research projects is a central focus at the Kahn Institute. While ideas for Kahn projects germinate in many different ways, all originate with members of the Smith faculty. The only requirement for projects is that their central research questions be broadly framed enough to appeal to a variety of disciplinary perspectives. If you have an idea, no matter how preliminary, we invite you to consider proposing a project for the 2009-2010 academic year (or beyond).



*"Narrative : Identity" (2006-07 Long-Term Project) Fellows during their weekly colloquium*

Proposing a Kahn project is a three-step process:

(1) Discuss your idea, however undeveloped, with the Institute's Director or a member of the Advisory Committee as early in the semester as possible, and as your ideas develop. They can assist you with brainstorming and making connections with other faculty members with complimentary research interests.

(2) Once your plans have achieved sufficient focus and depth, send a one-page "Letter of Interest" to the Director via email (rfantasi@email.smith.edu). Your letter should articulate the issue you wish to study and the questions you seek to pose. The deadline for submitting letters for 2009-2010 projects is **Friday, October 19, 2007**.

(3) After reviewing your letter, the Director and/or Advisory Committee member will work with you to expand it into a formal proposal. This proposal will focus on the questions you seek to address, your anticipated approach to them, and what you hope to accomplish during the course of your project year. It will also include a list of potential faculty and outside participants. The deadline for full proposal submissions is **Friday, November 30, 2007**.

Though Kahn projects have traditionally been developed as year-long collaborations, a short-term (two-to-three day) project can be an excellent forum for more preliminary research and discussion. Short-term project topics also often serve as seeds for future long-term projects. There is no deadline for short-term project proposals, and they will be considered by the Director and Advisory Committee on a rolling basis.

Alternative project designs will also be considered, and can provide new contexts for faculty to explore research topics. Proposals for new project forms should follow the procedures and deadlines for long-term projects, laid out above.

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## FACULTY FELLOWSHIPS FOR 2008-2009 PROJECTS

Faculty Fellowship applications are now being accepted for the following two year-long projects for the 2008-2009 academic year. Project descriptions for *Deceit: The Uses of Transparency and Concealment* and *A Festival of Disorder* may be found on pp. 8-9.

### DECEIT: THE USES OF TRANSPARENCY AND CONCEALMENT

Organizing Fellow: Mlada Bukovansky (Government)

Faculty Informational Meeting:  
Tuesday, September 18, 5:00pm

### A FESTIVAL OF DISORDER

Organizing Fellows:

Elisabeth Armstrong (Program for the Study of Women and Gender)  
Marjorie Senechal (Mathematics / History of Science)

Faculty Informational Meeting:  
Wednesday, September 19, 12:00pm  
(Lunch will be served)

All Faculty Fellows receive research grants in the amount of \$3,000 for the project year and, if they wish, student assistants during that period. Junior faculty (only) have the option of choosing either a research grant or one course release during the project year.

Faculty Fellowship applications should include a brief statement of your interest in the project and what you hope to contribute, and should be submitted to the Director via email (rfantasi@email.smith.edu) or post. Faculty must be able and willing to attend the weekly research colloquia for the **entire academic year** in order to be awarded a Fellowship. Day and time will be determined by participating Faculty Fellows at a meeting late in the fall semester.

The application deadline for these two projects is Friday, October 12, 2007.



The Institute will also be sponsoring an additional project in the spring of 2009, which is not subject to the deadlines above:

### LOCAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Organizing Fellow:  
Rick Fantasia (Sociology)

More information on *Local Ethnography* will be included in the Spring 2008 issue of the *Kahn Chronicle*.

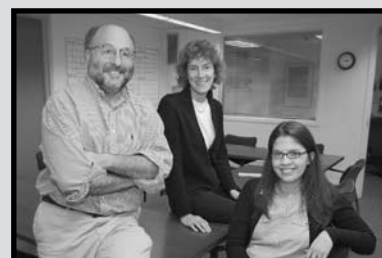
## Who's Who at the Kahn Institute

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Rick Fantasia  
Director  
Chair, Advisory Committee  
Professor of Sociology

Chrissie Bell  
Administrative Coordinator

Hana Boston-Howes  
Project and Publicity Manager



\*\*\*\*\*

## Advisory Committee 2007-2008

Patrick Coby, Professor of Government

Robert Dorit, Associate Professor of  
Biological Sciences

Dawn Fulton, Associate Professor of  
French Studies

Mary Harrington, Tippet Professor in  
Life Sciences, Psychology

Christopher Loring, Director of Libraries

Kevin E. Quashie, Associate Professor of  
Afro-American Studies

Andrew Rotman, Assistant Professor of  
Religion

\*\*\*\*\*

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### Event Information

Phone: 413-585-7584  
Email: kahnevents@smith.edu



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## KAHN STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS AWARDED FOR 2007-2008

The following Smith students have been awarded Fellowship in connection with the two long-term Kahn projects for the 2007-2008 academic year: *Sustainable Houses, Homes and Communities*, organized by Nathanael Fortune (Physics) and Ann Leone (French Studies and Landscape Studies); and *Undergrounds Underworlds*, organized by Kevin Rozario (American Studies) and Michael Thurston (English Language and Literature).



Najia Ahmed '09 (Engineering)  
Rachel Brown '08 (Mathematics)  
Dana Gould '08 (Studio Art)  
Piper Hanson '08 (Sociology)  
Samantha Lyon '08 (Government)  
Annie Parker AC '08 (Economics)  
Dharana Rijal '08 (Mathematics)  
Jessica Wilbarger '08 (Engineering)  
Ji Ying Zhao '09 (Biochemistry)



Sarah Bolts '08 (English)  
Iemanjá Brown '08 (Government)  
Candace Clement AC '09 (American Studies)  
Andrea Gohl '08 (Geology)  
Rebecca Mueller '08 (Anthropology)  
Aliyah Shanti '08 (Music and Italian Studies)  
Rosanna Speller '08 (Mathematics)  
Kathryn Sutton '08 (American Studies and English)  
Lauren Vollono '08 (Art History and Classical Studies)  
Elizabeth Williams '08 (History)

Students in the *Sustainable Houses, Homes and Communities* project join the Faculty Fellows in probing how and why we as human beings continue to draw materials from the natural environment to build and maintain the structures we inhabit, while knowing that these materials will not last forever. The students' research interests are broad and range from how urbanization in developing areas is depleting the land once used for farming and villages, to studying and documenting the methodologies of local sustainable projects in order to generate greater discussion about how local models can be replicated and applied to society at large. While pursuing their individual research, the Fellows also hope to act collectively as a catalyst for innovations in the creation, design, and construction of new houses, homes and communities.

Meanwhile, *Undergrounds Underworlds* Student Fellows will join their faculty counterparts in considering what occurs in the underworlds of mythology, ritual, and poetry, as well as in undergrounds of subterranean space. The creation of underworlds into which characters descend and the use of undergrounds in which revolutions are hatched have held meaning across wide spans of geographical and cultural space, and in every historical period. Student research interests in this project include how the underground becomes an intermediary between the living and the dead, how liminal spaces seem particularly likely to become the sites of significant transformations of how gender is constructed and perceived, and the intersection of the natural phenomenon of cave formation and the intense emotional significance human beings attach to these underground spaces.

## FALL 2007 CALENDAR OF PUBLIC EVENTS

Monday, September 24  
7:00pm, Graham Hall

**MARCUS DE LA FLEUR**

The Kahn Institute's *Sustainable Houses, Homes and Communities* project will welcome renowned landscape architect **Marcus de la fleur**, who will present a public lecture on sustainable housing.



Thursday, October 4  
7:00pm, Graham Hall

**ROSALIND WILLIAMS**

Rosalind Williams, Bern Dibner Professor of the History of Science and Technology at MIT will visit Smith as a guest of the Kahn's *Undergrounds Underworlds* project. A cultural historian of technology, Prof. Williams explores the emergence of a predominantly built world as the environment of human life, often using imaginative literature as a register of and source of insight into this transition.



Thursday, October 11  
7:00pm, Seelye 106

**PETER STALLYBRASS**

The Kahn Institute's short-term project for 2007, *The Meaning of Matter*, will welcome **Peter Stallybrass**, Annenberg Professor in the Humanities and Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. Prof. Stallybrass teaches the Renaissance and is a noted authority on the history of the book and material culture, with a particular interest in theories of the body and of transgression.



Tuesday, October 16  
7:00pm, Graham Hall

**DAVID LOWENTHAL**

*Sustainable Houses, Homes and Communities* is pleased to sponsor the visit of **David Lowenthal**, Professor Emeritus of Geography at University College London. Prof. Lowenthal will give a lecture entitled, "Reclaiming the Future" on topics of environmental history, conservation, landscape, heritage and stewardship.

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# SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS

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*"Narrative: Identity" Student Fellow Kathryn Fox '07*

## "THE MEANING OF HOME"

FROM NORTHAMPTON TO THE OREGON TRAIL AND BEYOND

by Kathryn Fox '07, Student Fellow, *Narrative: Identity*  
Major - American Studies

We've all heard the lyrics: "Oh give me a home, where the buffalo roam." The song—I'll let you hum the rest in your mind—conjures up images of a great American West, of wagon trains nobly lumbering toward a blazing sun that lights the way to a wellspring of prosperity and fullness of life. It's an idealistic song, and though it was written in 1872, over 20 years and a Civil War after the first wave of American migration to western U.S. territories, it articulates the desire for a home—a place of origin, identity—held by western migrants throughout the nineteenth century, whether they were headed to Oregon, Oklahoma, or Omaha.

What we tend to forget, however, and what makes this familiar song rather ironic, is that these migrants hardly lacked a home before departing for western lands. The majority of travelers, or at least the thousands who journeyed on the now-called Oregon Trail before the Civil War, came from the tightly structured culture of the Midwestern farming community. In this environment, one's place in society was strictly defined by one's place within the family. Familial status, age,

and gender designated one's work and personal responsibilities. A family structure served as the economic, social, and political foundation of this society, and it operated tightly on the paradigm of the cycle: children were expected to grow up, replace their parents, and begin the life circle again.

It was from this culture that Abigail J. Malick emerged. Malick was a woman who, in middle age, moved with her husband and six children from Tazewell County, Illinois, to the banks of the Columbia River in what is now Clark County, Washington. There they established a farmstead where they hoped to establish economic and personal prosperity, and to live in the harmony of their familiar life cycle. However, their new life turned out to bring anything but that hope. The two oldest sons, Charles and Hiram, died within a year of their migration. Malick's husband died of a stroke four years into their new life in Oregon Territory; her beloved daughter Rachel died in childbirth just a year later. Malick's family unit, the foundation of her social, economic, and political identity was crumbling.

And yet it had begun to deteriorate even before leaving Illinois. Malick's oldest child, Mary Ann, was married and remained in Illinois when her parents and siblings departed. Malick's inevitable means of communication with Mary Ann was the letter, and Malick wrote long and often. Today, we have over seventy of Malick's letters written in the seventeen years between her journey to Oregon and her death. The Malick Family Papers collection, now kept at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, also includes letters from Malick's children, husband, and son-in-law to Mary Ann and her family. Mysteriously, the whereabouts of the family's letters from the trail are unknown, as are all their letters from the last four years of Abigail Malick's life.

It was through these letters that I have gotten to know Abigail Malick over the past year, and though I've always been an early American history junkie, I still can't quite pinpoint my interest in these letters. Perhaps, as a nearing Smith graduate, I was anticipating a major life shift in which I would leave one way of being for another, like Malick. Of the letters, I asked, "where and what is the bridge between two phases in life?" For Malick, writing became not only a way of keeping "in touch" with her daughter, but a space in which she could narrate—and thus negotiate—the status, the quality, and the meaning of her life. Her writing walks, and dances around, a fine line between performance for her readers and personal life accounting; by her fluctuation we must ask, what is the difference? What does this mean for Malick's relationship to her readers, and what does that say with regard to her sense of self? Does her separation and relocation turn into dislocation, not just from her readers but from herself? How does she try to mend it, justify it, or redeem it?

Often in our Kahn colloquiums we asked more questions than we could ever answer. Studying identity, like developing identity, is always an ongoing process. For that reason, I'm not sure I'll ever be truly "finished" studying or thinking about Abigail Malick's letters. My research, like Malick's journey westward, has been, and will be, an adventure to new places and thoughts: an investigation of a new frontier.

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# 2006-2007 ORGANIZING FELLOWS'

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by Bill Peterson, Associate Professor of Psychology  
Organizing Fellow



*The "Narrative: Identity" Fellows at their final colloquium meeting*

The final weeks of *Narrative: Identity* were emotional ones as our group contemplated the end of our time together. Over the past academic year we grew close as a learning community. In the future many of us will have opportunities to talk with each other, but there was a palpable feeling of regret that the entire group will no longer enjoy afternoon seminars followed by dinners that lasted well beyond the allotted hour (thank you Chrissie and Hana for indulging our late departures from the Kahn Institute).

Common themes that united many of our individual projects were apparent when our students presented their work at Collaborations Day. One of the themes that we discussed several times in our year together was how to go about documenting identities. How do we study a trenchant concept like identity and, furthermore, package our labors in such a way that others will find it interesting and important? Some of our solutions involved the writing of traditional essays, whereas others expressed their concerns through artistic productivity. These latter efforts, especially, expanded our notion of identity so that we moved away from a focus on the mind to focus on the display of identity through body movement and voice. We experimented with documentary theatre, watched dance pieces, and listened to vocal expressions of identity accompanied by music and chant. Many of the identity projects in this

area focused on the way that selfhood is negotiated in 21st century America.

Indeed, what some might call identity politics emerged in our discussions. Individual members of our group focused on how social expectations based on gender roles and ethnicity might impact identity formation and display. We discussed how identity is not just a personal thing; it's also an interactional construct that evolves over time through social encounters. Some projects led us to struggle with identity in very practical ways. For example, one member of our group had to deal with social expectations as a director when casting the characters in a play about the Philippines. As other projects showed, social displays of identity occur in settings as varied as museum exhibits and at the cinema.

A third theme that emerged revolved around the assessment of identity at a distance. Many of our projects focused on the identity concerns of people from other time periods (e.g., Elizabethan England; during the heyday of the American frontier). We asked to what extent are the identity concerns of historical figures understandable to those of us in the 21st century. What aspects of identity are historically relative, and what aspects of identity seem to endure over generational time? In many cases the past is still present and studying prior ways that identity was formulated provided insight into contemporary issues that continue to vex. For example, just as with e-mail now, letters passed across the U.S. during the 1850s among a pioneer family are no substitute for the interactional displays that confirm personal identity.

This was a rewarding year for faculty and students in *Narrative: Identity*. We came away from our project with an increased respect for the intelligence, poise and polish of our Smith students (or the "Kahnies" as they dubbed themselves). We also came to appreciate again one of the factors that drew us to a liberal arts college in the first place—the value of interdisciplinary dialogue with wonderful colleagues.

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## Marriage and D I V O R C E

by Alice Hearst, Associate Professor of Government  
& Lois Dubin, Associate Professor of Religion  
Organizing Fellows

During the spring semester of 2007, the project successfully continued its multi-faceted explorations of marriage and divorce. As faculty and student fellows addressed a range of social, cultural, and legal issues in diverse historical and contemporary settings and through different media, we developed greater appreciation of one another's approaches and of the value of combining different disciplinary perspectives. Individual



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# FINAL REFLECTIONS ON THEIR PROJECTS

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fellows were often pleasantly surprised to discover the relevance of another's work that initially seemed far afield from their own. By the end, faculty and students generally felt that they had substantially advanced their own research agendas through their work with the group.

Once again, as in the first semester, we invited a number of guest speakers whose excellent presentations sparked lively discussions and greatly enriched our thinking. The project opened in January with a presentation by **Dirk Hartog**, Professor of History at Princeton University. His *Man and Wife in America* explores how husbands and wives experienced marriage and separation within the 19th-century American legal regime. It was particularly interesting to hear him reflect on the arguments of the book five years after its publication date. That conversation was especially informative for students, as it introduced them to the ways in which scholarly work evolves over time.

Subsequent sessions were equally engaging. **Suzanne Gottschang**, an anthropologist at Smith College who specializes in 20th century China, introduced seminar members to the complicated kinship system in China, and discussed how the Chinese Revolution has altered (and not altered) traditional ways of thinking and practices of marriage and kinship. **Jutta Sperling**, an historian at Hampshire College, joined the group to talk about dowry systems in early modern Italy and how dowries functioned as means of inheritance and disinheritance for women. **Gail Perlman**, a local family court judge in Northampton Massachusetts, offered a judge's perspective on family law in the United States today; a former social worker, she surveyed developments in family law in recent decades and offered critical reflection on changing legal models. **Peggy Cooper Davis**, a law professor at New York University, discussed how race and gender considerations complicate legal assumptions about marriage, divorce, and citizenship in America.

The project also held a number of public events. In April, we sponsored a panel discussion on the legal and political aspects of gay and lesbian marriage, both in the United States and internationally. The panel was composed of two guest speakers; **Lee Badgett**, an economist at the University of Massachusetts, and **Jennifer Levi**, a law professor at Western New England College School of Law. Badgett has written extensively on the myth of gay affluence. She is currently working on the European and U.S. experience with gay marriage, looking particularly at the fiscal impact of same-sex marriage. As an attorney with Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders in Boston, Levi was extensively involved in the litigation resulting in the legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts. She is now involved, as well, in litigation involving the dissolution of some of those marriages. The public panel was well attended, attracting some sixty or so audience members. The Fellows enjoyed a follow-up panel at our regular session the next morning.

The project also sponsored several public film screenings, continuing the series started in the fall. The three films presented during the spring were *Scenes from a Marriage*, *La Séparation*, and *The Squid and the Whale*. Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage* explored the dynamics of a long term relationship and its eventual demise in Sweden; the latter two films focused particularly on divorce in France and the United States respectively.

Considerable time was taken up with the presentation of projects by individual seminar members. **Lois Dubin** presented her work on a new book, *Rachele and Her Loves*, an exploration of the regulation of marriage



*Marriage and Divorce Student Fellows Cara Gaumont, Beth Prosnitz and Jo Leach*

and divorce in early modern Europe, especially the tensions of competing state and religious authorities and the creation of civil marriage by centralizing modern states during the late 18th century. **Alice Hearst** introduced her work on children, cultural identity and contested custody matters, while **Ernie Alleva** explored contemporary philosophical work on same-sex marriage. **Jennifer Heuer** discussed the ways in which marriage was used as a tool of nation-building in Napoleonic France, and **Ginetta Candelario** engaged the seminar in a discussion of her work on rethinking the value of maternal labor, both by exploring Dominican feminist thought and activism between 1880 and 1960, and by looking at how maternal labor is discounted in the contemporary father's rights movement in the United States.

Student Fellows also presented their work. **Caroline Fox '07** discussed shifts in ideas of gender relations in Spain during the transition from Franco's dictatorship to a democratic regime. **Beth Prosnitz '07** explored how Internet dating services affect the customs of arranged marriages in India. Concerning marriage in the United States, **Maureen Sarna '07** introduced the group to the phenomenon of covenant marriage; **Cara Gaumont '07** explored images of celebrity motherhood in popular culture; and **Sarah Sherman '07** discussed the resistance to marriage in some sectors of the gay and lesbian community. **Lisa Redmond '07** focused on contract and status as two different building-blocks for structuring marital rights. The students also planned and presented a panel discussion of their projects during the "Celebrating Collaborations" weekend in April.

On the whole, the project enriched and complicated individuals' perspectives on the study of marriage and divorce. It was successful in creating ties among a number of faculty members, laying the groundwork for future collaboration. It was also successful in introducing students to independent scholarly work; at the end of the Project, many students commented that they now had a much better grasp of the research process. Through the Kahn Institute, they also learned the value of sustained discourse and disagreement among a group of engaged scholars.



# 2008-2009 PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

## DECEIT: THE USES OF TRANSPARENCY AND CONCEALMENT

Organizing Fellow: Mlada Bukovansky (Government)

*"Wouldn't the social fabric come undone  
If we were wholly frank with everyone?"<sup>1</sup>*



Associate Professor of Government Mlada Bukovansky

The use of language to deceive appears to be a universal human trait.<sup>2</sup> As Molière suggests, a world of absolute transparency and frankness would probably be unbearable. People find many reasons to conceal truth. Some of those reasons might be considered legitimate while others not, and judgments about the legitimacy of any particular deceit often are themselves contestable. From the twisting of intelligence reports to reach a politically-motivated conclusion, to parental narratives denying past recreational drug use when counseling their children, to the massaging of data in a scientific paper for the purposes of communicating an ethically desirable thesis about, say, global warming – deceit, hypocrisy, and concealment are widespread social practices that can provide a vehicle by which we can learn a great deal about ourselves as human beings.

Such practices have always been central concerns in the realm of literature and poetry, and provide a rich and varied source of materials for critical consideration. Apart from moral condemnation, the matter of deceit has been perhaps less of a focus for examination across the social and natural sciences, and for this reason may offer particularly ripe intellectual fruit for our picking. This project will seek to explore the manifold ways in which the practices of deceit both sustain and undermine human relationships and social order.

My own work focuses on hypocrisy, a form of deceit which the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) defines as the “assuming of a false appearance of virtue or goodness, with dissimulation of real character or inclinations, esp. in respect of religious life or beliefs; hence in a general

THE APPLICATION DEADLINE  
FOR 2008-2009 LONG-TERM  
FACULTY FELLOWSHIPS IS  
**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2007**  
(see Announcements on p.3 for more details)

sense, dissimulation, pretence, sham.” I am particularly interested in how deceit complicates our understanding of norms and values in social life, and how hypocrisy is used to paper over incommensurate values and interests. For example, I am currently exploring the impact of hypocrisy on international norms and institutions, with a focus on trade liberalization negotiations within the World Trade Organization (WTO). Hypocrisy and deceit tend to be routine in the international milieu; they are essential to diplomacy because without them it would often be impossible for states with incommensurate interests and values to come to agreement. In the WTO, wealthy countries push weaker states to liberalize their markets while they themselves retain institutionalized modes of protection in key sectors such as agriculture. This form of hypocrisy appears to be a prerogative of power. In turn, poor countries demand agricultural liberalization by the rich as a precondition for negotiating further liberalization, while simultaneously advocating exceptions for themselves. This is yet another form of hypocrisy, and does not appear to prevent the poorer countries from publicly shaming the rich by leveling accusations of hypocrisy against them.

Such hypocritical practices have become a focal point of contestation within and resistance to the WTO, revealing the interplay and negotiation of diverse and perhaps incommensurate values such as market openness, protection of rural landscapes and ecosystems, and economic development.

This project will bring together a diverse group of scholars to explore the tensions between deceit and truthfulness, between concealment and transparency, in a variety of contexts. While each Fellow will bring to the group some case or set of problems that have been generated within their particular discipline, the collaborative framework will afford an opportunity to see beyond disciplinary horizons. That is, nested within each case study are broader philosophical, ethical, cultural and linguistic questions that are evoked by the human practice of deception. How has the play of deceit and revelation been represented in art and literature? How have such issues been manifested in different historical contexts? How do cultures handle deceitful practices differently, and how do they shape intercultural relations in their interaction? To what extent may new technologies be creating more perfect forms of deceit (such as the practice of identity theft or the role of the internet in human interactions) or how technologies of surveillance might make concealment more difficult (such as software designed to catch plagiarists)?

<sup>1</sup> Molière, *The Misanthrope*, quoted in Judith N. Shklar “Let Us Not Be Hypocritical,” in *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Dan Brown, *Human Universals* (1991), cited in Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: the Modern Denial of Human Nature* (NY: Viking, 2002), appendix.

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## A FESTIVAL OF DISORDER

Organizing Fellows:

Elisabeth Armstrong (Program for the Study of Women & Gender)  
and Marjorie Senechal (Mathematics / History of Science)

Who are we? Are we *Homo faber*, humans as makers, builders of a material world fashioned - in some sense - by inborn notions of space and time? Or are we *Homo sapiens*, supposedly intelligent humans, seeking patterns everywhere, finding them even when they aren't there, imposing them wherever we can? Or are we *Homo ludens*, humans as players, the defiant creators of carnivals and theater, exuberant arts, radical social movements and scientific revolutions? Or are we something of each?

Disorder can be courageous. Consider, for example, the green revolution state of Haryana, where vast irrigation projects and high yield crops once promised a future without hunger. But as land became concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, landless women faced greater indebtedness, fewer days of waged work, and greater sexual vulnerability to those whose fields they farm. Their survival depends upon fealty to an established order vast in time, power, and acreage, yet they defy its conventions, at great risk to themselves.

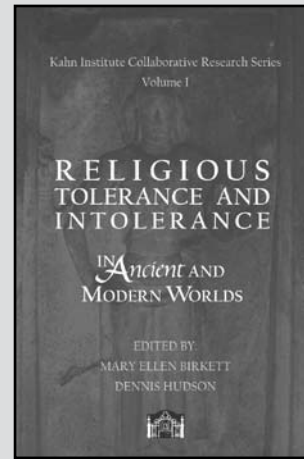
Disorder can be illuminating. Toward the end of the twentieth century, scientists in many fields, including mathematics, discovered that 'disorder' isn't random, it's a maze of subtle patterns with revolutionary implications. For example, for centuries clocks were the very model of an orderly universe, a well-behaved machine, but today they are studied as models for disorder, as diseases are traced to disorderly motions in heartbeats and circadian rhythms.

Thumb through the Smith course catalogue (or scroll through it on the internet): you'll find a compendium of patterns, from historical imperatives to natural laws. We teach, and search for, patterns in human speech, in behavior (economic, molecular, psychological, statistical), in whole numbers and irrational numbers, in galaxies, in movements for social change. What we find changes with the times (and with changing technologies) - the genome is supplanting Linneaus - but the impetus for pattern-seeking persists. Maybe that's why academia gives disorder short shrift. But is Order/Disorder a dichotomy, or a dialectic? Change - social, artistic, scientific - is fueled by disorder, by distrusting and defying received, and perceived, patterns.

Like a carnival, this "Festival of Disorder" will turn order upside down, as project Fellows probe the vast order/disorder spectrum.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of us, for example, plans a full-blown, disorderly, and disrespectful critique of the concept, and the role, of symmetry in the sciences. Another will look at the daily lives of working poor women who fight for social change in India; women who dare to imagine more than just a better life for themselves or their families, who challenge the new world order of neoliberal globalization.

## *RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND INTOLERANCE* BOOK PUBLICATION



In May 2007, the Institute celebrated the publication of the first volume of the Kahn Institute Occasional Papers; *Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Ancient and Modern Worlds*. Taking its name from the 2001-2002 Kahn long-term project from which it sprung, the volume was set in motion by Co-Organizing Fellow D. Dennis Hudson (Professor Emeritus of World Religions), and features the work of several of the project's ten Faculty Fellows. It was edited by Hudson, who passed away in late 2006, and Mary Ellen Birkett (Professor of French Studies).

The essays are vast in scope, touching upon the themes of tolerance and intolerance from varying perspectives and distances. In Birkett's own words, "the volume does not seek to be comprehensive, although the essays it contains reflect a wide variety of approaches, methods, and subject matter. It is a collection that can be dipped into, contemplated, set aside, and returned to: its essays seek less to provide answers than to open new areas of inquiry, provoke dialogue, and stimulate reflection about foundational questions."

Contributors to the volume were Ernie Alleva (Philosophy), Frank Marotta, Joel Kaminsky (Religion), Keith Lewinstein (History, Bridgewater State College), Margaret Sarkissian (Music), Patricia Skarda (English Language and Literature), Mary Ellen Birkett (French Studies), D. Dennis Hudson (Religion), and Vinay Lal (History, UCLA).

The book's release was marked by a reception at the Institute attended by many of the contributors, President Christ, former Director of the Institute Marjorie Senechal, Faculty and Student Fellows from the *Religious Tolerance and Intolerance* project, several Kahn Institute Senior Fellows, and friends and family of Dennis Hudson.

The Kahn Institute Occasional Papers are published at irregular intervals. Copies of *Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Ancient and Modern Worlds* may be requested from:

Kahn Liberal Arts Institute, Smith College  
Northampton, MA 01063  
413.585.3721

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# 2007-2008 SHORT-TERM PROJECTS

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## MEANING OF MATTER

Organizing Fellows:

Brigitte Buettner (Art)

and Dana Leibsohn (Art)

This project takes as its central theme the interpretation of material things. We are exploring ways of understanding the vast sediment of concrete objects, past and present, in the broadest sense: everyday stuff and artistic creations, bodies and food, totemic and disposable goods, and scientific objects.

The core question of this short-term project is thus: what are the possibilities—and limits—of what the material world can say to us?

Our underlying premise is that things are neither neutral nor passive. The Western metaphysical tradition has always drawn a sharp dividing line between subjects and objects; a division magnified by the idealist prejudice that systematically values mind over matter. This project delves into the work of scholars who challenge these assumptions so that we might consider their implications for our own work. For instance, in what sense do 'things talk back' (as suggested by the historian of science, Lorraine Daston)? And just what might constitute the 'social life' or the 'personality' of things (as anthropologists Arjun Appadurai and Marcel Mauss have proposed)? To what extent do the physical properties of things, including the way they are made, the way they look and they feel, affect how we, as subjects, relate to the world, to others and to ourselves? In this project we will "think the 'thingness' of things" by exploring how economic, social, technical and esthetic choices shape objects and how they, in turn, shape us.

We view this project as a way of engaging cross-disciplinary debates about materiality as a dynamic bearer of meaning. While each of the participants brings specific substantive questions and concerns about materiality and its interpretation that have been generated by their own work and disciplinary background, the project provides a forum to discuss both common readings and our own individual research projects.

This project consists of two parts. The first was a three-day colloquium from May 22-24, 2007. The mornings were dedicated to discussion of common readings and the afternoons to examination of 'thing-ness' from various disciplinary vantage points. Participants were asked to put forward particular aspects and problems from their own research for group discussion. The goal will be to use the colloquium to work through those intellectual questions that matter to each participant.

The second part of the project will take place in October 2007, after participants have had the summer to pursue individual research and reflect on our spring discussions. At our October meeting we will be joined by **Peter Stallybrass** (Annenberg Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania) whose recent work has highlighted the centrality of objects and materiality in Renaissance culture. He will present a public lecture on Thursday, October 11 that will serve as the frame for our colloquium meeting the following day.

We are pleased that this project has been of great interest and value to colleagues from a broad range of disciplines; not only in the humanities and the social sciences, but in the sciences as well, where materiality and its representation are also central, albeit with a very different inflection.

## OPEN LABS / OPEN STUDIOS

Organizing Fellow: **Thomas Ciufu** (Sherman-Fairchild Artist in Residence for Arts and Technology)

This project is intended to bring together Faculty Fellows from the arts and the sciences to visit each others' work domains over the course of several weeks. Artists will tour the laboratories of scientists, and scientists will visit art studios, both to view their colleagues' physical work spaces and to hear the occupants of these spaces explain what goes on there and why. Those who have agreed to let others visit their labs and studios will talk about what they do there; and will then pose questions and offer comments about what they see in the spaces of others. The aim of the project is to provide an opportunity for those accustomed to working and thinking among those who work and think in roughly similar ways, to engage and be engaged by those who work and think in radically different ways. In other words, *Open Labs/Open Studios* will be the occasion for artists and scientists to cross boundaries in order to stimulate the thinking of each in relation (and in reaction) to the other. Besides being fun and interesting, it is hoped that the experience may begin to forge a shared vocabulary for artists and scientists to engage with one another and to plant seeds for possible future joint projects.

In consultation with their inhabitants, several studios and labs will be selected for visits that will be scheduled at various points over the course of the current academic year. Once the schedule of visits has been concluded, the group will convene for a half-day colloquium for a broad discussion of impressions and ideas, with a view toward imagining the sorts of collaborations that might conceivably be hatched between working scientists and working artists.



*"The Meaning of Matter" Fellows enjoy the weather during a break from their May workshop  
(L-R: The backs of Linda Jones, Paul Newlin, Vicki Spelman, Andy Rotman, Rick Millington & Dana Leibsohn)*

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## THE NATURE AND USES OF MEMORY

Organizing Fellow:  
Nicolas Russell (French Studies)

This Kahn short-term project will focus on the different ways we define and discuss memory. Memory is an important subject of study in a wide range of intellectual domains; however, different intellectual disciplines ask different questions about memory, and at times, it is not at all clear that they are even talking about the same thing. The goal of the project is to have an interdisciplinary discussion in which the participants can compare the questions, concepts, and methods they use in thinking about memory to those used by others in other disciplines. My own work has focused on the concepts of personal and collective memory in early modern France (1500-1800) and has itself been interdisciplinary to a certain extent: theories and research from other fields – such as cognitive science, sociology, historiography, media studies, and philosophy – have helped me to answer some of my own research questions. However, impromptu discussions about memory with colleagues in various fields have given me a different interdisciplinarity experience. On a number of occasions, such conversations have pushed me to rethink some of my own assumptions and questions. It is this kind of interdisciplinary exchange that I am interested in fostering, for myself and for others, through this Kahn project.

To lay the ground work for this project we will ask participants to think about a set of questions, from their own point of view. What is memory and what roles do we ascribe to memory in the intellect and in society? How do we use memory as a metaphor and what metaphors do we use to understand memory? To what extent and in what sense can we say that memory extends beyond the mind – in computers, archives, social groups, genes? The questions are very broad and are meant as a heuristic tool rather than a task list to complete. Perhaps they will strike some participants as the “wrong questions,” which in itself might prove very interesting.

Before meeting, the participants will also read a series of texts on memory, divided into two groups and collected in a course pack. The first group of texts will introduce specific technical terms (e.g. distinctions between ROM and RAM or between procedural, semantic, and episodic memory). The second group of texts will present a set of thought-provoking problems or approaches to the concept of memory in different intellectual domains. Selected Fellows will be asked to suggest readings which (1) introduce technical terms they may want to use during group discussions, (2) present a thought-provoking problem, or (3) give an overview or introduction to their field's (or sub-field's) approach to memory. Some of these will be included in the course pack, while others will be added to a supplemental bibliography to be distributed to the group.

The project will take place over two to three days in January and February 2008. The first meeting will take place shortly before the start of the spring semester, and will consist of a discussion among the participants which will bring together the general questions at the origin of this project, the “course pack” readings, and the participants' presentations of their own work.

The second part of this project would involve an invited speaker, who will give a public lecture to the Smith community early in the spring semester. The Fellows will then meet with the visiting scholar to discuss the history and evolution of the concept of memory.

Applications from faculty across the three divisions are encouraged and would bring great value to the project.

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

(continued from back page)

that I am unaware of (my understanding is that only research that is federally funded is legally required to proceed through IRB vetting, while most research in the social sciences and the humanities is privately funded) then there are other possible steps besides a blanket exemption. For instance, each department or program in the social sciences and the humanities might be “deputized” to serve as the equivalent of an IRB. This would afford a review of ethical practices for all student (and perhaps faculty) research to remain within the intellectual domain in which it is being conducted. It would permit a reduction of bureaucratic hurdles, while providing a means for student researchers to be made aware of the ethical requirements of the research process. Whether any of these points are worth pursuing or not, it is essential that the IRB process needs to be part of our discussion about building a “culture of inquiry”.

<sup>1</sup> See Adil E. Shamoo, “Deregulating Low-Risk Research” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Aug. 3, 2007 p. B16.

<sup>2</sup> “Research on Human Subjects: Academic Freedom and the Institutional Review Board”, a Report by AAUP, 2006, p. 5. [ <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/About/committees/committee+repts/...> ]

<sup>3</sup> See Patricia Cohen, “As Ethics Panels Expand Grip, No Research Field is Off Limits”, *The New York Times*, Feb. 28, 2007, p. A1.





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# A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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## A SNAG IN THE 'CULTURE OF INQUIRY'

An interesting and important discussion has taken place over the past year about ways to expand student involvement in the research process. The general idea is that the practice of research should extend beyond just those students involved in special research programs (like STRIDE, year-long Kahn Institute projects, and the capstone senior honors thesis), toward the creation of a broad "culture of inquiry" that would frame the experience for all students throughout their full four years. One can imagine the proposed center for community-based research playing an important role in this process and, together with the Kahn Institute and STRIDE, providing solid institutional supports for a set of initiatives that promise to excite and engage students through the practice of scholarship.

As we move to expand the opportunities for student research we should identify and address any institutional barriers. In my view, one such hindrance has been the requirement of having all research on human subjects monitored and regulated by an Institutional Review Board. As many other universities and colleges across the country are finding, the IRB process can push against the kind of "culture of inquiry" that we seek by placing bureaucratic speed bumps in the way of research that, by its very nature, already has tough obstacles to overcome.

This is particularly so in the humanities and social sciences, where research is conducted on human subjects but where the actual risk to subjects in research is very low to non-existent. An IRB can wield substantial power over the research process, but unless all its members have been trained in the discipline or field of the research itself, they cannot be cognizant of the full theoretical and methodological context in which the research project was designed. The real problem is that IRB members are charged with scrutinizing a research proposal from a legal and bureaucratic perspective, rather than through a lens shaped by the academic/scientific practice from which it has acquired its rationale and its intellectual power.

Generally, one of the key tasks of an IRB is to ensure that the researcher obtains the informed consent of the human subjects of her research. Of course this is more than reasonable, and especially if the subjects are not autonomous adults (i.e. children, prisoners, mentally incapacitated, etc.). But what if unobtrusive observation is important to the research, at the same time that subjects must be informed that the purpose of the research is to observe particular behaviors? In such cases the spontaneity necessary to understand human behavior dissolves because research subjects have been prompted to act in ways that they otherwise might not. Moreover, when a researcher is studying illegal or stigmatizing behavior, or behavior in the context of social or political conflict, obtaining "informed consent" may be deeply problematic for the subjects, since anonymity may be the source of safety and protection. Maybe an IRB can be persuaded to permit an



*Rick Fantasia*  
Director

exemption for such research, but maybe not.

IRB's are charged with the difficult task of determining the relative costs and benefits of the research to human subjects. With literally thousands of IRB's operating nationally, each comprised of a distinctive mix of members with different education experiences and training, the same study at two different institutions will almost invariably be evaluated differently. With no appeal process, and with many IRB members predisposed by the legal framework to avoid risk, serious constraints on academic freedom become inevitable.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the recommendation of a recent American Association of University Professors (AAUP) report on academic freedom and IRB's could hardly be more explicit:

"....what we recommend is, more precisely, that research on autonomous adults, whose methodology consists entirely in collecting data by surveys,

conducting interviews, or observing behavior in public places, be exempt from the requirements of IRB review—straightforwardly exempt, with no provisos, and no requirement of IRB approval of the exemption."<sup>2</sup>

Smith College currently has two IRB's (consolidated from four in 2005), one for the School for Social Work and one for the rest of the college). According to IRB records, they reviewed 109 proposals in 2006-07, up from 87 in the previous year. The IRB members clearly work very hard, meeting once a month during the academic year, with turnaround time for proposals depending on how fully a researcher has been able to respond to detailed questions about their research. Almost all proposals reportedly require revisions or additions, thereby delaying approval for proposals that require a full review (roughly 12% of proposals last year); less if the IRB determines that it can be expedited or exempt. Still, even an expedited review can be a frustrating experience. Adjustment and modification are crucial at the early phases of certain kinds of social science research, but tend to be discouraged or foreclosed by a process that requires that all changes be subject to further review and regulation.

If research entails "interaction with an individual" all researchers in the humanities and social sciences must submit detailed initial proposals that include a list of questions they will pose, later adding any modifications to their interview questions, and providing annual progress reports. The Smith IRB process is not particularly onerous and much of its work seems to be dispatched thoughtfully and expeditiously, but yet it persists in creating unnecessary hurdles for researchers. While I have no evidence that the bureaucratic process dissuades scholars from conducting certain kinds of research at Smith, there is no doubt that this has been the effect at other institutions.<sup>3</sup>

If we are serious about moving to directly involve all of our students in the research process at Smith, the current IRB system will be an unnecessary impediment. If it cannot be eliminated it should be streamlined, especially for research in the humanities and social sciences. If it is determined that there is some legal restriction

*(continued on reverse)*