

# center for 21st century studies

a newsletter from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee ■ spring/summer 2010

## DEBT: The Conference

The Center convened its annual conference April 29 through May 1, this year on the timely subject of DEBT, in its many guises. Conference panels examined the meaning of debt in economics, the environment, and ethics, and attended to the histories and futures of debt. The conference was organized by Peter Y. Paik (Comparative Literature) and Center interim director Merry Wiesner-Hanks (History).

The conference kicked off on a Thursday night with a haunting musical performance by Theaster Gates, a Chicago artist and performer, at the Milwaukee Art Museum. Accompanied by Khari Woolfolk on cello, Gates sang a series of spirituals of his own composition, channeling the antebellum slave, Dave Drake, also known as Dave the Potter. Drake produced stoneware pottery and famously



*Economics of Debt* panelists Joel Magnuson, Elaine Lewinnek, and Richard D. Wolff.

adorned his pots with poetic couplets—a quite dangerous activity for slaves who were forbidden to read and write. During and after the set—which ran the gamut from the deeply melancholic to the proud and arrogant, all with elegant, improvisational flair—Gates provided some insight into his aesthetic debt to, and his current art installation on, Dave the Potter, “To Speculate Darkly,” sponsored by the Chipstone Foundation. Before the performance, Chipstone curator Ethan Lasser graciously provided conference speakers an intimate tour of both Gates’ work and the Foundation’s decorative arts galleries.

The conference continued on Friday in Curtin 175 with a welcome from Richard Meadows, Dean of Letters & Science, who was gleefully amazed by the brevity of the conference title, surely the shortest in Center history. The day continued with panels on the Economics of Debt and the Ecology of Debt, as well as the keynote lecture. In the Economics of Debt, Richard Wolff (University of Massachusetts-Amherst) zeroed in on the rise of U.S. consumer debt: by the 1970s, 150 years of steady real wage increases for American workers ended as employ-

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### From the Director

Because Center conferences demand such a long lead time in order to attract the interdisciplinary fit among participants that we strive for, and allow the speakers sufficient time to prepare their remarks, we sometimes wonder if the topic will be as timely when the conference takes place as it seems to be when first proposed. For this spring's Debt conference, we should have had no doubts, but Peter Paik and I could hardly have expected that the topic—originally suggested to Peter by his wife, Nan Kim, an assistant professor in the history department and Center fellow—would be as apt as it was. As I noted in my welcome to attendees, on the very morning that the conference opened, Greece's national debt was reduced to junk-bond status, oil from the BP spill first reached land, and the Manhattan office of the US Attorney General launched a criminal probe into Goldman Sachs for fraudulent peddling of a mortgage-backed financial product, the type of product that continues to be labeled a "security" with no sense of irony. As the recap of the conference in this newsletter notes, the conference papers only enhanced our sense of the pervasive nature of debt in every way it was examined: environmental, economic, and ethical; past, present, and future. All paths led downward. Sadly, events of the last month have done nothing to change this. The Greek debt crisis has now spread to Spain and Portugal, and the value of the Euro has declined drastically. The case against Goldman Sachs will no doubt drag on for years, as their executives continue to earn enormous bonuses. And though we could not let ourselves imagine in April that oil would continue to flow in June, it does, with no end in sight. It was hard at the conference to find a ray of hope, although the intellectual companionship, good food, and stimulating conversation made the journey to what was often portrayed as the edge of a cliff a pleasant one.

All of these—intellectual companionship, good food, and stimulating conversation—have long been among the Center's many benefits. Directing the Center for three of the last four years has been a privilege, made sweeter by the friendships I have forged with staff, fellows, and visitors. I wish incoming director Richard Grusin the same.

*—Merry Wiesner-Hanks, History, Interim Director*

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## Correction

We apologize for neglecting to report in the Center's Winter 2010 issue that **Ferne (Caulker) Bronson** (Dance, UWM) was a featured participant at the Imagining America Annual Conference, 2009. Bronson, a registered member of Imagining America, participated as a "working" artist on the panel "Strong in Broken Places," Saturday, October 4, 2009. She presented video excerpts of *Forgotten* and discussed making the "real" alive for contemporary students by translating the experience of being stranded on a rooftop during Hurricane Katrina through the art of choreography. Cheryl Ajirotutu (Anthropology, UWM) also used a video of *Forgotten* as preparation for her Winterim New Orleans class project in 2010.

Professor Bronson is Founder and Artistic/Executive Director of Ko-Thi Dance Company, a company dedicated to the preservation and performance of traditional African-American and Caribbean dance and drumming. For more information, please visit [www.ko-thi.org](http://www.ko-thi.org).

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*Audience at Barney Warf Lecture, American Geographical Society Library, April 2, 2010; foreground, left: Center graduate project assistant Kris Knisely and undergraduate student blogger Vince Tripi III.*

**DEBT conference**

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ers thereafter kept real wages flat while labor productivity kept rising. In response, a stunned working class took on unprecedented levels of debt, and worked longer hours, to afford rising consumption costs. Elaine Lewinnek (California State University, Fullerton) examined the foundations of American home-lending policies at the turn of the twentieth century, specifically the many immigrant-led micro-lending societies in Chicago. Joel Magnuson (Portland Community College, Oregon), in arguing for de-centralized, community-based banking solutions, reviewed the conditions and legislation leading up to our current economic crisis that have centralized economic power. Responses to the current crisis, he argues, are simply “hair of the dog” solutions that only concentrate economic power even further.

By the time of the Ecology of Debt panel, it was clear that Curtin 175 was experiencing its own micro climatic disaster: an unusually warm April day forced the air conditioning system into a downward spiral of ever cooling temperatures. Where were the astute entrepreneurs to sell stadium blankets to a chilled audience? Gerry Canavan (Duke) brought together three alternative frameworks for balancing the books of ecological debt: climate debt, as championed by Naomi Klein; climate trials, as suggested by NASA’s Jim Hansen; and permaculture, as developed by Australian agriculturalists Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. Though three different approaches, each recognizes

a “planetary commons” from which industrial capitalism appropriates more than its fair share. Genese Sodikoff (Rutgers) showed examples of “extinction debt”—the time lag between a species’ biological longevity and its death sentence—in Madagascar, the source of her research over the past two decades. Julianne Lutz Warren (NYU) drew upon American and English utopian narratives of the late nineteenth century to question current attitudes about debt and nature that have brought us to an age of global economic and ecological crisis. At this moment in history, we are all “grasping for a language” that’s different from a capitalist lexicon to better understand our relation to the earth.

In looking at debt across Western history, keynote speaker Michael Gillespie (Duke) invoked the old philosophical dictum, “nothing comes from nothing.” Or, to put it another way, “everything comes to be from something else.” Since nothing is self-made, “every individual thing is thus indebted to something else for its being.” Debts to one’s ancestors, prevalent in earlier traditions, have by now been transmuted into a generic, abstracted debt to the current owners (or managers) of capital, thereby weakening many social relationships, practices, and institutions that have ameliorated the negative aspects of modern individualism. For Gillespie, we can only solve our current economic woes by increasing our debts to our ancestors, our communities, and the natural world.

Saturday’s sessions were held at UWM’s Hefter Conference Center, a

stately 1911 “country house” donated to the university. During the opening panel on the Ethics of Debt, Eleanor Courtemanche (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) noted that the “doctrine of unintended consequences”—the unanticipated negative effects of government intervention in the private sector—has broader and more complex applications than currently popularized by conservatives. She traced the doctrine’s intellectual roots to Victorian novelists who illustrated a much wider range of unintended consequences than just those created by government intervention. In looking at the moral components of debt, Kennan Ferguson (UWM) reminded us that we are all, already and always, indebted: “We are born indebted to those who raise us, we remain indebted to those who love us, and we will die indebted to those who remember us.”

Given the spectre of massive national and international debt, it was not uncommon for a thread of doom-and-gloom to pervade the proceedings. Stephen Gardner (University of Tulsa), for instance, noted that since democracy itself is predicated upon the fallacious principle that humans are masters of their own fate, it in turn follows that democracy is built upon ropes of sand, ready to collapse under its own weight. Following Gardner in the next panel, the Demons of Debt, Morris Berman (Independent Scholar) reiterated the self-destructive nature of American democracy and capitalism. At the heart of the American Revolution



# FEATURE



was a rejection of the European notion of an organic commonwealth in favor of the Jeffersonian model of unfettered competition. This Jeffersonian path, while it certainly led to economic expansion in the past, has had its own down side: the warping of our inner lives and the emergence of a predatory foreign policy. Mary Poovey (NYU) was particularly interested in the transformation of debt from the Victorian era to the present: demonized in the nineteenth century as something to be avoided (a consumptive debt), by the early twentieth century debt was something to be encouraged (a productive debt) in order to finance the American Dream. An increasing democratization of debt was made possible by the ever increasing socialization of risk which links national prosperity to individual consumer spending.

In the conference's final panel, the Futures of Debt, Michael Tratner (Bryn Mawr) noted renewed interest in Keynesian economics, but these revivals have been leaving out Keynes' understanding of economics in relation to the human body. Keynes' theories are based upon Freudian concepts of instinctual drives—people act on their “animal spirits”—yet for contemporary Keynesians people act like animals not because of instinctual drives but because of narratives, stories, illusions. This transformation of the animal in humanity is one of the main features of the post-modern turn: fundamental structures are no longer masses of flesh but rather patterns of symbols, as in DNA. Steven Shaviro (Wayne State) continued this theme of abstracting the body by focusing on a Gilles Deleuze essay that argued we are moving away from Foucault's disciplinary society into a “control society.” The traditional disciplinary regimes of schools, churches, and factories have lost their power and are now replaced by the “discipline of the market,” with its accounting for all areas of human life in financial terms, the regnancy of homo economicus. Humanity is no longer confined, but is in debt. Donald Hester (UW-Madison) looked at the large and growing indebtedness of the United States to China, stressing that practices and policies on both sides—the dismal personal savings rates for Americans and Chinese hesitancy to allow the yuan to appreciate—have led to this widening gap.

During the lively wrap-up discussion, which involved conference presenters, UWM faculty and students, and visitors from as far away as Chicago, participants

used previous discussions as starting points to address what was absent from the conference—a necessary hazard given the enormity of DEBT. Despite, or because of, the depressing nature of the topic, conference participants developed a spirit of “lifeboat camaraderie,” and the proceedings ended with quite a few notes of hope.



*This page, top, l to r: Stephen Gardner, Eleanor Courtemanche, and Kennan Ferguson; side, top to bottom: Mary Poovey and Morris Berman, Steven Shaviro and Donald D. Hester, Ferguson's hands; Opposite page, l to r: Gerry Canavan and Richard D. Wolff, Julianne Lutz Warren and Genese Sodikoff, Peter Y. Paik and Richard Gillespie.*

### Monuments of Disintegration: A Keynote by Matthew Coolidge

Befitting the theme of this year's Midwest Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference—"Obsolescence"—Matthew Coolidge brought an eye-popping keynote presentation on "Monuments of Disintegration" to Curtin 175 on February 12. Coolidge, the founder and director of the Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI), took a captivated audience on a tour of generally unseen American landscapes of disintegration, decay, ruin, and waste. These places—"the terrestrial by-products of production and consumption"—"contain clues that support a more complete understanding of our culture, condition, and future."

Coolidge opened by grounding the activities of CLUI—which is interested in all built landscapes, not just the disintegrated variety—on the Duchampian sensibility that "art takes place in the viewing of the art" and in an Heisenbergian notion that the act of observation is in itself transformative. Another principle underlying their work is the recognition that "every time you look at something you are turning your back on something else."



CLUI Field Session at the Desert Research Station No. 667-20-  
es © CLUI Archive Photo 2001

At the core of CLUI is its Land Use Database, a collection of "unusual and exemplary sites." Available and searchable through their web site—[www.clui.org](http://www.clui.org)—the database includes Wisconsin's own Badger Army Ammunition Plant near Baraboo and, just across Highway 12, Dr. Evermor's rambling Forevertron sculpture.

CLUI uses individual elements from the database to create public exhibitions, publications, and tours that are typically regional and/or thematic in nature. The remainder of Coolidge's talk took the audience through some of these thematic and regional interests. For instance, the American West's Great Basin region is particularly intriguing since it poses "special notions of liminality, of self-containment, and of isolation." As a network of watersheds that has no outlet to the ocean, the rain that falls within it stays within it: it is essentially a big bowl with no drain. And as a physiogeographic space that captures the waste stream, it also captures many of our socially constructed detritus: it has "more large-scale NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) land uses"—nuclear test sites, waste storage, military bombing ranges, open-pit mines—"than anywhere else!"

Also of interest to Coolidge are acts of "terrestrial miniaturization." The Army Corps of Engineers, for example, created two of the largest waterway models in the world: a 200-acre model of the 1.25 million square mile Mississippi river basin and an eight-acre indoor model of the Chesapeake Bay, our country's larg-

est and most complex estuary. These engineering marvels, constructed during the final days of the analog era, have since been replaced by digital modeling and are now thoroughly obsolete. The Mississippi basin model sits dormant and degraded to a point beyond repair, while the Chesapeake Bay model was ground up into aggregate for road construction.

*"The goal of driving is, after all, parking."*

– Matthew Coolidge

Other points of interest in Coolidge's travelogue of decay and degradation included Detroit, the grand earthworks from the 1960s and 70s, dead malls, landfills, ship dismantling sites, river dams and their environs, and the "bird's foot" delta of the Mississippi River. Naturally, or unnaturally (as the case may be), a certain unexpected beauty can inhabit these monuments of disintegration, such that an abandoned strip mall might be seen as sculpture or that parking lot signage might lead one to an epiphany: "The goal of driving is, after all, parking."

# EVENTS

## Shanghai and the History of the Future: A Lecture by Jeffrey Wasserstrom

On February 26, Jeffrey Wasserstrom (History, UC-Irvine) delivered a compelling and entertaining lecture on “Shanghai and the History of the Future” to an overflow audience in Curtin 118.

To open, Wasserstrom related an anecdote regarding his forthcoming book, *China in the 21st Century*, the format of which demanded that he devote one chapter to the future of China. With his training in history, Wasserstrom naturally felt comfortable working in the past, but having to step into the future was “a bit like going into the void.” As a crafty historian, however, he could artfully dodge making predictions about China’s future by noting how, over the years, people have had remarkably faulty foresight with respect to China.

That artful dodging led to his current interest in the history of how people thought about Shanghai’s future, and how that has changed over time. For Wasserstrom, Shanghai of the early 20th century was primarily a “juxtaposition of cultures,” divided into primarily British/American and French sections that surrounded the Chinese “Old City.” A westerner, for instance, could feel comfortable in sections as modern as London or Paris, while simply walking a few blocks to visit “the Orient.” Likewise, rural Chinese could visit Shanghai to catch a glimpse of the modern West without having to leave the country.

In the 100+ years between its establishment as an international treaty port (1843) and Mao’s takeover (1949), Shanghai’s breathtaking modernization was accompanied by a wild speculation about, and an obsession with, its future: it’s as if “a bravado were hardwired into the city’s personality.” Although Shanghai was in China, it was never felt to be of China. During this period, the West viewed Shanghai as a marvel simply because it was up to the speed of other modern, Western cities, but it was never felt to surpass them—it was never felt to be a “futuristic” city.

Over the last two decades, however, Shanghai has finally achieved that “futuristic” status. Its new architecture—with towering skyscrapers such as the World Financial Center and the Pearl of the Orient Tower—evinces a retro-futurism like *The Jetsons*, and the city itself has been described by *Forbes* magazine as “Las Vegas meets *Blade Runner*.” Its maglev train is the fastest in the world, with a maximum normal operating speed of 431 km/h (268 mph). It is now a setting for science fiction movies and cyberpunk novels.

Most of the new architecture has been constructed across the river from Shanghai in Pudong, creating a stark contrast between the old “modern” Shanghai and the new “futuristic” Shanghai. For Wasserstrom, this “juxtaposition of eras” has been laid over the older “juxtaposition of cultures.” In this coming together of past and future, Shanghai is seen as “reclaiming a role it once had—as the center of Chinese cosmopolitan modernity.”

*The Shanghai of the early 20th century was a “juxtaposition of cultures.”*

*Today, it is a “juxtaposition of eras.” – Jeffrey Wasserstrom*



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*Merry Wiesner-Hanks and Jeffrey Wasserstrom at the Center reception for “Shanghai and the History of the Future.”*

## EVENTS

### **“Every Secret Thing?” Racial Politics in Ansuayah R. Singh’s *Behold the Earth Mourns* (1960): A Lecture by Antoinette Burton**

As part of the Visiting Scholars Interdisciplinary Series: The Global Modern, Antoinette Burton (History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) delivered her paper, “‘Every Secret Thing?’ Racial Politics in Ansuayah R. Singh’s *Behold the Earth Mourns* (1960),” to an attentive audience in Curtin 368 on March 11.



Little noticed when first published in 1960, *Behold the Earth Mourns*, now heralded as the first Indian novel in South Africa, currently exists as part of a new, “unmarked” generic category: “struggle literature in the service of heritage history.” This category also includes contemporary memoirs such as Gillian Slovo’s *Every Secret Thing* and Mamphela Ramphele’s *Across Boundaries*, as well as Imraan Coovadia’s novel *High Low In-between*.

Burton attributes this renewed interest partly to the run-up to South Africa’s hosting the 2010 World cup, though 2010 also marks the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first indentured Indians to South Africa, as well as the 50th anniversary of the novel’s publication.

Yet for Burton, the novel moves beyond a “reclaimed” history of Indians in South Africa. She sees the landscape of the novel not as “monochromatic surfaces” across which Indians travel, but as “a highly racialized topography through which Indians move in concert, and sometimes in collision, with black South Africans.” Attending to the interracial modes of engagement not only “destabilizes the history of progressive Indian development,” it helps to underscore the multidimensionality of racial formation in South Africa and it addresses how these racial politics are embodied in gender terms. With her project, then, Burton would like to challenge the notion of *Behold the Earth Mourns* as “a struggle literature only for Indians of South African descent” and, in so doing, to “repurpose it for conversations about how to read and write histories of Indo-African solidarity from the 20th Century.”

The novel, set in the tumultuous 1940s, tells the tale of a transnational marriage between a well-off, cosmopolitan Bombay woman, Yagesvari Jivan-Sinha, and a Durban man, Srenika Nirvani. Srenika’s father is from the first generation of Indian settlers in South Africa, following the arc from indentured laborer to trader to owner of sugar cane fields. Before he marries, Srenika, an idealistic young man disillusioned with the state’s racist policies—e.g., the 1946 Asiatic Land Tenure Act restricted the areas in which Indians could live—joins a group of Gandhi-inspired Passive Resisters. During a protest march in the streets, Srenika is arrested and jailed. Through this trial by fire Srenika comes to realize that he’s now mature enough to marry, where the coded word “maturity” means “to move beyond politics.” Yet in marrying Yagesvari, Srenika simply moves from a confrontation with colonial politics to a “politics of conjugality”: the two marry in Bombay but South African law does not allow the entry of brides from India.

Singh registers the impact of Africans upon Indian political activity by plotting African characters very centrally. In an historical context where many Indians saw black Africans in racially negative terms, at least in part because they feared that “a racist state wished to combine the two communities to a similarly subordinate and dispossessed state,” *Behold the Earth Mourns* suggests how and why Indian racial and political coherence developed through the work of Africans in this struggle.

Although Srenika is convinced that his political education is self-made—a combination of his own internal struggle and an ongoing ideological battle with his brother, a successful businessman—the novel itself offers an alternative explanation through the character of Serete Luseka, Srenika’s longtime black African friend. Serving as a realist to the idealistic Srenika, Serete teaches Srenika survival skills and offers Srenika contrapuntal arguments that help Srenika refine his own political thought.

### Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Geographical Imaginations: A Lecture by Barney Warf

The worldly surrounds of the American Geographical Society collection in UWM's Golda Meir Library made a welcome setting for Barney Warf's April 2 lecture on "Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Geographical Imaginations."

Warf (Geography, University of Kansas) sees nationalism, the ideological counterpart to the nation-state, as a way for elites to control culturally diverse populations. For nationalism to work, the nation-state must sustain an illusion of homogeneity by covering over differences, particularly of class, and "suturing together" its diverse populations by means of narratives of mythic origins. Nationalism celebrates the nation-state as "natural," ignoring its socially constructed nature.

Although nationalism has served progressive roles, its star has faded. It is now "virtually inseparable" from militarism; at its core is a "culture of fear."

An alternative to nationalism is "cosmopolitanism." Although the word has broad applications, Warf is interested in a quite narrow meaning of the word. Cosmopolitanism

- seeks to uncouple ethics from location (one is obligated to humanity as a whole, not just to people in a specified place)
- uses all human beings as its point of departure

Cosmopolitanism has a long history, but Warf's interests lie in a contemporary cosmopolitanism.

Historical figures with cosmopolitan bents include Diogenes the Cynic; the 16th century Dominican priest Bartolomé de las Casas; Immanuel Kant, the first to theorize an ethics outside of the nation-state and who argued for a voluntary world federation of states; Karl Marx; and Albert Einstein who stated in 1934, "Nationalism is an infantile sickness. It is the measles of the human race." Warf's interests, however, lie in a contemporary cosmopolitanism, one that is developing within our era of globalization. Although he doesn't see the nation-state disappearing any time soon, he does see it "losing its power to supra-national and subnational powers."

*"Space and identity are shot through with one another." – Barney Warf*

Warf acknowledged, and then rebutted, some standard criticisms of cosmopolitanism:

- Cosmopolitans are often accused of being dreamy, impractical utopians, rootless people who belong everywhere . . . and nowhere. Such descriptions, however, ignore a great body of literature that has looked at how "space and identity are shot through with one another." Identities, moreover, are not fixed, frozen, and given, as nationalists would have it, but are open, porous, and malleable.



- Cosmopolitans are accused of being more interested in people in distant places, not in their own back yards. Warf considers this a "misplaced objection"; after all, cosmopolitans have to live somewhere, too. In the words of Daniele Archibugi, "To express solidarity for distant groups does not mean denying it to those who live in our own neighborhood."
- Cosmopolitanism is simply a disguise for multinational corporations as they seamlessly integrate all the countries of the world into one market. Such arguments, however, ignore cosmopolitanism's moral critique and its emphasis on compassion.

To conclude, Warf urged an expansive cosmopolitanism that looks forward, extends compassion, and encourages empathy.

### Animating the Archive: A Lecture by Tara McPherson



On April 9, Tara McPherson (School of Cinematic Arts, USC) presented an overview to her scholarly work, “Animating the Archive: Old Codes and New Media,” to an enthusiastic audience in Curtin 175.

McPherson first attempted to integrate two deeply siloed sets of archival knowledge from the 1960s and 70s: a technological history of digital computing and a socio-cultural history of race and media. In the former case, she emphasized increasing modularity, especially through the development of the Unix operating system and its heirs. For those interested in the history of race relations, however, the touchstones from the same time period are quite different: Voting Rights Act, Watts

riots, assassinations of Malcom X and Martin Luther King. Rarely do audiences for each of these histories ever meet.

The very incompatibility of these two histories is “part and parcel of the organization of knowledge production that operating systems like Unix helped to disseminate.” In previous work, McPherson has termed post-World War II racial paradigms as “lenticular logics,” after the lenticular printing process used for 3-D post cards. Unlike the stereoscope card of the industrial era that melds two different images into an imagined whole, the lenticular image partitions and divides, privileging fragmentation or modularity. “A lenticular logic is the logic of the fragment, a way of seeing the world as discrete nodes, a mode that suppresses relations.”

Explanations of Unix design philosophy employ a common set of rules that “complicitly translate into computational terms the chunked logic of the lenticular.” One design principle, for example, encourages modularity, the use of interchangeable parts, to control the complexity of a computer program. Despite the practical advantages to such principles, they also underscore a world view in which “a troublesome part might be discarded without disrupting the whole,” a problematic concept when considering racially segregated cities where “whole areas of the city might be rendered orthogonal, and thus disposable.”

Although “our technological formations are deeply bound up with our racial formations,” McPherson does not argue that one mode is causally related to the other, but that they both represent ongoing moves toward modular organization across all of culture, including the university and its “increasingly niched production of knowledge” after World War II.

In the second part of her lecture, McPherson noted that her recent work looks to close the gap between digital platforms/interactive networks and the philosophical and political questions that drive the humanities, such as attending to various histories as she sketched in the first half of her lecture. Another way to close this gap is to “take responsibility for the making of digital culture.” This responsibility rests with the “multimodal humanist” who brings together databases, scholarly tools, networked writing, and peer-to-peer commentary, while also leveraging the potential of visual and aural media. The multimodal humanist tackles questions such as: How does one experience or feel an argument in a more interactive and sensory rich space? Will representing data differently change the ways we understand, collect, and interpret it? What happens to argument in a non-linear environment? Attempts at answering these questions can be found in McPherson’s online scholarly publication, [www.vectorsjournal.org](http://www.vectorsjournal.org).

*“Our technological formations are deeply bound up with our racial formations.” – Tara McPherson*

# EVENTS

## What is the Place of Public Scholarship: An Open Forum

On March 12, a broad cross-section of UWM filled Curtin 118 to hear faculty and staff respond to the question put forth by the forum, “What is the Place of Public Scholarship?” Panelists included Greg Jay, director of the Cultures and Communities Program; Jasmine Alinder, co-coordinator of the Public History program; Michael Doyle, head of UWM Libraries archives; and Kate Kramer, the Center’s deputy director. To open, Greg Jay noted that his Cultures and Communities Program (CC) was founded in 2000 to promote multicultural awareness and civic engagement by sponsoring community partnership grants, service learning for undergraduates, and fellowships for faculty. In 2009, CC joined Imagining America (IA), a consortium of higher education institutions that supports public scholarship.

A seminal IA research paper, *Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University* (2008) provides a way to think about public scholarship in the tenure and promotion process. In defining public scholarship (see sidebar), Jay noted that the many different end products of such scholarship present a challenge to the traditional academic rewards system. Moreover, public scholarship is always a mutually collaborative arrangement between academia and the community, far different from more common “drive-by” community engagements, where an academic swoops into a community, studies it, and then swoops back out.

Jasmine Alinder provided an enlightening introduction to “public history” as a subset of public scholarship. The discipline flowered in the mid-1970s partly because recently graduated historians had valuable skills to offer government agencies, corporations, and other publics. This created a tension between the academic historians and those who spoke to different audiences, however.

Both Alinder and Michael Doyle spoke about their March on Milwaukee: Civil Rights History Project, housed at the UWM Libraries Digital Collections. Emanating from UWM’s 2007 March on Milwaukee conference commemorating the 40th anniversary of Milwaukee’s open housing marches, the project is a fully searchable online digital archive of documents—personal letters, public school records, oral histories, video footage, and more—related to the civil rights struggle of the 1960s. The goal of digitizing these documents was not to completely replicate the physical archive, but to make a key selection of primary source materials more readily available.

The final panelist, Kate Kramer, noted public scholarship has played a significant role in Center programming, manifested through recent collaborations with Anne Basting (Center for Age and Community), Ray Isaacs (Architecture), and Arijit Sen (Architecture). Kramer also reminded faculty that the Center, in developing its public programming, responds to their needs, so that if a critical mass of interest in public scholarship develops, then the Center will certainly show interest, too.



Gregory S. Jay



Jasmine Alinder and Michael Doyle

### Public Scholarship Defined

“Publicly engaged academic work is scholarly or creative activity integral to a faculty member’s academic area. It encompasses different forms of making knowledge about, for, and with diverse publics and communities. Through a coherent, purposeful sequence of activities, it contributes to the public good and yields artifacts of public and intellectual value.”

— J. Ellison and T. K. Eatman, *Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University* (Syracuse, NY: Imagining America, 2008).

## EVENTS

### Spring 2010 Humanities Dissertator Panel with Diana Belscamper, Daniel Brown, and Donte McFadden

Part two of this year's presentations by humanities dissertators took place in Curtin 118 on April 16. Presenting excerpts from their dissertations were Diana Belscamper (History), Daniel Brown (English), and Donte McFadden (English).

In "Democracy, Duty, and Dreams: The Cultural Climate at *16 Magazine's* Inception," Diana Belscamper looked at the cultural milieu of *16 Magazine*, first published in 1957. During this period, American intellectual and popular culture reflected broad concerns and discourses of the Cold War era, especially those involving gender and generational roles and behaviors. Common themes in accordance with the era's social and political emphases on democracy, conformity, and consumerism emerge in the magazine, with particular roles and "assignments" designated for children and teenagers. The magazine also circulated theories of consumer behavior, popularized by Vance Packard, new views of American history, via Richard Hofstadter, and advice for teenage girls, from Betty Betz.

In "The Highland Clearances and the Politics of Memory," Daniel Brown attended to shifting memorializations of a time known as the Highland Clearances in Scottish history. The late 18th century saw the mass transfer of land from the public—land held by Scotland's clans—to the private. With

this transfer of land, a host of families were evicted from their clan-based lands and forced into leasing farm land from private landowners or moving to factory towns. More families were displaced when private lands transitioned from farming to sheep grazing.

Original memorials to this era—such as the towering statue of the Duke of Sutherland—honored the landowners. Now we see such memorials as symbols of power, greed, and oppression. Despite the troubling aspects of the Highland Clearances, the passions incited by these memories have been "swollen by time, not diminished." Today, Scots and Scottish expatriates, full of "passionate indignation," too easily romanticize these pre-industrial days and slip into a "spectacle of trauma." In 2002, an oversized monument, bordering on kitsch, was proposed to commemorate the Highlands diaspora . . . and to compete with the Sutherland statue. The project was eventually scrapped, only to be replaced by a much smaller, but equally kitschy, bronze statue that depicts a father, mother and child departing their homeland.

Donte McFadden's presentation, "The First Short Films of Charles Burnett: How Collective Historical Memory and Contemporary Urban Space Shape Formal Components," focused on Burnett's filmmaking style and thematic content, framed by contemporary conditions of Los Angeles and popular memory of the South. The post-revolt Watts region of L.A. and the imagined geography of the

South are the two sites that determine Burnett's formal and stylistic strategies. In *Several Friends* (1969), Burnett addresses the stagnancy and aimlessness of Black men born in South Los Angeles. Through episodic narrative structure and handheld camerawork, *Several Friends* exhibits a non-fictional sensibility that magnifies the impact of de-industrialization and the subsequent economic deprivation it causes, which ultimately prompts a misguided sense of masculinity. *The Horse* (1973) takes place on an ambiguous southern plantation. He uses tableaux framing to display the vast memory space and the landscape that embeds the characters. The boy's presence throughout the film reflects how an oblivious consciousness is awakened by an urgency to escape financial and physical exploitation, which also shapes the physical and emotional aspects of Black masculine identity.



*l to r: Daniel Brown, Diana Belscamper, and Donte McFadden.*

© Peter Jakubowski, Visual Imaging, UWM



Love Disorder (2008) interactive video installation. Photo courtesy Bruce Charlesworth.

### Current Center Fellows

**Erica Bornstein** (Anthropology) presented the keynote address, "Disquieting Gifts: Some Cosmological Considerations Regarding Development and Other Humanitarian Endeavors," to the Association of Development Researchers' annual conference in Gjerrild, Denmark, "Development that Matters: Religion, Local Communities, Livelihood and Entrepreneurship." She was also invited to present "Philanthropy and Empathy" at the Institute of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Closer to home, she presented "Religious Charity Outside the Law" at UWM's Center for International Education (CIE) conference "Law and Disciplinarity: Thinking Beyond Borders."

Out of 500 applicants, **Bruce Charlesworth** (Film) was just one of fifty artists selected to show their work at the prestigious 2010 Wisconsin Triennial at Madison's Museum of Contemporary Art, May 22 through August 15, 2010. His interactive video installation, *Love Disorder* (2008), was previously mounted at the San Jose Museum of Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Cleveland. The Triennial also features an installation by former fellow **Carol Emmons** (UW-Green Bay, 1991-92).

### Past Fellows

**Cecelia Condit's** (Film, 1995-96) film and video work were the subject of two surveys this spring: *Cecelia Condit, 1981-Present* at the North Dakota Museum of Art (Grand Forks) February 17 - April 11, 2010 and *Cecelia Condit* at INOVA (UW-Milwaukee) May 7- August 8, 2010.

Over the spring, **Luca Ferrero** (Philosophy, 2008-09) presented "Bratman on Self-Governance and Time" at the SOFIA International Conference on the Philosophy of Action in Mexico; "Disjunctive Intentions" at USC; and "'I Will If You Will' – Conditional Intentions and Joint Agency" at the Bay Area Forum for Law and Ethics, UC-Berkeley. Moreover, "Decisions, Diachronic Autonomy, and the Division of Deliberative Labor" was published in *Philosophers' Imprint*, 2010, 10.2: 1-23.

**Thomas Haigh's** (SOIS, 2008-09) stay at the Center has led to two publications: "The Commercialization of Data Base Management Software 1969-83" (with Tim Bergin) and "How Data Got its Base: Information Storage Software in the 1950s and 60s," both in the *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 31:4 (Oct-Dec 2009). His recent presentations include "The Goodbye Petrovka Plan: The Moral Economy of File Sharing in Post-Soviet Society" (with Maria Haigh) at the Free Culture Research Workshop at Harvard Law School, "The Historian for Hire: Conducting a Career Oral History Series in a Technical Area" at the University of Turku, Finland, and "The Web's Missing Links" at the Science, Technology and Society cluster symposium series at the National University of Singapore and at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea.

**Christopher Burns** (Music, 2009-10) has been taking "Sawtooth," created during his Center residency, around the country: the New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival, the ACM Computer-Human Interaction (CHI 2010) conference in Atlanta, the Intermedia Festival in Indianapolis, and the Fulcrum Point New Music Project at the Harris Theater in Chicago.

**Lisa Silverman** (History, 2008-09) had two publications come out during Spring 2010: "Max Reinhardt between Yiddish Theater and the Salzburg Festival," in *Going Public: Jews and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Theater*, ed. Jeanette R. Malkin and Freddie Rokem (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2010), 197-218; and (with Deborah Holmes) "Zwischenraum, Zwischenzeit: Wien nach 1918," in *Kampf um die Stadt. Politik, Kunst, und Alltag um 1930*, ed. Wolfgang Kos (Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2010), 28-34.



A **Curricular Guide for Embodied Placemaking**—complete with speaker biographies, titles, abstracts, and recommended readings—will be posted on the Center's website: [www.21st.uwm.edu](http://www.21st.uwm.edu). Please contact Center associate director and editor John Blum ([blumj@uwm.edu](mailto:blumj@uwm.edu)) with any questions or suggestions.

**SAVE THE DATE!! SAVE THE DATE!!**

**FRI APR 29 2011**

**9:00 am - 5:00 pm, Curtin 175**

**Embodied Placemaking in Urban Public Spaces Part II**, a symposium organized by **Kate Kramer** (Center) and **Merry Wiesner-Hanks** (History); speakers include **Rachel Breunlin** (U of New Orleans), **Elizabeth Currid** (USC), **Emanuela Guano** (Georgia State), **Carl Nightingale** (SUNY-Buffalo), **Susan Ossman** (UC-Riverside), and **Janet Zweig** (Brooklyn, NY).

### Fall 2010 Preliminary Calendar

**FRI SEP 10**

**2009-10 Fellows Presentations** by **Bruce Charlesworth** (Film), **Jennifer Johung** (Art History), **Deborah Wilk** (Art History, UW-Whitewater), and **Bob Wolensky** (Sociology, UW-Stevens Point)

2:30 pm, Curtin 118 followed by **C21 OPEN HOUSE** 4:00 pm, Curtin 929

**FRI SEP 24**

**Richard Grusin** (Center director)

"The Future of 21st Century Studies," a lecture

3:30 pm, Curtin 175

**FRI OCT 8**

**Embodied Placemaking in Urban Public Spaces, Part I**, a symposium organized by UWM faculty **Joe Austin** (History), **Arijit Sen** (Architecture), and **Lisa Silverman** (History); speakers include **Swati Chattopahdyay** (UC-Santa Barbara), **Jennifer Cousineau** (City College of New York), **Charlotte Fonrobert** (Stanford), **James Rojas** (Designed Based Planning), **Joseph Sciorra** (John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Queens College), and **Karen E. Till** (Virginia Tech) *co-sponsored by Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures Initiative, Center for Jewish Studies, Cultures & Communities Program, Department of Anthropology, Department of Geography, and the Urban Studies Program*

9:00 am - 5:00 pm, Curtin 175

**THU OCT 21**

**Jussi Parikka** (English, Communication, Film and Media, Anglia Ruskin University; Director, Cultures and Digital Economy Research Institute [CoDE]) a lecture

*co-sponsored by Department of English*

2:00 pm, Curtin 368

**FRI NOV 5**

**Arun Saldanha** (Geography, University of Minnesota)

"A Tear in the Fabric of Time: The Immediate Impact of Jan Huygen van Linschoten's *Itinerario*," a lecture

*co-sponsored by Department of Geography*

3:00 pm, Curtin 175

*continued on next page*

Please visit [www.21st.uwm.edu](http://www.21st.uwm.edu) for additions and updates to the calendar.

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**THU NOV 11**

**Paula Massood** (Film Studies, Brooklyn College)

**Second Annual New American Studies Lecture: "Harlem and Visual Culture"**

*co-sponsored by CIE, Cultures & Communities Program, Department of English, and College of Letters and Science*

2:00 pm, Curtin 368

### New Center Director Appointed

The Center for 21st Century Studies and College of Letters & Science is pleased to announce that Professor **Richard Grusin** accepted the position of Professor of English at UWM, with a concurrent appointment as Director of the Center for 21st Century Studies, effective June 24, 2010. A former English department chair at Wayne State University, Grusin teaches American literary and cultural studies, environmental studies, and new media studies.

He is the author of *Culture, Technology, and the Creation of America's National Parks* (Cambridge, 2004); *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (MIT, 1999), with Jay David Bolter; and *Transcendentalist Hermeneutics: Institutional Authority and the Higher Criticism of the Bible* (Duke, 1991). In his most recent book, *Remediation: Affect and Mediality After 9/11* (Palgrave, 2010), he argues that at the beginning of the twenty-first century networked global media strive to ensure that the future has already been pre-mediated before it emerges into the present.

As department chair at Wayne State, Grusin reconfigured department programs to emphasize global, urban, and technological issues, and substantively revised the doctoral program under the auspices of the Carnegie Foundation's Initiative on Doctoral Education in the 21st Century. While department chair at Georgia Tech, he introduced the department's first undergraduate computer classrooms, and was actively involved in establishing the department's Center for New Media Education and Research and an endowed professorship to direct the Center.

The Center is grateful to the Center director search committee members for their service and dedication: **Jane Gallop** (English, Chair), **Aneesh Aneesh** (Sociology), **Margaret Atherton** (Philosophy), **Cecelia Condit** (Film), **Andrew Kincaid** (English), **Kate Kramer** (Center, *ex-officio*), **Jeffrey Merrick** (Associate Dean of Humanities, College of Letters & Science, *ex-officio*), and **Cara Ogburn** (English).

*back cover, l to r: Michael Tratner and Kennan Ferguson at the Hefter Conference Center during a lunch break, Saturday, May 1, 2010.*

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