

Routing Diasporas: Capstone Conference of Two Years of Geographies of Difference

When in 2003 the Center launched the first two-year research theme in its history, we hoped that faculty fellows from the first year would have the opportunity to contribute to Center activities during the second. We not only met this objective, but far exceeded it thanks to three fellows from 2003-04, Sukanya Banerjee (English), Aims McGuinness (History), and Steve McKay (Sociology). During their fellowship year, they generated the concept for the path-breaking international, interdisciplinary conference *Routing Diasporas: Labor, Citizenship, Empire*, and agreed to serve as its organizers.

The conference was held April 8 and 9, 2005 at the American Geographical Society Library at UWM, a most congenial and fitting venue, enhanced by an exhibition, "People on the Move," which Jovanka Ristic of the AGS



(left to right) Angel Adams Parham, Jenny Sharpe, and Lok Siu

Library curated especially for the conference. An audience of over 70 participated. In addition to the organizers, who each served as discussant for one panel, the conference also featured 2003–04 Center fellows Kristin Espinosa (Sociology) as a presenter and Andrew Kincaid (English) as a discussant.

After welcoming remarks by Center director Daniel Sherman, the opening panel, with papers by Engseng Ho (Anthropology, Harvard), Parama Roy (English, UC-Riverside), and Jenny Sharpe (English & Comparative Literature, UCLA) underscored the urgency of rethinking diasporas as ongoing life passages. Ho did so by discussing how early 20th century Arabs from Yemen living in various places around the Indian Ocean pulled the British imperial state into a cooperative relationship; Roy by emphasizing the role of "banalities" in the formation of

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From the Director

In my opening remarks at last month's highly successful conference, Routing Diasporas, I summarized the project of our two-year research theme, Geographies of Difference, by citing a passage from an article by the French historian Fernand Braudel. "Spatial models," Braudel wrote, "are the charts upon which social reality is projected, and through which it may become at least partially clear; they are truly models for all the different movements of time...and for all the categories of social life." I wish I could claim that this elegant formulation had been in my mind at the moment we began mapping out our Geographies of Difference programs, but in fact I came across it just a week or two before the conference, when preparing to teach a long-forgotten article in my graduate seminar on historiography.

In a manner befitting my belated appropriation of it, Braudel's brief discussion of space comes as something of an afterthought in an article best known for setting out his original and highly influential schema of time, focused on the concept of the *longue durée*, which moves so slowly as to be almost imperceptible. This is the kind of time most academics can only dream of, and, even though Geographies of Difference doubled the amount of time the Center has devoted to a single theme, it has still gone by very quickly. But as we begin our preparations for next year's theme, States of Autonomy, the idea of the "afterthought" strikes me as especially pertinent, not only in its literal sense but as a metaphor for continuities in the work of the Center of which we may become aware only in passing.

To take a couple of random examples, Engseong Ho's fascinating paper at the Routing Diasporas conference, though concerned on one level with the diaspora of peoples from the Hadramaut (southern Arabia) throughout South Asia, also dealt with new forms of sovereignty devised in the later stages of the British Empire—sovereignty, of course, being the theme of next year's annual conference, scheduled for this coming October. In the fellows' seminar last month, Andrea Westlund (Philosophy) presented a paper that involves notions of autonomy as centrally as it does concepts of difference. Simone Bitton's *Mur*, the film we proudly presented in its Milwaukee premiere in February, echoed—I would say uncannily, except that the two directors undoubtedly know each others' work—Michal Rovner's *Border*, which Irit Rogoff showed as a prelude to her lecture last September. Many of the scholars faculty members have suggested we invite for next year would have fit equally well into the Geographies of Difference theme, and vice versa. And the inevitable time lag between our books and working papers and the events from which they emerge creates the possibility for myriad unforeseen connections, oppositions, even hauntings. In all these ways, the afterthought may be the perfect trope for the kinds of serendipitous flows that, we hope, make up the Center's *longue durée*.

—Daniel Sherman

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audience at Routing Diasporas conference, American Geographical Society Library, April 8, 2005

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colonial scapes; and Sharpe by reading recent texts by Edwige Danticat and Caryl Phillips as remapping the Middle Passage in ways that defy easy culpability.

The second panel focused on questions of (im)migration and national identity. Rachel Buff (History, UWM) characterized United States Cold War immigration policy as an “imperial” rather than a “civil rights” moment; Betty Joseph (English, Rice) described attempts by members of the Indian diaspora, using both traditional narratives and the internet, to contribute to the Hindu nationalist agenda of rewriting history; and Todd Shepard (History, University of Oklahoma) analyzed the tortuous redefinitions of French citizenship as France confronted an unexpected, diverse exodus from newly independent Algeria. A reception highlighting the AGS Library collection, hosted by AGS Library director, Dr. Christopher Baruth, concluded the first day.

The second conference day began with a panel that included Martin Berger (Art History, UC Santa Cruz), Shelley Streeby (Literature, UC San Diego), and Julie Greene (History, Colorado). Berger discussed what he called the “imperialism of whiteness” in the mid-to-late 19th century through a careful decoding of the valances of Orientalist styles in museum architecture. Shelley Streeby drew parallels between representation of immigrant soldiers during the Mexican War of the 1840s and so-called “green card soldiers” today to investigate the issue of “imperial citizenship.” Greene addressed the same theme, but from the perspective of white American workers during the construction of the Panama Canal. The first Roosevelt administration’s efforts to keep these workers—and citizens—happy turned them into representatives and enforcers of United States empire, she argued.

The morning concluded with the keynote address by Aihwa Ong (Anthropology, Berkeley): a wide-ranging discussion of the way technology today “de-territorializes” prosperity in today’s global economy, for example through outsourcing. The first afternoon panel on “The Work of Diaspora” featured three rich papers focusing on different historical and geographical time periods, all emphasizing the need for multi-lingual research in a wide array of sources to do justice to both historical context and to the particular roles of diasporic workers. In a paper co-written with Marina Carter (South Asian Studies, Edinburgh), Crispin Bates (History, Edinburgh) suggested the importance of considering historically the role of kinship networks as a source of worker agency in the colonial Indian labor diaspora; Donald Nonini (Anthropology, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill) investigated the complexities of class formation among Chinese Indonesians in Australia; and Julius Scott (History, Michigan) discussed the sense of trans-national possibility that arises from considering the maritime dimensions of the Haitian Revolution. The final panel examined the role of technology today, especially, as discussant and current Center fellow



Steve McKay

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Thomas Malaby (Anthropology) noted, its impact on traditional constraints and possibilities for identity and network creation. Kristin Espinosa (Sociology, UWM) illustrated the multiple types and functions of the web pages established by Mexican towns and migrants from them in the U.S.; Angel Adams Parham (Sociology, Loyola, New Orleans) discussed the use of the web to construct both virtual and face-to-face diasporic communities, many of them with distinct protocols of belonging; and Lok Siu



*Geographies of U.S. Empire panel
(left to right) Martin Berger, Julie Greene, and Shelley Streeby*

(Anthropology, New York University) presented her fieldwork on narratives of self-identity among members of the Chinese community in Panama.

The conference format, with pre-circulated papers and panel presentations limited to 10–15 minutes, proved extremely successful. Not only did conference participants—both speakers and audience members—develop new professional contacts, but after every panel the forty-five minute time slot allotted for discussion proved to be too short. In practice, as participants referred back to earlier sessions, each discussion period served to launch multiple, productive conversations during breaks, receptions and over dinner each evening.

MUR: Screening and Panel Discussion, February 24–25, 2005

Just as the Supreme Court of Israel was ordering the Israeli government to re-route portions of its new barrier around the West Bank, the Center brought to Milwaukee *Mur* (Wall), a new film on this controversial project by French-based director Simone Bitton. The screening at the Union Theatre was the third in the United States (after those at the Sundance and Miami film festivals) and attracted an audience of over 100.

As Ussama Makdisi (History, Rice) emphasized at the panel discussion the following day, Israel's security barrier is a tragedy for all sides. According to Makdisi, the barrier does not simply intrude on West Bank territory—as Bitton's film also showed—and thus create new hardships for Palestinians living there; for the Israeli government the wall is an attempt to relegate Palestinians to a “not there” status. As such, it is an obstacle to any possible reconciliation or peace, Makdisi argued.

Brian Edwards (Comparative Literature, Northwestern), the second speaker, discussed the ambiguities and different identities Bitton purposely inserted into her film, not least in relation to her own role. The ostensible purpose of the wall is the clear separation of two different, clearly delineated groups of people, which the film illustrates through its interview with an Israeli defense official. The film also shows, however, and this for Edwards constitutes one of its major strengths, that reality is much more

“Peace will come. It always does. But for now, the era of walls is upon us and I sense that it will be a horrific one.”

*Simone Bitton,
Intention Note for MUR*



(left to right) Ussama Makdisi, Tasha Oren, and Brian Edwards

complex, both in the ways different people on both sides experience the wall and in the way one can discuss the barrier's purpose and impact.

The panel's final speaker, Tasha Oren (English & Film Studies, UWM; Center Fellow 2001-02), dissected the film's artistic and ideological methods while also examining *Mur's* possible political effects. Bitton, Oren argued, does not seek to offer a fact-based, journalistic report on Israel's security barrier. At the same time,

until the very end the film is not very personal either. Instead, Oren suggested, Bitton designed her project as a kind of "road film," a spontaneous experience whose main purpose is to show "how the wall works." Bitton's political purpose is not obvious, Oren concluded, and perhaps she has none. Still, the film's life since its release strongly suggests that *Mur* will contribute to ongoing critical evaluations of the barrier, as it did to a lively exchange among all three speakers and the engaged audience of Center fellows, students, and members of the community. The panel discussion was co-sponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies.

Former Center Fellows, Speakers, and Authors in the News

Brian Edwards (English, Northwestern) and **Sohail Hashmi** (International Relations, Mount Holyoke College) have been named to the 2005 Class of Carnegie Scholars, with projects respectively entitled "After the American Century: Globalization and the Circulation of 'American Civilization' in North Africa and the Middle East," and "Islamic International Law and Public International Law: Convergence or Dissonance?" Edwards was a participant in the Center's panel on the Simone Bitton film *Mur* last February. Hashmi's essay "9/11 and the Jihad Tradition" will appear in the Center's upcoming *Terror, Culture, Politics: Rethinking 9/11*, due out at the end of the year from Indiana University Press.

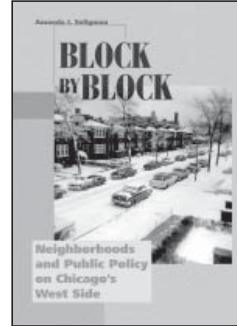
Carlos Galvao-Sobrinho (History, fellow 2002-03) has been awarded a 2005-2006 Rome Prize by the American Academy in Rome. He will be at the Academy in Rome from September 2005 to July 2006 working on his project entitled "Burial Rites, Funerary Sociability, and Sense of Self among Slaves and Freed Persons at Rome in the Early Principate."

Carla Bagnoli (Philosophy, fellow 1999-00) has been awarded a research fellowship by Italy's Ministry of Scientific Research. The fellowship is designed for scholars who have been working outside Italy for the past three years and whose work is deemed crucial to the advancement of a particular research project in an Italian university.

Bagnoli was nominated by the University of Siena to carry out a research project on ethical objectivity. This, under the title of "Phenomenology of Objectivity and Autonomy," has been the focus of her work during the past years.



Galvao-Sobrinho (l) and Bagnoli (r)



2001-02 Center fellow **Amanda Seligman** (History) has just published *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (University of Chicago Press, 2005), a project she worked on during her fellowship year.

Seligman draws on the surprisingly understudied West Side communities of Chicago to shed new light on the story of postwar urban America. Seligman's careful and evenhanded account will be essential to understanding that the "flight" of whites to the suburbs was the eventual result of a series of responses to transformations in Chicago's physical and social landscape, occurring one block at a time.

EVENTS

Art and Public Space: Center Symposium

Siah Armajani and Sheba Chhachhi, the speakers at the Center's March 4 symposium on Art and Public Space, co-sponsored with the English Department, have made the integration of art, community, and activism central to their distinguished bodies of work. They addressed their approaches to these issues in lively presentations to a large, diverse audience of faculty, students, and guests from as far away as Madison.

Armajani, who spoke first, delivered what he called a manifesto on public art. Public art, he argued, is not about self, but others; concerns everything that belongs to the public; is local, not universal; and seeks to bring together art and citizens. While admitting to some personal disillusionment with public art, and expressing skepticism about the value of large "heroic" projects, Armajani called for artists to seek vigorous contact with the public in their own communities in order to de-mystify art and to fully reconnect the public to it. Armajani's public art projects, which he reviewed for the audience, demonstrate, among other things, the importance he attaches to poetry as a central means of cultural communication.

In an elaborate multi-media presentation Sheba Chhachhi related the history of India's "Courts of Women" movement of the past twenty years and the ways artists like herself have connected with the performance aspect of this phenomenon to help women testify about and respond to violence. Both Chhachhi's documentary film work and her exhibits combining text and image served as evidence of her argument that art as testimony has the power to affect the public image of conflict and can thereby offer potential solutions.

audience at Art and Public Space symposium, Mitchell Hall 191, March 4, 2005

"Public art is not about personal taste but about the needs of others."

Siah Armajani



Fellows & Staff News

Derek Counts (Art History), published a review of V. Karageorghis, *Early Cyprus: Crossroads of the Mediterranean* (Los Angeles, 2002) in the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 336 (2004), 81-4. At the end of May he submitted his book proposal "Understanding Cypriote Cult: Potnios Theron and the Search for a Principal Male Divinity in Iron Age Cyprus" to Routledge



Counts (l) and Malaby (r)

Press. The Cypriote cult was also the subject of Counts' presentation in the fellows' seminar this past semester.

Thomas Malaby (Anthropology) presented "Coding Control: Ethics and Contingency in the Production of Online Worlds" at the American Bar Foundation 2005 Winter/Spring Seminar Series in Chicago, February 2.

Rina Ghose (Geography) published "The Complexities of Citizen Participation through Collaborative Governance," *Space and Polity*, vol. 9 (1) April, 2005. She also presented the following papers: "The Politics of Scale in Public Participation GIS"

and (with Wen Lin) "Investigating GIS Provision for Urban Grassroots Community Organizations—The Role of Politics of Scale and Scaled Networks," both at the annual meeting of Association of American Geographers (AAG) held in Denver in April.

Saltanat Mambaeva (Open Society Institute Fellow and Visiting Scholar from Kyrgyzstan) presented "Teaching Culture through Language" at the 9th TESOL Annual Convention in San Antonio, Texas, March 29-April 2. On April 13 her work, "Communicating across Cultures," was the subject at UWM's Department of Communication Colloquium. She also gave a talk in a workshop on publishing and publications at the Annual Conference of the Open Society Institute's Faculty Development Fellowship Program, in Washington, DC, April 29-May 2.

New Newsletter Format

Regular readers of our newsletter will have noticed that with this issue we have moved to a new format and design. Last year the Center was approached by Joan Dobkin (Visual Art, Center fellow 2002-03), who was seeking clients for a newsletter project for one of her graphic design classes. While we did not commit ourselves to choosing a new design from this class project (we were still quite satisfied with our traditional design), we were particularly impressed with the work done by senior Lauren Hanaman. Ms. Hanaman agreed not only to let us use her design, but also to help us put

together this first issue. We are very happy with the new look and hope our readers feel the same way.

Center Welcomes First Tennessean Graduate Research Fellow

Thanks to generous contributions from friends and colleagues of Center executive director emerita, Carol Tennessean, and with help from the Graduate School, the Center is extremely happy to announce the selection of its first graduate summer fellow in Karen Keddy (Architecture). The Center's Faculty Advisory Subcommittee on Fellowships and Programs selected Ms. Keddy's proposal from several interesting submissions from three different departments.

We launched the Tennessean Graduate Research Fellowship a year ago and are encouraged by the response rate to our initial fundraising appeals. We need to build on the initial success. We believe that graduate student research in the arts, humanities, and social sciences should not only be an integral part of UWM's renewed research emphasis, but also deserves a permanent place at the Center for 21st Century Studies. If you would like to make a contribution, please send a check to "Center for 21st Century Studies—Tennessean Fund," University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, P.O. Box 413, Milwaukee, WI 53201. Non-earmarked contributions to the Center are also appreciated. Please make these out to the UW-Milwaukee Foundation and indicate the Center on the memo line. Thank you!



Preliminary Fall 2005 Calendar of Events

FRI SEP 16

Annual Center Open House

2 pm CRT 939

Jerome Schneewind (Philosophy, Johns Hopkins)

a lecture, *Autonomy and Its Histories*

4 pm CRT 175

FRI SEP 23

Amanda Anderson (English, Johns Hopkins)

a lecture, *Beyond Sincerity and Authenticity: The Ethos of Proceduralism*

3:30 pm CRT 118

FRI-SAT, OCT 21-22

Art of the State: Sovereignty Past and Present

an international conference organized by Douglas Howland (History, UWM; Center fellow 2004-05) and Luise White (History, University of Florida)

conference begins 1 pm CRT 175

FRI NOV 4

N. Katherine Hayles (English, UCLA)

Phi Beta Kappa Distinguished Lecturer

time and place to be announced

FRI NOV 18

Debra Satz (Philosophy, Stanford)

a lecture, *Learning as Equals: What is Wrong with Inequality in K-12 Education?*

co-sponsored by the Philosophy Department

3:30 pm CRT 118

FRI DEC 2

Religion, Violence, and the Limits of Liberalism

a symposium organized by Peter Y. Paik (French, Italian, & Comparative Literature, UWM; Center fellow 2002-03)

1 pm CRT 175

Center On-Line Working Papers Series Continues to Grow

Another paper has been added to the Center's on-line working paper series. It is Laird Boswell's "Right-Wing Extremism in Frontier Regions: The French National Front and the Crisis of Alsatian Identity." Professor Boswell (History, University of Wisconsin-Madison) presented an earlier version of this essay at last year's Center symposium New European Frontiers. His paper is the second from that symposium to be included with our series. You can view all working papers at: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/21st/workingpapers/index.shtml>.

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Lauren Hanaman

New Center Theme and New Group of Center Fellows for 2005-2006

This coming Fall, the Center will organize its work around the theme of "States of Autonomy" and will welcome a new group of Center fellows whose research addresses this theme. Emerging from projects submitted last year in response to our first call for conference proposals, the theme "States of Autonomy" will examine the idea of autonomy, especially as focused on the human body, and its larger implications and relationships. The idea of the modern self, arguably one of autonomy or self-determination, retains intellectual currency despite, or perhaps as a result of, post-structuralist challenges, but it raises many questions. What sort of condition is autonomy? Why do we value it? What are the conditions under which autonomy is developed and expressed? Can there be autonomy in an extra-social state of nature, or is some kind of social or even civil order necessary? For a full description of the new theme, please

visit our website at: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/21st/theme0506long.pdf>.

Center Fellows and their projects are: **Jasmine Alinder** (History), "Out of Site: Photographic Representations of Japanese American Incarceration"; **Ellen Amster** (History), "The Moroccan Body: A Locus of Islamic Cosmology, Biomedicine and Moroccan History, 1912-1956"; **Edward Hinchman** (Philosophy), "Autonomy, Trust, and Reason"; **Melanie Mariño** (Art History), "Motivating Autonomy: Notes on Gesture in Contemporary Art"; **K.E. Supriya** (Journalism and Mass Communication), "A Quest for the Free Indian Body: Mahatma Gandhi's Rhetoric of Autonomy as Global Limit"; **Richard Wearn** (Visual Art), "Relational Art and the Conditions of Autonomy"; and UW System fellows **Susan Laikin Funkenstein** (Art, UW-Parkside), "Gendered Bodies: Images of Dance in Weimar German Visual Culture" and **John McGuigan** (Languages & Literatures, UW-Whitewater), "Literary Modernism's Pursuit of an Anarchist Culture."

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*Routing Diasporas conference, April 8–9,
2005. above: Rachel Buff; below:
Todd Shepard (l) and Martin Berger (r)*