

# CIRCA

News *from* the University of Chicago Divinity School

THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD “RELIGION” IS COMMONLY TRACED TO ONE of two Latin words: *relegere*, “to read over again,” or *religare*, “to bind.” The latter came to be favored as originary due to its demonstrable early connection with those monastic Christians who were bound by orders and were called “religious.” I instinctively demur from the conundrum: The religions call us to re-read, and they also bind us.

They ask us to return again to the expressions of truth that we take to be fundamental, and they draw us into a relationship of submission to them.

Perhaps no twentieth-century figure better embodied this dual phenomenon than Mary Flannery O’Connor (1925–1964), the writer who made the red clay and myriad personalities of rural Georgia the subject of searing, revelatory stories. A devout Roman Catholic residing in the Protestant South, O’Connor habitually reread certain authors—especially Thomas Aquinas—with religious zeal. In Aquinas she discovered the most apposite justification for her vocation as an artist: what Sally Fitzgerald felicitously termed “the habit of being,” the conviction that the artist serves truth by constantly rendering whatever it is that she sees to the best of her given abilities. This was no small consolation for O’Connor, because what she saw and rendered with considerable ability was grotesque and macabre, and became no less distressing when leavened with local dialect and deprecating humor. O’Connor “wrote what she knew,” and by rereading Aquinas she maintained the conviction that in doing so she was teaching us about God. Rereading clarified and strengthened her vocation. Like many prophets, she had to deal with the rather radical disjunction between her own sense of her art and its general reception. Rereading fortified her religious practice of writing.

At the same time, O’Connor was literally physically bound—with *lupus erythematosus*, the disfiguring neurological disorder that forced her to return to the care of her mother as a young adult,

## Letter from the Dean



Our understanding of religion can be enhanced by the study of lives, perhaps most especially lives that, whether they involve explicit affiliation with a tradition or not, display a penchant for rereading and are somehow duty-bound.

and sapped the life from her over the two all too brief decades of her adult life. Readers of O’Connor’s correspondence can sense both her utter lack of pity and sentimentality about a disease that was not only painful but hideous. Indeed, O’Connor came to regard lupus as God’s gift to her. Bound physically to her immediate surroundings in the town she once wanted to leave forever, O’Connor only had sufficient stamina to write for short periods in the morning. Her resulting literary output tended toward the short story rather than to the more sustained effort required to produce a novel. Here again O’Connor faced an irony, for she very much aspired to write a, if not the, Great American Novel. Yet her physical circumstances literally rendered it impossible. Today, reading through her thirty-plus stories and her two novels, a strong case can be made that neither of the novels is especially accomplished; yet as a short story writer, she is virtually without peer in world literature. The binding of O’Connor was thus also the means of her finest art: In physical limitation she discovered her true talent.

Our understanding of religion can be enhanced by the study of lives, perhaps most especially lives that, whether they involve explicit affiliation with a tradition or not, display a penchant for rereading and are somehow duty-bound. In such lives we glimpse the complex fact that, with all due respect to the etymologists, religion is best understood as a matter of “both/and” rather than as a matter of “either/or.” It is a point not readily at hand in our world. Yet it is essential. □

# John C. Holt Named Alumnus of the Year

The Board of Trustees of the Baptist Theological Union has named John C. Holt, Ph.D. 1977 (History of Religions), the Divinity School's Alumnus of the Year for 2006. Holt is the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of the Humanities in Religion and Asian Studies at Bowdoin College, where he has taught since 1978, focusing on courses about Asian religious traditions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as courses on theoretical approaches to the study of religion.

His publications include *Discipline: The Canonical Buddhism of the Vinayapitaka* (Dehli: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981); *A Guide to the Buddhist Religion* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981); *Buddha in the Crown* (NY: Oxford U. Press, 1991), for which he was awarded an American Academic Book Award for Excellence in 1992; *The Anagatavamsa Desana* (Dehli: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993); and *The Religious World of Kirti Sri: Buddhism, Art and Politics in Late Medieval Sri Lanka* (NY: Oxford U. Press, 1996). He has also edited a collection of essays titled *Constituting Communities: Buddhism and the Religious*



*Cultures of South and Southeast Asia* (SUNY Press). His most recent book, *The Buddhist Visnu* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), is a groundbreaking study analyzing the assimilation and transformation of the Hindu cult of Visnu by the Sinhala Buddhists of Sri Lanka, wherein Holt argues that political agendas and social forces, as much as doctrinal

concerns, have shaped the shifting patterns of the veneration of Visnu in Sri Lanka.

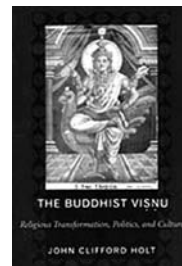
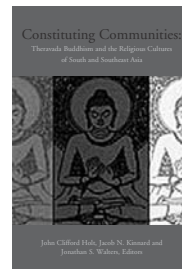
In 1982, Holt organized and founded the Inter-collegiate Sri Lanka Education (ISLE) Program for a consortium of private liberal arts colleges, and in 1986 he became the first chair of Bowdoin's Asian Studies program.

Holt's numerous research awards include three fellowships from the National Endowment of the Humanities, two senior fellowships from the Fulbright Program, as well as other national research awards from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Social Science Research Council, and the Asian Cultural Council.

He has been an editor of *Religious Studies Review* and was elected as a fellow to the American Society for the Study of Religion in 1995. He has been Visiting Professor of History and Comparative Religion at the University of Peradeniya three times (1984, 1989, and 1999), a Visiting Reader at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (1994), and the Visiting Numata Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of Calgary (2000). In 2002, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Peradeniya for his contributions to Sri Lankan and Buddhist Studies. □

Holt will deliver his Alumnus of the Year address in November of 2007 in Swift Lecture Hall with a reception to follow.

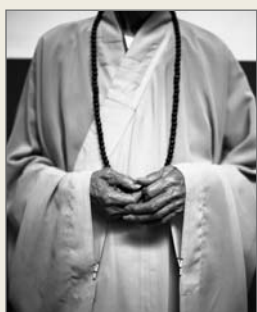
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## Yu Awarded Mellon Fellowship

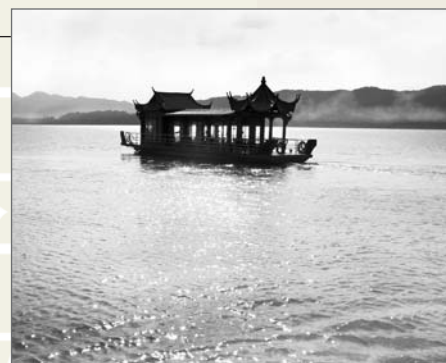
The Trustees of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation have approved a \$55,000 award to the University of Chicago, for use over two years, to support an Emeritus Fellowship for Professor Anthony C. Yu, the Carl Darling Buck Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus in the Humanities and Professor Emeritus of Religion and Literature in the Divinity School.

The grant will support a large project of research and writing concerning the sixteenth-century masterwork of traditional Chinese fiction, *The Journey to the West*. In 1984 Yu was awarded the Laing Prize for his plenary and annotated four-volume translation of this work, the first complete version in English. The Mellon Fellowship will support a thorough revision of that translation, featuring the conversion into the now standard Hanyu Pinyin system of Romanization, a new scholarly introduction, and the updating



of annotations. A new one-volume edition, titled *The Monkey and the Monk, An Abridgement of the Journey to the West*, was published by The University of Chicago Press in 2006.

The Mellon support will enable Yu to reconcile the old full-length edition with the format, style, and scholarly substance of the new abridgement. The bulk of Yu's work will be done in the University of Chicago Library, but he will also be traveling to the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the newly established Centre for the Study of Daoist



Culture there for further research.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (New York, NY) is a not-for-profit corporation that currently makes grants in six core program areas, including Higher Education and Scholarship.

Yu is the second Divinity School faculty member to be so honored; last year Bernard McGinn, the Naomi Shenstone Donnelley Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology and of the History of Christianity in the Divinity School, received an award. □

# Spring News and Notes

## Marty Delivers Baron Lecture

Martin E. Marty, the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, delivered the Third Annual Robert C. Baron Lecture at the American Antiquarian Society on Wednesday, October 18, 2006, in Antiquarian Hall (Worcester, MA). His lecture dealt with his book *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America*, which won the National Book Award for philosophy and religion in 1972. Marty's Baron Lecture updated his thinking about religion in today's American society and examined, in light of today's events, the conclusions he reached at the nation's bicentennial.

Named in honor of Robert C. Baron, past AAS chairman and president of Fulcrum Publishing, the annual Baron Lecture asks distinguished AAS members who have written seminal works of history to reflect on one book and its impact on scholarship and society in the years since its first appearance. The American Antiquarian Society is a learned society and a national research library of American history, literature, and culture through 1876.



## Tanner Delivers Warfield Lectures



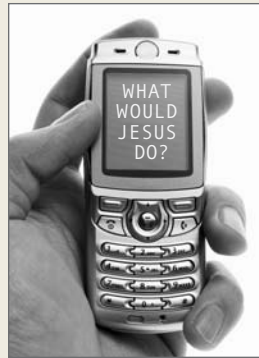
Kathryn Tanner, Dorothy Grant Maclear Professor of Theology in the Divinity School, has been selected to deliver the Warfield Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary. In the will of Dr. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, distinguished professor of systematic theology in the Seminary, a fund was created to establish a lectureship in memory of Mrs. Warfield, to be called the Annie Kinkead Warfield Lectureship. In accordance with the terms of the trust, the lecturer on this foundation is approved by the faculty of the Seminary, upon the nomination of the Charles Hodge Professor of Systematic Theology. Each lecturer belongs to the Reformed tradition in theology, and the subject of the lectures is always some doctrine or doctrines of the Reformed system. Professor Tanner's lectures will be titled "In the Image of the Invisible," "Grace Without Nature," and "Trinitarian Life." She delivered the lectures the week of March 19, 2007.

In the will of Dr. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, distinguished professor of systematic theology in the Seminary, a fund was created to establish a lectureship in memory of Mrs. Warfield, to be called the Annie Kinkead Warfield Lectureship. In accordance with the terms of the trust, the lecturer on this foundation is approved by the faculty of the Seminary, upon the nomination of the Charles Hodge Professor of Systematic Theology. Each lecturer belongs to the Reformed tradition in theology, and the subject of the lectures is always some doctrine or doctrines of the Reformed system. Professor Tanner's lectures will be titled "In the Image of the Invisible," "Grace Without Nature," and "Trinitarian Life." She delivered the lectures the week of March 19, 2007.

## Through a Glass Darkly: The Church and Popular Culture in the Media Age

The Ministry Program in the Divinity School is pleased to announce its 3rd Annual Ministry Conference, taking place this year on Friday, May 4th, in Swift Hall. This year's conference will focus on questions about portrayals and understandings of the Church expressed in popular culture — as well as on the Church's appropriation of and interaction with popular culture.

This year's conference will also have an online component; explore the interface between Christianity and pop culture on the conference blog, and follow the conversation with us over the next few months.



Please visit [http://divinity.uchicago.edu/news/spring\\_2007/media\\_age/conference.shtml](http://divinity.uchicago.edu/news/spring_2007/media_age/conference.shtml) for more information and to access the conference blog.

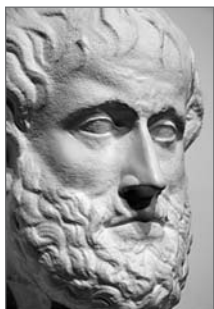
**Upcoming Wednesday Lunches** include Ronne Hartfield (M.A. 1982) on "The Words to Say It: Poetry, Perplexity, and the Blues," Sister Julie Viera on her blog "Nuns 2day," and our annual barbecue.



## Lear to Deliver Nuveen Lecture

Jonathan Lear, the John U. Nef Distinguished Service Professor in the Committee on Social Thought, has been selected to deliver the 2007 John Nuveen Lecture. His lecture is titled "The Transformation of Courage." A leading American philosopher whose work examines both Freud and the ancient Greek thinkers, Lear was educated at Yale University, Cambridge University, and The Rockefeller University.

He is a graduate of the Western New England Institute for Psychoanalysis and serves on the editorial boards of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* and the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*. Before coming to the University, Lear was the Kingman Brewster professor of the humanities at Yale University and fellow and director of studies



in philosophy at Clare College, Cambridge. He joined the faculty of the University of Chicago in 1996. The John Nuveen Lecture was established in 1972 by the Trustees of the Baptist Theological Union, who oversee an endowment that helps to support the University of Chicago Divinity School. Each year, a prominent member of the University's faculty is invited by the BTU and the Divinity School to deliver the lecture. □

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**Thursday, April 26, at 4:00 p.m.** at Swift Lecture Hall. This event is free and open to the public. For more information, or special needs assistance, please contact Terren Ilana Wein at [terren@uchicago.edu](mailto:terren@uchicago.edu) or 773-702-8230.



# Marty Center Dissertation Seminar Endowed

We are delighted to announce that the Martin E. Marty Center Dissertation Seminar is now endowed, thanks to a major gift by Jane and John Colman of Highland Park, who proposed a specific challenge to the Divinity School in 2002.

The Colmans made their gift after friends and alumni donated an additional \$1.5 million in response to their challenge to the Divinity School to raise twice the amount of their pledge. This is the largest one-time gift to the School from living individuals in the last twenty years, and one of the largest in the School's history. Fifteen current and emeritus faculty members participated in the challenge by making a commitment, as did many alumni, Visiting Committee members, and friends, giving this "mini-campaign" a very broad base of support.

"We are profoundly grateful to Jane and John Colman, not only for their generous gift to endow the Marty Center Dissertation Seminar, but also for their leadership in challenging the Divinity School to multiply it twofold," said Richard A. Rosengarten, Dean of the Divinity School. "The Colmans' gift is particularly meaningful because it provides financial support for our students while at the same time giving them an important educational experience."

The Marty Center Dissertation Seminar is a crucial element of doctoral education at the Divinity School. It has its genesis in a 1998 grant from the Henry Luce Foundation to support Ph.D. candidates in the research and writing of their dissertations. Divinity faculty used this grant to create a year-long seminar for advanced students within the Martin Marty Center. The Seminar not only supported students' progress toward the completion of the degree, but also provided the opportunity for them to work in both a designated classroom setting and with visiting interlocutors at the crucial tasks of translating specialized research knowledge for broader publics.

The Luce Foundation was sufficiently

pleased with the results that it extended the original five-year grant for two further years. At the conclusion of the grant in 2005, the Luce Foundation urged the Divinity School to seek funding that would endow the seminar to ensure that it is a permanent part of the Center. Jane and John Colman, long-time friends of the Divinity School and the Martin Marty Center, responded with their pledge and challenge.



Jane and John Colman have been associated with the Divinity School since the 1970s, when John joined the Visiting Committee during the tenure of Dean Joseph Kitagawa. The Colmans have now known and worked with four separate Divinity School deans and John has been on the Advisory Board of the Marty Center since it was formed in 1998.

"Over the past three decades," Dean Rosengarten said, "Jane and John have become utterly engaged citizens of the School. To break bread with either one over dinner at

a meeting is, inevitably and delightfully, to engage in serious conversation about the work of the School with someone who has followed it with exacting attention for some time."

In speaking to the question of why they made this gift, Mr. Colman explained that "the Marty Center Dissertation Seminar resonated completely with the focus we had already developed in our special contributions to other colleges and universities. Finding, recruiting, and maintaining those who have the best prospects for becoming leaders is what interests us. It is key to maintaining excellence in higher education in this country."

Colman continued, "Jane and I feel very privileged to have had this opportunity to assist in the polishing of some of the very best products of the Divinity School, a fun-

damental part of the University of Chicago. We hope that we have encouraged others in the larger community to share that view and, over time, to join us in increasing substantially the endowed base of the Divinity School." □

**To discuss making a gift,** please contact Mary Jean Kraybill, Director of Development, by phone at 773-702-8248 or email [mjkraybill@uchicago.edu](mailto:mjkraybill@uchicago.edu).

## The Martin E. Marty Center Dissertation Fellows

Marty Center Dissertation Fellows are appointed for a full academic year and receive a living stipend. An important part of their charge as dissertation fellows is to situate their research within a broader cultural frame of reference, bringing their perspectives to bear on religious questions facing the wider public.



### The Marty Center Dissertation Fellows:

- **Meet regularly throughout the year,** under the guidance of a faculty member, to share their work in progress. These meetings are designed to generate careful and insightful scholarship that deploys conceptual tools and interpretive methods to advance thought within a discipline in the study of religion, and to provoke new work at the intersection of disciplines.
- **Design and teach a course** in an institution of higher learning in the Chicago area under the guidance of a faculty member at that institution.

- **Think concretely about wider publics** for their research beyond the scholarly arena. At the end of the year, students present their dissertations to a group of public interlocutors, citizens from professional arenas outside the academy who have an interest in religion.

The seminar thus challenges students to step back from the immediacies of specialized research to ask themselves how that research will contribute to the institutions and the society in which they will pursue their scholarly vocations. Alumni of the seminar describe the experience as having a seminal influence on their careers.

# Ministry Program Update



## Listening to Alumni

**T**he Divinity School has historically embraced a singular approach to the study of ministry, insisting on integrity and excellence by holding the preparation of professors and pastors together in one school, with one faculty.

But in these days, when religious understanding and religious leadership are especially crucial, it has become increasingly important to ensure that our future ministers receive an education that is at once academically rigorous, spiritually nourishing, and eminently relevant. To this end, the ministry program of the Divinity School has embarked on an investigation of the impact and effectiveness of a Divinity School education on the understanding and practice of ministry. The study began last spring with a brief questionnaire sent to over 500 graduates from the Divinity School's ministry-related degree programs, including graduates from the 1950s to the present, in the B.D., D.Min., and M.Div. programs. The simple survey tool invited alumni to share their experiences and insights about their educational experience at Chicago, and their subsequent work lives. How well were our alumni prepared for their ministerial vocations? What were the ideas and themes that characterized the conversation in Swift Hall while they were here? What work have graduates engaged

in; how have they thought about that work; and now, having engaged in lives of ministry, what insights might they lend to the education of current religious leadership?

Over one hundred completed surveys have been received to date, the beginning of what promises to be an ongoing and useful discussion. We have been pleased by the response thus far, especially from our retired and most experienced alums and hope to hear, still, from more alums who are mid-career, or even quite new to their positions. Not surprisingly, there was an overwhelming consensus that the Divinity School has consistently stressed an academic approach to ministry, and must continue doing so. It appears that those who study for ministry at the Divinity School are committed scholars to begin with: around 35 percent of these graduates go on to enroll in some kind of formal education beyond their ministerial degree. Evident among the responses, as well, though, was the perennial

concern for the relationship between the practical aspects of the program's curriculum—field placement, CPE experiences, Arts of Ministry courses, etc.—and the “academic” portions of the program. Respondents indicated that while their field work was a prominent and indispensable part of their education here, the program has not consistently offered coursework and supplemental support to give students confidence and competence in the ministerial arts and practical reasoning. This discrepancy suggests work still to be done on several levels—a need to better harmonize the existing curriculum, to demonstrate to students the integration of all aspects of the program, and, most importantly, to continue to examine the fundamental question about how we think, and how we teach, about the nuanced and essential relationship between theological activity in the academy, ministerial practice, and the lives of religious communities. Alongside this enduring discourse about how students are prepared for ministry, it is significant that over 80 percent of the survey's respondents indicated that they felt prepared for ministry, and well over half indicated that they were more than adequately prepared.

Interesting, too, and suggestive of continued consideration, is the survey's consensus around a spacious conception of ministry, suggested by the Divinity School's articulation of ministry as inherently “public” activity. Almost 90 percent of our respondents said that they considered their vocation to be ministry, in some form or another, but around a third of these are working outside the traditional parish. Parents, teachers, architects, community organizers, higher

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education administrators, economists, librarians, and many others from a wide spectrum of professions all professed that what they do is ministerial: our ministry alums identify and serve a wide range of publics. Additionally, it seems that a broad-based Divinity School education is the foundation for a variety of ministerial reincarnations within a single career—many of our older alums recount employment histories that combine parish work, denominational leadership, community organizing and advocacy, and teaching or administration, and indicate that their educational formation as critical thinkers was indispensable to this mobility.

From the many thoughtful, annotated responses, we have gleaned numerous

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*Continued on page 10*

# An Interview with Richard Fox



**R**ichard Fox became Assistant Professor of the History of Religions in July of 2006. His primary research and teaching interests lie in the historical and ethnographic study of South and Southeast Asian Religions. This interview was conducted while Professor Fox was performing field work in Bali.

**CIRCA:** Prior to your arrival at the Divinity School, you taught at Williams College. Could you describe your experience there, and the Balinese theatrical visits you coordinated?

**RF:** It was a great pleasure to work in such a collegial environment, and I shall always remember my time at Williams with great fondness. Both within the department, as well as at the College more generally, there was a strong sense of intellectual community that brought together both faculty and students alike. The College was very supportive with respect both to my teaching and research, and the Balinese theatrical visits are an excellent example of this support. Through collaboration with scholars and performers from Indonesia, the UK and US, we were able to bring five of Bali's leading performers to New England, with the College hosting three full nights of Balinese theatre and a week of interdisciplinary workshops on various aspects of Balinese religion, culture, and performing arts. In planning the events, one of our primary concerns was that the repertoire usually performed for tourists (and on overseas tours) is quite far removed from what Balinese perform for themselves. We felt that simply bringing the tourist repertoire to America would do little more than to perpetuate a romanticized vision of an exotic and unchanging culture. And so we aimed to do something different. We chose to focus on a classical form of dance opera called *Arja*, which, under ordinary circumstances, would be utterly inaccessible to a non-Balinese audience. Much of the dialogue in an *Arja* performance



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occurs in *Kawi*, a complex linguistic register incorporating elements of Old Javanese, Sanskrit, and literary Balinese. However, in Bali itself, extemporized translation into the vernacular is an integral part of the performance, rendering it more approachable and enjoyable for its audiences. As internationally trained scholar-performers, the visiting actors were able to use English in place of vernacular Balinese, thereby offering the Williams community a unique opportunity to experience the kind of performance many Balinese themselves like to watch.

**CIRCA:** You trained at the School of Oriental and African Studies. Why did you do two programs of study, and what does this mean for your approach to the history of religions?

**RF:** I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to receive training at SOAS in both the Study of Religions and Cultural Anthropology. Having spent time in Bali as an undergraduate, I was interested in the ways in which contemporary Balinese were using Old Javanese texts, both in ceremonial contexts and otherwise. Based on my initial fieldwork experiences, I had begun to worry that I was inadequately prepared to engage in any seriously critical fashion with the complexity of Balinese Hinduism as it is practiced on a day-to-day basis. On the one hand, I felt that a classically philological approach would have been woefully inadequate to the practices I wanted to study. Yet, on the other, an ethnography uninformed by attention to textual and linguistic nuance would have been equally problematic — albeit for somewhat different reasons. As if things weren't already complicated, I was confronted as the research progressed with the problem of mass media: What is one to do when one's texts are televised? The very textual practices that had interested me during my initial visits to Bali were now being broadcast on state television as part of the drive to “educate” Balinese Hindus in their own tradition. The upshot of all this has been an abiding interest in the problem of *mediation*. I am not at all convinced by what passes for a theory of mass communication in contemporary cultural and media studies. In short, unlike their hermeneutic counterparts in older (and often literary) disciplines, media scholars have paid scant attention to the inherent circularity of the interpretive process as they themselves understand it. The question is how one might think differently. I certainly don't believe that, in itself, an interdisciplinary training solves much. But I do think it has both forced me to acknowledge theoretical problems I might otherwise have overlooked, and provided me with some clues as to how I might proceed.

**CIRCA:** How has your mind changed in the course of your research on media and religion in Indonesia?

**RF:** When I began my graduate studies at SOAS, I must admit I wasn't terribly interested in mass media. I saw media as

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# Divinity Students Association



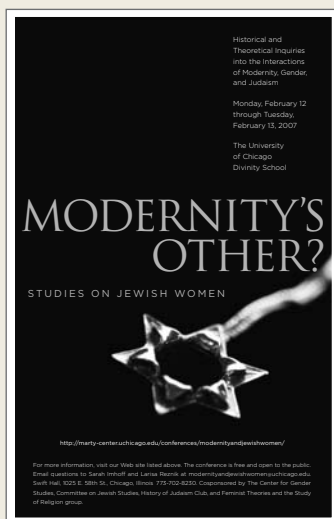
The suggestive, polysemic title of J. L. Austin's printed lectures, *How to Do Things with Words*, got me thinking about "how to do things with feminist scholarship." More specifically, just how expansive is (or, could be) the range of things one can do with the study of religion when feminist scholarship is involved?

The Feminist Theories and the Study of Religion group began in the winter of 2004 as an effort of three M.A. students committed to the idea that the theoretical resources available in feminist scholarship provide a variety of creative, insightful, and innovative tools for studying religion and, further, that questions about gender, sexuality, class, race, and arrangements of power ought to play a more normative role in the academic study of religion. Since then, we have been talking with and learning from faculty and students about diverse projects that deal with some of these questions.

Some of our past activities have included student presentations on the history of feminist thought in religious studies.

Students explored what exactly "feminism" is and whether the term is useful for speaking about religious thought and practice in a cross-cultural context. We have also benefited from panels where Divinity School faculty discussed their work. Professors Jean Bethke Elshtain, W. Clark Gilpin, and Kristine Culp (Dean of Disciples Divinity House and Senior Lecturer in Theology), shared the ways in which "feminism" and "feminist theories" have or have not been helpful in their research and teaching. Dr. Celia Brickman (a former Marty Center Fellow), Amy Hollywood (now at Harvard), and Professor Françoise Meltzer discussed the relationship between religion, gender, and psychoanalysis. We also offered a workshop

on the politics of divine representation—entitled "Divine Representation: Inversion, Appropriation, and Embodiment," it featured papers from four Divinity School students: Ellen Haskell (Ph.D., History of



Venessa Mendenhall (M.A., 2005). Last spring, Professor Catherine Brekus presented an essay that examined the absence of women in American religious history textbooks and syllabi, and asked why women's history has not gained a greater acceptance among "mainstream" American religious historians.

The 2006–2007 academic year has been particularly busy and productive for the group. Thanks to the organizational efforts of Erika Tritle (Ph.D. student, History of

Christianity), we welcomed Prof. Lucy Pick, who shared an article that dealt with religion and power of royal women in early medieval Spain. Next, Jeremy Biles (Ph.D., Religion and Literature), editor of *Sightings*, spoke to us about sex, death, and bugs. In a clever and challenging article entitled "I, Insect; or Bataille and the Crush Freaks," Biles encouraged us to think about many aspects of theoretical reflection, including the limits of theory, by offering a case study: the "crush freaks," men who derive sexual pleasure from watching people (primarily women) step on and crush various insects.

In February a two-day conference called "Modernity's Other?: Studies on Jewish Women," raised historical and theoretical questions about constructions of Jewishness and gender at the onset of modernity. With guidance and support from Professors Paul Mendes-Flohr, Catherine Brekus, and other faculty, and with generous cosponsorship from the Martin Marty Center, the Center for Gender Studies, the Committee on Jewish Studies, and the History of Judaism Club, the conference featured speakers such as Daniel Boyarin, Barbara Hahn, Paula Hyman, and Shulamit Magnus.

The spring also promises interesting talks in the spirit of variety and interdisciplinarity. In March, Kristin Bloomer (Ph.D. candidate, Theology), will share her fieldwork on women, spirit possession, and popular Catholicism in south India (March 19, 2007). In April,

we welcome Uma Naryan, Professor of Philosophy at Vassar College, to speak about the "politics of forgetting" and "the politics of rescue." This talk will look at the way the figure of the "Muslim woman" is being deployed in a global context, and what the social, political, and economic consequences of such deployment look like (April 9, 2007).

We hope these events are previews of future opportunities for students and faculty at the Divinity School to "do things with feminist scholarship." □



Judaism); Amanda Huffer (Ph.D. student, History of Religions); Rory Johnson (Ph.D. candidate, Anthropology and Sociology of Religion); and

—Larisa Reznik, Feminist Theories and the Study of Religion coordinator, 2006–2007

## The Divinity Students Association

(DSA) is an organization run by and for University of Chicago Divinity School students. The organization attempts to contribute to many spheres of life in the Divinity School: academic, professional, and social.

This article continues our series about Divinity School student life.

To learn more about the DSA and its many activities, please visit <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/student/dsa/index.shtml>

# An Interview with Beth Bidlack



**B**eth Bidlack is Bibliographer for Religion and Philosophy at the University of Chicago Library, a position she started in September, 2005. Responsible for developing and maintaining the Library's collections in the areas of religion and philosophy, Bidlack also provides specialized reference service and bibliographic instruction for faculty and students in religion and serves as a liaison between the Library and the Divinity School.

**CIRCA:** You have a background as both a biblical scholar and a librarian. What was your training, where have you been, and how did you end up here?

**BB:** At Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio, I majored in philosophy and religion. After graduation, I went to Boston University School of Theology. Since I was eligible for work-study, I went to the library and soon learned about cataloging. After completing an M.T.S. degree with a concentration in biblical studies, I stayed at Boston University to pursue a Ph.D. in the History and Literature of Ancient Israel. I also continued my work-study position in the library. With the encouragement of a few librarians, once I was "ABD" I found my first full-time job in the cataloging department at Andover Newton Theological School. From there I became a bibliographer and systems supervisor at the Episcopal Divinity School/Weston Jesuit Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Shortly after completing my Ph.D., I became the library director and member of the faculty at Bangor Theological Seminary in Bangor and Portland, Maine, where I taught courses in biblical languages and theology and directed studies in theological librarianship and Unitarian Universalist theologies.

In terms of library work, I have worked in all three major areas of librarianship: technical services (e.g., cataloging), public services (e.g., reference), and administration (e.g., report writing, budgeting, staff supervision). In addition to my library work, I was an adjunct instructor for ten years, teaching courses in biblical languages and

literature at Boston University, Merrimack College, Emmanuel College, and Episcopal Divinity School. While at BU, I was a teaching assistant for courses on the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Western Religions.

What appealed to me about the position here at the University of Chicago Library was its university context. I have really enjoyed the interdisciplinary nature of my work here.

**CIRCA:** How do libraries contribute to and enhance theological education?

**BB:** That is a great question. Theological librarians have been discussing this for quite some time. There are two ways I think libraries contribute to theological education. In my experience, libraries have provided

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contexts for critical thinking and information literacy, essential components of theological education. When students shift from assigned readings in a course to writing research papers, it is sometimes difficult for them to locate, organize, assess, and synthesize large amounts of information. In my current position, not only do I help build a collection in religion and philosophy, but I also help users navigate the collection to find and assess the resources they need. Rather than giving users a static list of resources to consult, my approach is more dynamic: I try to "teach them to fish." During workshops and research consultations, I give them an overview of the resources the Library provides and suggest some search strategies. I try to ensure that they have the research skills they need to narrow their topics and locate relevant resources.

The second contribution I would like to highlight is the multifaceted role of librarians. One the one hand, we are preservers of religious tradition (especially texts), but on the other hand, we challenge homogeneity and the status quo by collecting "voices from the margins" and by identifying areas of study which are not yet "mainstream." Theological librarians combine their

roles as sustainers of tradition, prophets, and pastors. In building our library collection, I feel like a take on a prophetic role when I seek out innovative electronic resources and voices that are underrepresented—but not to the detriment of print resources, which I strive to sustain. One also needs to be pastoral when guiding users through the millions of library resources, whether print or electronic.

**CIRCA:** Could you say something about plans to expand the library and other future plans for the library?

**BB:** As you may know, the Library is planning a \$42 million addition, which will hold 3.5 million volumes and be built adjacent to Regenstein Library. When added to our current 4.5 million volume capacity, we will have one of the largest library collections under one roof in North America. Unlike many other research libraries, we have the funding and physical space to build an

*Continued on page 12*



# Marty Center News and Events



The Martin Marty Center builds on a long-standing conviction of the Divinity School that the best and most innovative scholarship in religion emerges from sustained dialogue with the world outside the academy. In all of its projects, the Center aims to serve as a robust circulatory system that strengthens, deepens, and extends scholarly inquiry by moving it through the deliberating bodies of the students, faculty, and public. — Wendy Doniger, *Director of the Marty Center*

## Upcoming 2007 Conferences



### Conference to Honor David Tracy

May 6–8, 2008, Swift Hall

This two-day conference, organized by Professors W. Clark Gilpin and Susan Schreiner, will focus on Augustine. The conference will be held in honor of David Tracy, the Andrew Thomas Greeley and Grace McNichols Greeley Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Catholic Studies and Professor of Theology and the Philosophy of Religion in the Divinity School; also in the Committee on Social Thought, who retired in 2006.

More information will be available at our website.



### Mourning Religions

October 20–21, 2007, Swift Hall

Please save the date for this conference cosponsored by the Center for Religion & Psychotherapy of Chicago. Contact Dr. Celia Brickman at [cbrickma@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cbrickma@sbcglobal.net) for details.

## Religion and Culture Web Forum

This past fall, the Religion and Culture Web Forum launched a new discussion board, with better design, enhanced features, and more open access. It has received nearly 2,000 page views since its debut.

Comments are welcomed on the discussion board at <https://cforum.uchicago.edu/view-forum.php?f=1>, where invited responses from a diverse group of academics and other professionals are also posted. Current and archived forums may be accessed through the RCWF home page: <http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/webforum/index.shtml>.

In the spring, the Web Forum will feature essays by W. Clark Gilpin on secularism in American history and Jeffrey Kripal on Esalen and American religiosity. To be notified of new content on the Web Forum, subscribe to the once-a-month mailing list at: <https://listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/rcwf>.



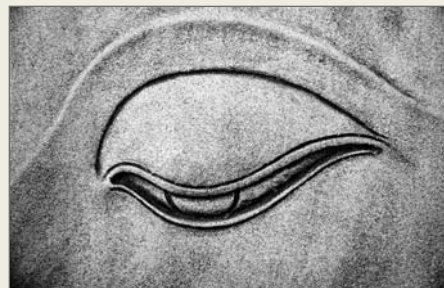
### Recent Fora

October 2006

Daniel Groll explored the relationship of jazz improvisation to the idea of moral improvisation.

November 2006

In an excerpt from his award-winning book, Daniel Arnold looked at the lessons of first-millennium Indian philosophy for students of religion.



December 2006

Through an intriguing case study, Michael Sells discussed the formation of militant identities within Islam in a negative symbiosis with the West.

January 2007

Bruce Lincoln addressed the connection between religion and imperial violence in ancient Persian and contemporary America.

February 2007

J. Ronald Engel reflected on the Earth Charter as a new covenant for democracy.

The Web Forum welcomes submissions from affiliates (present and past) of the Divinity School. Essays should run 15-20 double-spaced pages in length and be accessible to non-specialists, on topics which illuminate the relationship of religion to an aspect of culture. Inquiries should be directed to the forum's managing editor, Debra Erickson, at [dje@uchicago.edu](mailto:dje@uchicago.edu).

# Martin Marty Center's *Sightings*



In addition, *Sightings* has proven a valuable venue in which to call attention to the growing presence of religion in unexpected places—such as knitting ministries—or to clarify the religious dimensions of items that might otherwise be misunderstood, such as in the controversy surrounding the claim to “sanctuary” by a Mexican woman sheltered in a Chicago church and seeking to avoid deportation.



**S***ightings*, the Martin Marty Center's biweekly electronic publication analyzing issues at the intersection of religion and public life, is flourishing. In the past several months, the reader base

for the editorial has continued growing at a rapid clip; it now boasts nearly 6,500 subscribers, in addition to the many people who receive the column forwarded from friends, relatives, colleagues, and other interested readers.

Part of the reason that *Sightings* continues to maintain the interest of its longtime readers while attracting an ever-expanding audience is the range and quality of the articles it publishes. Among its contributors are professors, clergy, journalists, and graduate students willing to share their expertise and insights across a broad spectrum of religious phenomena and issues in public life. And of course, Martin Marty's weekly articles continue to inspire and inform *Sightings*'s devoted readership.

While *Sightings* regularly publishes articles dealing with religion and politics—an inexhaustible, and inexhaustibly controversial topic—recent months have seen columns

on a diverse range of topics that bring innovative perspectives to big news—the intelligent design controversy, the Patriot Act, the naming of a new pope, faith-based initiatives, and the “war on terror,” for instance—or call attention to important stories and issues that do not always make the front page—including war-sick children in Uganda, the plight of Palestinian Christians, and the appropriation of yoga by fundamentalist Christians.



*Sightings* writers have also proven invaluable in analyzing the often perplexing, but always interesting, relations between religion and popular culture. Religious imagery in the movies, faith issues on TV's “Battlestar Galactica,” God in best-selling books, and even the theology of cell phones: all these have been subjects of authors' analyses.

Editor Jeremy Biles reports that one column exemplifying the kind of critical perspective that *Sightings* seeks to bring to its readers is David Morgan's article “The Likeness of Jesus,” reprinted on the following page. “This piece,” says Biles, “provides historical context for an analysis of a contemporary phenomenon with ancient roots: the practice of portraying Jesus in ways that facilitate identification with him.” In this way, Morgan, like other contributors, manages to offer readers in-depth commentary in the space of a computer screen. □

## Ministry Program Update Continued from page 5

suggestions from our alumni that will help us both to reinforce those existing components which have proven successful, and to utilize the resources of the university and its surroundings to prepare students even more deliberately and critically for the challenges of contemporary ministry. Several respondents pointed to the fact that parish ministry demands adept leaders, and suggested that more attention be given to organizational development and managerial skills. Some also challenged the program to be more inclusive in its texts and its cultural awareness, to include more current thinkers and contemporary problems in its agenda. Many of the respondents reported that they had experienced very little contact with the Divinity School since their graduation, and would have appreciated more;

clearly, persons engaged in ministry benefit from continuing contact with a community of critical discourse, and just as clearly, our efforts to prepare students for ministry need the insights of engaged practitioners. Several efforts are underway to revitalize this conversation, including the creation of a practitioners' advisory committee to review our curriculum regularly, building an alumni network for the exchange of ideas and resources, adding a ministry alumni event into our annual ministry conference, and designing a webpage in our Div School site upon which alumni and current students can post articles, sermons, and other work in progress.

The conversation begun in last spring's survey is ongoing; a second phase of the study, involving extended interviews of

some of our alums in ministry, will begin soon. Every response is valuable. The input of our alumni has given us a much better understanding of how their education here is put to use in a multivalent and ever-changing world. If you would like to be a part of this discussion and have not yet submitted a questionnaire, we invite you to do so now. □

**The survey form** can be completed and submitted online at <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/degree/ministry/survey.shtml>.

If you would prefer a paper copy, please contact Cynthia Lindner, our Director of Ministry Studies, by mail at 1025 East 58th Street, Chicago, 60637; or by phone at 773-702-8280. We look forward to hearing from you.

# Sightings: The Likeness of Jesus

Today one finds pictures of Jesus everywhere—in books and magazines, on television and the internet. But the profusion of images of Jesus is nothing new. Beginning as early as the late third century, the Nazarene miracle-worker appeared on carved Roman coffins. In fourth-century Rome, or more accurately, beneath fourth-century Rome, in the dank and sprawling galleries of the catacombs, Jesus first appeared in portrait imagery on frescoed walls and vaults.

Mosaic imagery followed soon after. As Christianity's status eventually rose from marginal and foreign cult to the official religion of the state, the visual apparatus of ritual and worship developed apace. Sometimes Jesus appears with the bare, round face of Apollo, whose cult he rivaled in the upper reaches of fifth-century Roman society. Elsewhere he is depicted as a tunic-clad philosopher seated among his disciples; or sometimes with beard and long hair, looking like sculptured philosopher portraits of the day; or like Jupiter or Mithras (a Persian sun deity) or Asclepius (son of Apollo and the god of healing)—all rivals whose iconography waged Roman and Byzantine culture wars.

After late antiquity the iconography continued to evolve, relentlessly enfolding inherited images of Jesus into local visual garb to achieve updated versions that spoke to newly converted Christians. In the process, his appearance took on ethnic color and regional features. Jesus



went from being a Greek philosopher to a French monarch or an Italian friar. In these constant reincarnations he assumed the appearance of whomever it was that cherished his image, which meant among other things that he almost never looked Jewish.

From the early church to the present, missionaries have taken icons and devotional images around the world with them. These portraits have served as bridges between cultures. Asian and African Christs emerged from the sixteenth century to the twentieth. Black Christs became part of the political agenda of racial liberation in the American civil rights movement, and Christ as a



**“So what does the likeness of Jesus mean in this dizzying spectrum of images?”**



woman registered the aims of feminist Christians who challenged masculinist conceptions of the Christian message. Only a few days after the national celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, it was announced that African American rapper Kanye West would pose on the cover of *Rolling Stone* with a crown of thorns, evoking Mel Gibson's film “*The Passion of the Christ*,” but also King's own axiom, “suffering is redemptive.”

Some were offended by the cover, dismissing it as a shameless PR stunt. But is it inconceivable that in addition to the commerce of selling music, the image also conveys the artist's faith?

The long history of images of Jesus as a white man ensures that portraying him as Black or Asian or as a woman still has an edge. So what does the likeness of Jesus mean in this dizzying spectrum of images? Since no one drew his picture from life (notwithstanding the old claim that Luke was an artist who did so), aren't all images of Jesus mere fiction in service of something sinister—such as the hegemony

of race, gender, or national or ethnic identity? The website Rejesus, operated by several Christian organizations and denominations in Great Britain, offers a range of visual portrayals of Jesus and invites viewers to vote for their favorite image. Voting is tallied instantly and visitors can see how their selections compare to those of hundreds of others.



The range of images displayed at the website is telling. Jesus shows up as Che Guevara; as a Black Caribbean man; as a Caucasian with his head thrown back in laughter; as the actor Robert Powell, who portrayed Jesus in the well-known 1977 film “*Jesus of Nazareth*”; as the ghostly image of the Shroud of Turin; as an early Byzantine icon; and many more. The images have been culled to register the great diversity of theological and political ideals, all of which correspond to one element or another belonging to the “portrait” of Jesus found in the New Testament gospels.

**“...one suspects that the likeness of Jesus is not simply his appearance, but what his image shows him to be like.”**



In the end, one suspects that the likeness of Jesus is not simply his appearance, but what his image shows him to be like. That is, portraying the likeness of Jesus is the act of glimpsing whomever one believes him to be. By tailoring the racial and ethnic features of the face to one's own group, believers fashion an intimate and immediate connection with Jesus. To some, this will always appear ethnocentric or even racist—and perhaps it is. But it may also be more than that, since the impulse to identify with Jesus goes to the heart of devotion to him. □

David Morgan is Duesenberg Professor of Christianity and the Arts and of Humanities and Art History at Valparaiso University, and author of *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*.



## Bidlack Interview Continued from page 8

addition on site; many of our peers have had to resort to off-site storage. The addition will include a reading area, a much needed state-of-the-art conservation lab, and a high-density storage and retrieval system. For more about the addition to Regenstein, see the Library's website: <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/reg/addition>.

There are other projects currently under way, such as increasing the number of electrical outlets for users, acquiring new chairs, and updating the HVAC system. In addition, in order to continue being central to teaching, research, and learning, over the next few years the Library is planning to convert up

to four seminar rooms in the reading areas of Regenstein Library into technology-equipped teaching and learning spaces. One such room is scheduled to be completed by the end of this academic year.

The Library has recently received a \$617,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Community outreach for a project entitled "Uncovering New Chicago Archives Project (UNCAP)." The grant will allow graduate students (who will be trained by librarians) to organize and describe the archives at the DuSable Museum of African-American History, the *Chicago Defender*, and the Vivian G. Harsh Collection of

Afro-American History and Literature, located in the Woodson Regional Library, as well as the archives of contemporary poetry and the Chicago Jazz Archives, located in the Special Collections Research Center of the University of Chicago Library. Descriptions of these collections will be available on a centrally located website. This project is the embodiment of the synergy among faculty, students, librarians, and the community. For more information, see the recent article in the October 19, 2006 issue of the *University of Chicago Chronicle*: <http://chronicle.uchicago.edu/061019/library-archives.shtml>. □

## Fox Interview Continued from page 6

something that was *added onto* the traditions I wished to study. Subsequently, I have come to see those traditions in an important sense as constituted by and through different kinds of media. To put it rather more concretely, I would argue, for instance, that one cannot possibly understand present-day configurations of "traditional" Islam in Indonesia without understanding the role of television and the Internet in mediating the Muslim community today — both within Indonesia and abroad. That is to say, I don't think it's simply a matter of strapping "media" onto an otherwise unreconstructed model of social scientific or humanities-based inquiry. Rather, I believe any serious attempt to grapple critically with mass mediation as a global phenomenon will require rethinking most of our key critical categories, including perhaps most prominently tradition, community, agency, and identity, as well as religion itself. This is not simply an abstract theoretical point. On the contrary, it's one that has quite far-reaching implications for how we approach the day-to-day practices that — when taken



**"The question is how one might think differently."**

together — comprise the religions of the world. I would press further to argue that this is not only the case in overtly "globalized" urban centers, but also — or perhaps especially — in the more rural locations that have long been imagined as the primary sites of authentic "tradition." Hi-fi stereo equipment and cellular phones, for instance, are now an integral component of the most "traditional" of Balinese Hindu temple ceremonies. A karaoke machine is frequently the instrument of choice for broadcasting mantras during the *odalan* ceremonies at village temple complexes. Assuming our object of study lies somewhere outside these developments is, in my opinion, to take history out of the History of Religions. □



**For calendar updates**, please consult the Divinity School's website at <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/news/>. Access the most up-to-date events information, sign up for our electronic events calendar — "At the Divinity School" — and get current, and archived, news.