

# Letters

THE SEMIANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES



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## Rediscovering the New World

The 2000/2001 Fellows Program at the Warren Center, "Rediscovering the New World: Exploring Lines of Contact among the Americas and within the United States," will consider the various ways in which the cultures of North, Central, and South America have been defined, particularly since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Starting from the realization that the Americas' division into nation-states often does not reflect the Western Hemisphere's diversity of peoples and cultural interactions accurately, the seminar will consider the Americas as a single whole, identifying different cultural formations that have taken shape and considering their social and political implications for the present and future. The seminar's participants include scholars from Vanderbilt's departments of anthropology, communication studies, history, and Spanish and Portuguese, as well as a visiting professor of Hispanic studies. The program's co-directors are Earl E. Fitz, professor of Portuguese and Spanish and director of the program in comparative literature; Cathy L. Jrade, professor and chair of Spanish; and William Luis, professor of Spanish. Professors Fitz, Jrade, and Luis met recently with *Letters* to discuss their hopes and plans for the program.

**LETTERS:** How did this program come about?

**CATHY JRADÉ:** The idea for the program came about shortly after a routine review of the department of Spanish and Portuguese. The department had been reviewed with the program in comparative literature, the de-



*William Luis, Cathy L. Jrade, and Earl E. Fitz*

partment of French and Italian, and the department of Germanic and Slavic languages. What became clear from the review was that we, all the departments, had tended to work in isolation from one another. It also became clear that there was a great deal of knowledge and expertise that could be pooled to build a stronger Vanderbilt. I therefore suggested to Earl and Willy that we think about constructing a program that would place our work at the center of a larger, interdisciplinary project. Willy works with Caribbean literature and the culture of Hispanics within the United States, and Earl has been active in inter-American studies for many years. My expertise is in the field of Spanish American literature, particularly poetry. This program will allow us to draw on our particular strengths while raising issues that are not limited to Spanish America and Brazil, not limited to literature and literary studies.

**WILLIAM LUIS:** And given the important role that the Warren

Center plays here at Vanderbilt, we thought that this would be an appropriate venue for this project—a place to establish dialogue with scholars outside our department.

**EARL FITZ:** My interest in these issues goes back a long time. Starting in the spring of 1979, I built up, at Pennsylvania State University, a program of six courses that dealt with the literature of the Americas. These courses ran the gamut from the pre-Columbian era up to the twentieth century. Their sequence takes as its premise the idea that Willy and Cathy have been outlining—that one can focus on the Americas as a whole, considering historical, literary, and cultural texts with a view toward both differences and similarities.

**LETTERS:** Why has there not been much work in this area thus far?

**JRADÉ:** One reason has to do with the nature of the American university. We are products of graduate programs; the traditions that we are trained in are those of

national literatures. Most of us become experts in the literature and culture of a single nation. Spanish American literature, however, cannot be so easily confined—it places less emphasis on the nation-state and distinguishes itself primarily from literature of Spain. Latin American literature extends even

farther, encompassing Brazil and other countries in the region whose first language is not Spanish. We are therefore well positioned to undertake this kind of work on a larger scale.

**FITZ:** I would say that the history of the American university has made it almost impossible to pursue these kinds of studies. Another problem is linguistic—people trained in individual language areas are often simply not prepared to work with texts written in other languages. Their only recourse is either to remain completely ignorant or to read the texts in translation—which presents additional difficulties. Then there is the political dimension. People who study inter-American literature have been disturbed by

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## FITZ:

## The history of the American university has made it almost impossible to pursue these kinds of studies.

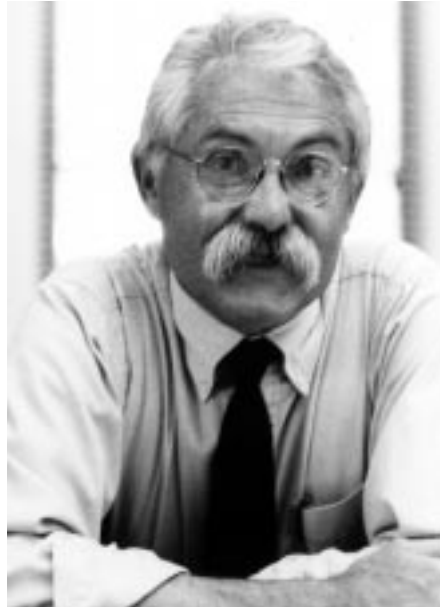
the perception that the United States acts like the proverbial big pig at the trough, while everyone else plays second fiddle. In one sense, this is the classic problem of comparative literature: whoever becomes established as the model achieves hegemony, but the others have to struggle to be heard. The fact that many countries in the Americas have a troubled historical relationship with the United States also plays a role here.

I do think, though, that the tables began to turn decisively in the 1960s toward a more comparative approach to these literatures. In that decade, the new novelists of Latin America began to influence younger writers in the United States through the translations of their novels. The influence of Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges on John Barth, for example, is now well established. One result of this influence is that comparative study between Anglo and Latin American literatures has become more accepted.

LUIS: As Cathy suggested, those of us who specialize in Latin American or Spanish American literature are in a good position to question the concept of the nation. After all, we have had to know the literatures and cultures of more than one country from the outset. But the rise of this interdisciplinary, transnational approach also coincides with a period in the history of literary criticism—the period in which Jacques Derrida and others began deconstructing traditional notions of the center, of the sign. The elements that a Derridean approach uncovers are often transnational in nature. Moreover, the theory of postcoloniality, which is widely read at the moment, allows us to place these ideas in a larger context. Even as we talk specifically about Latin American, intra- and inter-American literature, we are really talking about questioning the discipline. Universities themselves are reconsidering their role in the twenty-first century, and our perspectives can speak to these issues in a unique way.

LETTERS: How might postcolonial studies shed light on the project that you are pursuing?

LUIS: Postcolonial studies first emerged in reference to the European countries and their Asian and African colonies, but some of its ideas need to be modified in a Latin American context because the model does not fit exactly. Some postcolonial concepts might illuminate the old relationship between Spain and Latin America. Others might reflect on the double role of the United States, which began as a colony but became a colonizer. Of course, the traditional model of postcolonial theory assumes a geographic distance between colonizer and colonized—whereas in the Americas, colonizer and colonized usually occupied the same space. In other words, the frame of reference in Latin America is different—and this difference allows for a different but enriching reading of postcolonial theory.



LETTERS: So would one goal of the project be to emphasize that this intermingling of cultures is nothing new, but a phenomenon that extends back to the original European settlement, if not before?

JRADE: The roots do indeed go back very far, and we are interested in the full spread of historical de-

velopment. My sense, however, is that these issues have become more urgent, and that we need to project forward as much as we look back. The presence, cultural influence, and political clout of Hispanics within the United States, for example, carries many implications for the future.

FITZ: I would agree. The three of us envisioned a project that will focus primarily on the nineteenth century through the present. The colonial and pre-Columbian periods are important, to be sure, and they do draw attention to a number of volatile political issues. Many Native Americans, for instance, want nothing to do with this kind of work. They object to being called Americans at all. Others counter that the choice not to engage in these debates proves isolating and self-defeating in the long run.

The struggles between the European powers in the colonial period also have had long-term effects on the history of these countries and their cultures. The Spanish and the Portuguese, for example, were disputing who owned what territory in the New World as early as the fifteenth century. Later, in colonial New England, Samuel Sewall and Cotton Mather were much concerned about the Spanish in the New World, very covetous of their wealth, and at least for a while contemplating an invasion of Mexico. In real human terms these cultural interactions and conflicts begin thousands of years ago; in more textbook terms they begin with what we think of as the pre-Columbian period. In any case, there are long standing, deeply rooted cultural and historical conflicts that shed light on what begins to happen in the nineteenth century.

LUIS: We chose the nineteenth century as our starting point be-

cause at that historical moment the nations of Latin America emerged as independent countries. In considering the origin of these nations, we have an opportunity to question the visions of nationhood that the different founding fathers established. Often, these visions are hegemonic discourses meant to promote the interests of a particular class, rather than ideas representative of the whole population. But if identity is constructed with reference to one's nationality, then how does identity change if we interrogate the model of nation that undergirds it?

The nineteenth century is also crucial to the identity of the United States, which emerged as a dominant power in the hemisphere, took over a huge portion of Mexico in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and began to extend its influence into the Caribbean. Though Americans have not often considered these events in this light, they have implications for the historical development of North American identity.

LETTERS: Could you perhaps talk a little about specific moments in culture or literature that you might see the concerns of this project engaging?

FITZ: Back in October of 1963 I was reading a famous Spanish American epic poem, *La Arrucana*, by Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga. I could not understand why it seemed so familiar to me, because it was the first time I had read the poem. I finally realized that language differences aside, the poem was essentially dealing with the same issues familiar to students of United States history—the arrival of European adventurers who slaughter Native Americans and take over whatever they possess. This experience showed me that these texts can be viewed not just from a strictly local, but also from a hemispheric, perspective.

Around the same time, John Barth began speaking about the influence of Latin American writers on his work. His first novel,

## JRADE: The problems of national and transnational affiliations are ultimately global.

*The Floating Opera*, is indebted not just to Márquez and Borges, but also to the Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis. With these two experiences in mind, I began to accumulate notes, to uncover an extraordinary number of patterns and relationships that already existed.

LUIS: I became interested in this subject while working on my most recent book, *Dance Between Two Cultures*. That book explores how the Hispanic population in the United States both interacts with and maintains a distance from the dominant Anglo culture. I came to see, however, that the Hispanic population was itself not monolithic. Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Afro-Hispanic, and Chicano experiences within the United States are distinct. With these differences in mind, I could reconsider the history of Latin America and the presence of marginal groups within those cultures as well. Rather than looking simply at the literature of the dominant class or entertaining the idea of a single nationalist discourse, I have come to look for a multiplicity of voices, dominant and marginal, and to ask how those voices contribute to national discourses and the construction of identity. So whether we are talking about Spanish America, Portuguese Brazil, the United States, or the Francophone and Anglophone Caribbean, there is the possibility of reading one particular experience in terms of another that enriches and deepens our work on each of the various countries.

JRADE: My own background in this area emerges from my work on *Modernismo*, the twentieth-century literary movement that extended beyond national boundaries in Latin America. I wanted to know how literary and cultural discourses, writers and intellectuals responded to social and political change in their individual countries even as they embodied a perspective that transcended regional concerns. Many of this movement's writers traveled a great deal

and lived for extended periods outside their native countries. How do their migrations play into the issue of national or transnational identity? Did these writers, like many intellectuals today, consider themselves members of a world community? How does the imaginative dissolution of borders affect cultural identifications? How do we define ourselves, to what do we belong? I think that these are some of the issues that we should explore; they are issues that extend beyond the Americas, to Europe, Africa, and Asia. The problems of national and transnational affiliations are ultimately global.

LETTERS: You mentioned before that this kind of work has taken on a particular urgency since the 1960s. Why have older cultural histories begun to lose their explanatory power? What political or cultural forces are at work in this transition?

FITZ: Technology is certainly one factor. Things simply happen more quickly, and the rate of change will almost certainly continue to accelerate. Technological innovations will probably erode many of the disciplinary boundaries that graduate programs and universities have erected, placing many faculty and students in awkward positions. People will have to learn to read texts in radically different ways. We will have to come to grips with the fact that the process of literary and cultural influence and reception—which constitutes a cornerstone of comparative literature as a discipline—has assumed an unprecedented importance. In some ways, this ever widening circle of influences highlights the classic weakness of comparative literature, which is the danger of homogenization. The more one loses a sense of the particularity of a nation, a culture, a text, an author, the more one concedes to influence—and everything begins to look more or less the same. This problem exists in my mind much more as a theoretical issue than as a practical prob-

lem. Real authors write real texts, and they still have to be dealt with as texts. In theory, however, the danger of homogenization is worth pondering.

LUIS: I would agree, but I also think that the 1960s are important because of that decade's political conflicts. There was a refocusing of world attention on Latin America, particularly because of the Cuban Revolution and the possibility that nuclear war would erupt as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Ever since then, there has been a more political interest in Latin America—consider, for example, John Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, which sought to eliminate poverty but also to diminish Cuban or Communist influence in Latin America. The 1960s also saw the establishment of Latin American studies programs in U.S. universities, the questioning of U.S. foreign policy, and large migrations of peoples from Latin America. The Puerto Rican presence, of course, had been evident since the Jones Act of 1917, which granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship, but in particular after Operation Bootstrap in the late 1940s. After the Cuban Revolution, Cubans began arriving in large numbers; after the death of Trujillo in 1961, Dominicans; and of course in California many Mexicans moved across the border to look for work with increasing frequency in the twentieth century, as they had done before the United States imposed a political border in 1848—a border which they do not recognize. Later, in the 1970s and 1980s, more people arrived fleeing from dictatorships and military regimes in Argentina, Chile, and Central America. Finally, in the literary world, during the 1960s Latin American writers received world attention: Carlos



Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, Guillermo Cabera Infante, Gabriel García Márquez, and many other writers of the so-called "Boom" period really came into their own.

JRADE: But I would also say that this urgency is, in its crassest terms, political. We are now recognizing the Hispanic population within the United States as an important political factor. I often recount to my classes that when I was growing up, Hispanics had a very bad reputation. The image of the Mexican lying under a cactus with his sombrero over his head, sleeping, lazy, unproductive—this and other erroneous stereotypes had considerable cultural currency. Now suddenly—almost overnight, it seems—Hispanic culture has become positive. There is a new recognition of a very strong, valuable, family-oriented culture that has wonderful things to offer. Cultural features of the Hispanic world are being incorporated into the dominant North American culture quickly at this point—something that has never happened before. One can see this appreciation even in popular culture. Salsa, for instance, which has existed for many years, was ignored. Political and cultural factors are causing students, here at

## LUIS: How does identity change if we interrogate the model of nation that undergirds it?

Vanderbilt and elsewhere, to recognize that it pays to study Spanish and Portuguese, that a knowledge of these languages will prove useful not just for people who pursue careers in international relations or trade, but for people in the United States. At the same time, these rapid changes put pressure on the academy to devise new frameworks for cultural analysis.

**LETTERS:** What about the danger of homogenization that you mentioned before? If we consider the Americas as a cultural and historical whole, then how does one distinguish nuances within that whole, or determine where one influence begins and another ends?

**FITZ:** My own work tends to wrestle less with beginnings and ends than with movements and patterns. I suppose it could be argued that, by doing so, it avoids the whole problem. But I am inclined to believe that the concepts of real beginnings and real ends are fallacious—they are mental constructs without much bearing in real life. I think that the most workable approach may be the one devised by Herbert Bolton, a historian at the University of California, who argued in the first decade of the twentieth century that the Americas have a common history in relation to Europe. Within that larger pattern, one could look for differences, but there was a common frame of reference that encompassed all of these variations, all of these attempts to define the nation. This is as true of Canada as of the United States and Latin America—there is a joke among inter-Americanists that the Canadians are the most obsessed by the concept of the nation. I find it more productive to look at these large patterns of interaction, to treat cultural systems and ideas as a continuum. Of course, this remains a bitterly divisive issue—many Spanish American historians and sociologists as far back as the 1930s have held that this kind of study cannot be

done, because the differences between countries and cultures are simply too great. Here again is the fear of homogenization. Yet as I said, I think that this danger does not really materialize when one confronts actual texts, actual phenomena. Instead, people end up doing what other people claim to be impossible. The proof is in the pudding.

**LUIS:** It might be, though, that looking at Latin America from this point of view both reinforces and questions the concept of homogenization. Take a country such as Peru, for example, which was constructed as a nation on the basis of nineteenth-century European concepts, but whose population today contains diverse elements, including not just the descendants of the Spanish but also Chinese, Japanese, and Africans. In other words, even as we pay attention to the large frame of reference that includes all the Americas, we see that within individual countries there are particular differences that complicate any simple understanding of that country's discourses. The same could be said of Guatemala, where Rigoberta Menchú has played an important role in bringing issues to the forefront that had almost disappeared with the nineteenth century. On the one hand, we understand that the Ladinos' exploitation of Native Americans continues a particular pattern that goes back to the moment the Europeans arrived there. Yet Menchú's voice allows for a different reading of that experience and reminds us that the discourses within particular countries, particular groups remain contested.

**JRADE:** When we talk about national literatures, we are dealing in broad generalizations and abstractions. For instance, I teach courses on "Spanish American civilization"—a rubric that suggests that Spanish America is unitary. In fact, it is not even multiple—it is more than multiple, as anyone who has visited Latin America can con-

firm. I remember that when I went to Colombia for the first time, I was amazed at how culturally distinct even very small adjacent regions were. Differences in pronunciation, in food preparation, in folklore, in popular songs could be considerable from one region to the next. So when we discuss the push toward homogenization, and then the shove back toward diversity, our position often depends on what level we are looking at and on how much we abstract from that level. We can easily see that with regard to certain issues, it makes more sense to focus on the differences; with others, the similarities are more important. But I am not so worried about homogenization when I see the degree of diversity that is maintained even within the United States. Hispanics who come to the United States preserve a great deal of their national and cultural differences. Perhaps Anglos tend to lump them all together, but they themselves do not.

**LUIS:** These differences also exist within the groups themselves. There are differences not just between Cubans who left Cuba prior to 1959 and those who left as a result of the Cuban Revolution, but also between those who left then and those who came in the 1980s—who are in turn different from the most recent immigrants. Likewise, Puerto Ricans who came at the beginning of the twentieth century differ from those who came because of Operation Bootstrap. Furthermore, regional distinctions within United States Hispanic communities have developed. There is more commonality among Puerto Ricans and Cubans who live in New York than among the different



waves of Cuban immigrants because the region demands a particular conformity or at least a particular understanding of cultures. These observations ultimately help us theorize and envision culture in new ways.

**JRADE:** Then you have a writer such as Rosario Ferré, who writes for and about Puerto Ricans who have never lived in Puerto Rico; she deals with the nuances that emerge when one's identity is not defined by living in a certain geographic space.

**FITZ:** The differences among Native American peoples are also a significant factor.

**LUIS:** Yes, the Native American situation adds another layer of complexity. Many Chicanos associate themselves with Aztlán, the original Native Americans of Mexico, but when Native Americans from Central America move to the Southwest, no immediate identification with them occurs, because they do not represent this mythical past. So these distinctions often have little to do with Native Americans per se, but with cultural constructs of what Native Americans represent. Sometimes the historical record and the cultural constructs exist in tension.

**LETTERS:** It strikes me that the U.S. South offers an example of some of the ideas you have been discussing. How might a regional identity within the United States be examined in terms of a hemispheric perspective, and what are the implications for politics based on that identity?

**LUIS:** That is an interesting test case. Is Miami part of the South? Is a writer like Gustavo Perez Firmat a Southern writer? What about Gloria Anzaldúa? Or Judith Ortiz Cofer, a Puerto Rican writer who lives in Georgia? What about the case of Rosario Ferré's novel, *The House in the Lagoon*, which shows the influence of Faulkner? The South may be a geographic space, but when you see the influence of the South in the literatures of other writers, do those writers also become incorporated into Southern literature? Or, conversely, does

Southern literature become a part of Latin American literature?

**FITZ:** Gabriel García Márquez has called Faulkner one of the greatest Latin American writers.

**JRADE:** Deborah Cohn, our seminar's William S. Vaughn Visiting Fellow from McGill University, takes up this question in her book *History and Memory in the Two Souths*. I hope that our seminar will explore this topic at length.

**LUIS:** I think that English and American studies departments also need to question why these categories exist. Once you begin to deconstruct the boundaries between, say, Southern literature and Latin American literature, then you see that other kinds of boundaries can be formed. What are the implications of this questioning for globalization? Do we also need to rethink the boundaries between the business sector and the univer-

sity, between the government and the university? These are the challenges that we face.

**FITZ:** I agree. I find it astonishing that the concept of inter-American literature is considered new and radical in the United States. For Canadians and Latin Americans, it is an old story. No doubt this is in part because of the hegemony that the United States has achieved. We do the exporting of literature and culture, and expect other countries to evaluate themselves according to our standards. Naturally this has been a source of tremendous irritation to our neighbors. And that is one reason why the whole concept of inter-American literature is so politically explosive. Many people want nothing to do with it because they worry about not being able to measure up—it is an old problem of comparative method-

ology. But the times really are changing, and if there were ever a culture that needs to recognize these changing times, it is the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This project has great political importance.

**JRADE:** At the beginning of his novel *The General and His Labyrinth*, García Márquez thanks people who have facilitated communication through such innovations as faxes and the Internet. Though the book is about the nineteenth century, it is also about knowing the nineteenth century from a twentieth century perspective, from a point at which you can be in another country with a couple of clicks on the computer. The appropriate word, as Willy suggested, is globalization. Above all, our seminar needs to reflect the complexity of the world created by these forces.

## Holocaust Seminar Produces Curriculum

**D**uring the 1999/2000 academic year, the Warren Center hosted "The Holocaust, Genocide, and the Teaching of Ethical Values," an initiative funded by the Zimmerman Foundation and the

Tennessee Holocaust Commission to develop approaches to teaching the Holocaust. During the summer of 2000, a group of eight secondary school teachers from Middle Tennessee met at the Warren Center to

refine and further develop the initiative's work. Their combined efforts culminated in the production of "The Holocaust and Other Genocides," a curriculum designed for secondary school teachers.

The curriculum's four units focus on the history of the Holocaust; the cultural representation and memorialization of the Holocaust; the comparative study of genocides in Armenia, Bosnia and Kosova, and Rwanda; and the ethical problems posed by genocides. These units include primary sources, questions for discussion, and a variety of supplementary resources. Because the units were constructed with an interdisciplinary approach in mind, materials can be excerpted from them for use in humanities, social studies, language, and ethics classes. According to Paul Fleming and Sue Gilmore, two high school teachers from Nashville who participated in the Holocaust seminar, the curriculum is intended "to promote discussion at a high level, to help students face the 'unfaceable,' and to bring active understanding to the phrase 'Never again.'"



Secondary school teachers from Middle Tennessee take part in a workshop at the Warren Center to develop approaches to teaching the new Holocaust curriculum. From left to right are Sue Chaney Gilmore, Lilian Lawrence-Crabtree, Griff Watson, Robin Jubela, Nancy Kemp, Carmen Anderson, Andrea Joy York, and Paul Fleming.

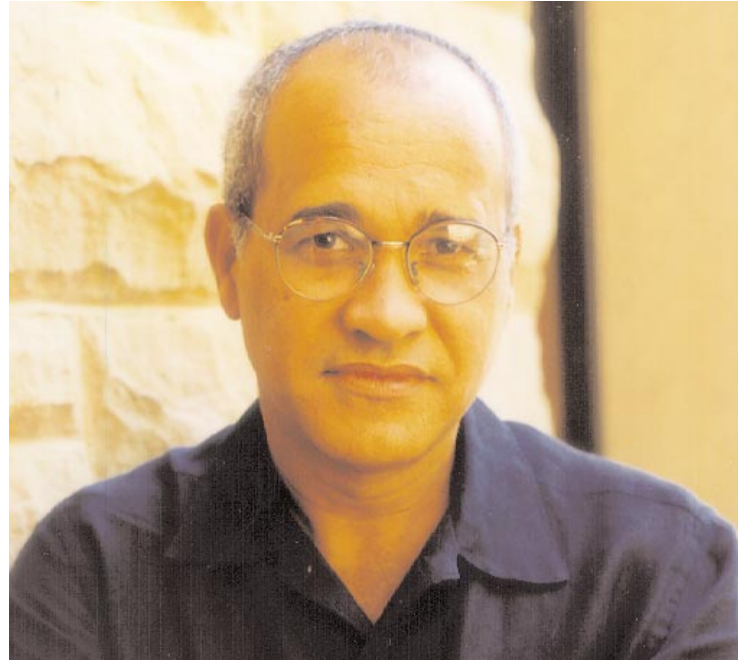
## Arnold Rampersad to Present Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture

This year's Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture will be delivered by Arnold Rampersad, Sara Hart Kimball Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University and a renowned critic and biographer. His lecture, "Biography and African-American Lives," will take place Thursday, October 19 at 4:10 p.m. in 103 Wilson Hall.

Rampersad is best known for his work in African-American literature and biography. His magisterial *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. DuBois*, published in 1976, remains a standard text; his subsequent biographies of Langston Hughes and Jackie Robinson have also received critical acclaim. In 1993 he co-wrote *Days of Grace*, a memoir, with Arthur Ashe. He has edited the Library of America's two-volume

edition of the works of Richard Wright, including revised individual editions of *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, and currently serves as co-editor of the Race and American Culture book series published by Oxford University Press. From 1991 to 1996 he held a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.

The Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture series was established in 1994 through the endowment of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Nash, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. George D. Renfro, all of Asheville, North Carolina. The lectureship honors Harry C. Howard, Jr. (B.A., 1951) of Atlanta and allows the Robert Penn Warren Center to being an outstanding scholar to Vanderbilt annually to deliver a lecture on a significant topic in the humanities.



## Third Annual Robert Penn Warren Lecture on Southern Letters: William Styron

The third annual Robert Penn Warren Lecture on Southern Letters will be delivered this year during the Tennessee Humanities Council's Southern Festival of Books by the distinguished novelist William Styron. Styron's talk will take place Friday, October 13, following a dinner at the Sheraton Nashville Downtown, 623 Union Street. Tickets for the event are \$50.00 and will go on sale September 1.

Styron was born in 1925 in Newport News, Virginia. Though he has lived for much of his life outside the South, his work reflects an ongoing interest in the problems of Southern his-

tory, including the conflict between Calvinist and "Cavalier" worldviews within the Southern elite and the social damage inflicted by slavery. In the words of the critic Lewis A. Lawson, Styron has been successful in wrestling with the complexities of Southern history because he possesses "that double vision so useful to the artist, the ability not merely to see a thing, but to question it."

Styron attended Christchurch, an Episcopal boarding school, and spent a year at Davidson College before he transferred to Duke University to enter a wartime officer training program. After serv-

ing in the Marine Corps during World War II, Styron graduated from Duke and went to work briefly as an associate editor for McGraw-Hill. His first novel, *Lie Down in Darkness*, was published in 1951. Subsequent novels have included *The Long March*, *Set This House on Fire*, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, and *Sophie's Choice*. His most recent works are *Darkness Visible*, a memoir, and *A Tidewater Morning*, a volume of three short stories. Among his numerous awards are the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Prix de Rome (for *Lie Down in Darkness*), the Pulitzer Prize (for *The Confessions*

of *Nat Turner*), the American Book Award (for *Sophie's Choice*), and the National Medal of Arts.

The Robert Penn Warren Lecture on Southern Letters was founded in 1998 as a collaborative project between the Warren Center and the Tennessee Humanities Council. It is intended to provide a public forum for the exploration of topics related to Southern writing. Previous lectures have been delivered by Elizabeth Spencer and Reynolds Price. For tickets and further information regarding the lecture, please contact the Tennessee Humanities Council at (615) 320-7001 or [www.tn-humanities.org](http://www.tn-humanities.org).

## 2001/2002 Fellows Program

The 2001/2002 Fellows Program at the Warren Center is entitled "Memory, Identity, and Political Action." The program will be co-directed by Vanderbilt faculty members William James Booth (political science), Larry J. Griffin (sociology, political science, and American and Southern studies) and Michael Kreyling (English).

This seminar will consider the role that memory plays in shaping identity and justifying political action. In an age in which the creation of museums and memorials, the invocation of cultural lineage and heritage, and national or collective attributions of guilt or appeals for redemption for past horrors have become commonplace, an examination of the political implications of memory

becomes especially important. The new century, which once seemed to promise a new globalism transcending the particular political attachments of an earlier age, has begun in an upsurge in nationalist and other particularist politics, whose agendas depend upon invocations of memory and continuity with the past. Memory allows groups to define, comprehend, affirm, and project who they are, where they are situated relative to others, and how they construct a moral identity.

The Fellows will investigate memory as an active agent in experiencing the past, in ascertaining the past's moral and emotional significance, and in spurring or retarding political action premised on some understanding of that past's morality.

In other words, they will consider memory less as a cognitive device allowing us merely to know the past than as a means of defining an ethical dimension of life, a sense of one person's or community's accountability across time and to others. Questions that may be taken up include how memories are transmuted into identities, the extent to which memory is voluntary or involuntary, the bases of shared memories and the reasons for contested memories, and the political and moral impact of collective amnesia. Rich historical cases and cultural sites for inquiry into these issues abound: apology, historical reckoning and national efforts at reconciliation in South Africa, post-Communist Eastern Europe, the United States, and elsewhere;

ethnic conflicts in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Ireland; identity-based separatist movements in Africa, North America, Europe, and East Asia; the Holocaust and its continuing legacies; and the political crystallization of African-American identities.

Five Vanderbilt University faculty members will be selected to join the program's co-directors in the year-long seminar. The Warren Center will also sponsor a Visiting Fellow with expertise in the area of study. The program's specific sites of inquiry will be shaped by the Visiting Fellow and the Vanderbilt faculty Fellows. Information regarding both the internal and external application processes can be obtained from the Warren Center.

## 2000/2001 Fellows

**Deborah N. Cohn**, William S. Vaughn Visiting Fellow and visiting assistant professor of Spanish, is assistant professor of Hispanic studies at McGill University. Her work examines the literature of Latin America and the southern United States, focusing on the way such figures as Mario Vargas Llosa and William Faulkner have been taken up by critics who work from an inter-American perspective. She is the author of *History and Memory in the Two Souths: Recent Southern and Spanish American Fiction*, published by Vanderbilt University Press.

**Anne T. Demo**, assistant professor of communication studies, is working on a project that considers the changing representations of the U.S.-Mexico border and the role that these constructions have played in the formation of national identity. She has published articles on the founding of environmentalism and the idea of wilderness, and on the feminist resistance of the Guerrilla Girls.

**Marshall C. Eakin**, associate professor and chair of history, specializes in the social and economic history of Brazil. His books include *Brazil: The Once and Future Country*, a general history, and *Tropical Capitalism*, a forthcoming study of the industrialization of the Brazilian city Belo Horizonte. His next project, a general history of Latin America, has been contracted with St. Martin's Press.

**Edward F. Fischer**, assistant professor of anthropology, has done extensive research on the Maya communities of rural Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize and is particularly interested in the effects of globalization on these communities. He is the author of *Maya Cultural Logics and Identity Politics in Guatemala* and co-author of *Tecpán Guatemala: An Ethnography of a Modern Maya Town*, both forthcoming.

**Earl E. Fitz**, Jacque Voegeli Fellow, professor of Portuguese and Spanish, and director of the program in comparative literature, is a co-director of the 2000/2001 Fellows Program. His research focuses on the colonial period and the twentieth century

in Brazilian literature and on the comparative study of Brazilian, Spanish American, and North American literatures. His books include *Ambiguity and Gender in the New Novel of Spanish America and Brazil*; *Rediscovering the New World: Inter-American Literature in a Comparative Context*; and *Clarice Lispector*.

**Cathy L. Jrade**, Spence Wilson Fellow and professor and chair of Spanish, is a co-director of the 2000/2001 Fellows Program. She has published extensively on Modernist poetry in Spanish America, particularly its confrontation with the social, political, and philosophic upheavals of its time. Her books include *Modernismo, Modernity, and the Development of Spanish American Literature* and *Rubén Darío and the Romantic Search for Unity: The Modernist Recourse to Esoteric Tradition*. Recently, she has published the chapter on Modernist poetry for *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*.

**Jane G. Landers**, associate professor of history and director of the Latin American and Iberian studies program, has written

on cultural adaptation and change among African, Hispanic, and Anglo peoples in Spanish America, the Caribbean, and the United States. She is the author of *Black Society in Spanish Florida*. Currently, she is at work on two monographs. The first, *Black Kingdoms, Black Republics: Free African Towns in the Spanish Americas*, explores how Africans in the Spanish world negotiated alternatives to slavery; the second, *Juan Bautista Witten, Formerly Known as Big Prince*, is a case study of a West African who escaped from slavery and joined the Floridian exodus to Cuba.

**William Luis**, Rebecca Webb Wilson Fellow and professor of Spanish, is a co-director of the 2000/2001 Fellows Program. He specializes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin American literature, as well as contemporary Spanish American, Caribbean, Afro-Hispanic, and Latino literatures. His most recent books include *Dance Between Two Cultures: Latino Caribbean Literature Written in the United States* and *Literary Bondage: Slavery in Cuban Narrative*.



## Nobel Laureate José Ramos-Horta to Speak at Vanderbilt

**J**osé Ramos-Horta, 1996 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, will deliver an address entitled "Peace-making: The Power of Nonviolence" in Langford Auditorium on October 4 at 7:00 p.m. His visit is sponsored by the Dean's Office of the College of Arts and Science. Ramos-Horta will be introduced by Chancellor E. Gordon Gee.

The son of a Timorese mother and a Portuguese father, Ramos-Horta is best known for his denunciation of the 1975 invasion and subsequent annexation of East Timor by Indonesia. An exile from his native land of East Timor since the invasion, he has worked to focus international attention on the Indonesian military's mass slaughters (whose victims include four of Ramos-Horta's brothers and sisters)

and on the denial to East Timorese of their right to self-determination. He is also active in other human rights movements around the world, maintaining close ties with such leading figures as Tibet's Dalai Lama and the Guatemalan activist Rigoberta Menchú. He shares the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize with Indonesian Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo and has also received the Unrepresented National and Peoples Organization's UNPO Prize for his "unswerving commitment to the rights and freedoms of threatened peoples."

Ramos-Horta's lecture is part of Symposium 2000. A complete listing of planned events can be found on the World Wide Web at [www.spaceformusic.com/symposium2000/main.html](http://www.spaceformusic.com/symposium2000/main.html).

### THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

#### Warren Center Staff

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*Office Assistant*

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#### Statement of Purpose

Established under the sponsorship of the College of Arts and Science in 1987 and renamed the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities in 1989, the Center promotes interdisciplinary research and study in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Members of the Vanderbilt community representing wide variety of specializations take part in the Warren Center's

programs, which are designed to intensify and increase interdisciplinary discussion of academic, social, and cultural issues.

Vanderbilt University is committed to principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

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