UNDERGRADUATE HUMANITIES FORUM

Eighth Annual Research Conference

Travel

MARCH 29-30, 2007
9:00 AM–5:30 PM
3619 LOCUST WALK

www.phf.upenn.edu
Gisele Aris
Sarah Breger
Sharon Cantor
Megan Curtiss
Michael Ellis
Sheira Feuerstein
Sara Gorman
Rachel Han
Di Hu
Gerard Leone
Andrew Meyer
Kojo Minta
Ellen Mossman
Sabina Pendse
Andrea Felber Seligman
Justin Tackett
Leonard Tso
Cheryl Yang
Special Thanks to

Joseph Benatov, Chair, Graduate Humanities Forum
Jennifer Conway, Associate Director, Penn Humanities Forum
Leslie Delauter, Director, College Houses & Academic Services
Mark Liberman, Faculty Director, College Houses & Academic Services
Catriona MacLeod, Director, Undergraduate Humanities Forum
Sara Sherger, Administrative Coordinator, Penn Humanities Forum
Wendy Steiner, Founding Director, Penn Humanities Forum

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Charles Bernstein  Phoebe Kropp  Neil Safier
David Buchta  William Labov  Susan Shifrin
Lee Cassanelli  William LaFleur  Peter Stallybrass
Camille Charles  Susan Lepselter  Jamie Taylor
Renee Fox  Jeehyun Lim  Fayyaz Vellani
John Ghazvinian  Catriona MacLeod  Lance Wahlert
Sarah Gordon  Kobina Ofosu-Donkor  David Wallace
Sheldon Hackney  Barbara Riebling  Sue Weber
Jan Jaeger  Paula Sabloff  Michael Wiedorn

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Conference Keynote

Robert Irwin
Historian and Broadcaster

The Arabic story cycle of the Thousand and One Nights is Indian in origin, Sinbad's adventures reflecting real-life Indian, Persian, and Arab maritime commerce. Like all tales of marvels in faraway places, it served pious purposes as well. Distinguished historian and public intellectual Robert Irwin follows the fortunes of this storied traveler and explains the modern transmutation of Sinbad from a cautious merchant into a swashbuckling sailor.

Robert Irwin read modern history at Oxford and taught medieval history at the University of St. Andrews. He has also lectured on Arabic and Middle Eastern history at the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and London. He is the director of a small publishing company and is also Middle East editor of The Times Literary Supplement and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

Program

March 29, 2007, 17 Logan Hall

5:00p | Conference Keynote Address
Robert Irwin, Historian and Broadcaster
Sinbad the Traveling Salesman: His Ancestry and Progeny

March 30, 2007, 3619 Locust Walk

9:00–9:10a: Welcome
Catriona MacLeod, Director, UHF and Associate Professor of German

9:15–10:30a | Poetic Travel
Chair: David Buchta, PhD Candidate, South Asia Studies
Sharon Cantor, College ‘08, English, Comparative Literature
Treading the Abyss: The Distressing Journey in Kierkegaardian Faith
Sheira Feuerstein, College ‘08, English, Theater Arts
Me Mout’ Haf Fe Sympat’ise Wid Somewe: Dialect-Poetry of Ambivalence in the Postcolonial Caribbean Context
Andrew Meyer, College ‘07, Philosophy, Religious Studies
“The Journey Itself Home”: Wandering Poets of Japan

10:30–10:45a | Break

10:45–12:00p | Modernisms
Chair: Michael Wiedorn, PhD Candidate, Comparative Literature
Giselle Aris, College ‘07, African Studies, Diplomatic History
The Power and Politics of Dress in Africa
Gerard Leone, College ‘07, Art History, Philosophy
The Suburban Jeremiads: Critical Dialogues on American Suburbia
Ellen Mossman, College ‘07, History, Economics
Charming Charleston: Elite Construction of an Idealized History in Twentieth Century Tourism

12:00–12:30p | Lunch

12:30–1:45p | Tourism
Chair: Lance Wahlert, PhD Candidate, English
Michael Ellis, College ‘07, Linguistics
Di Hu, College ‘07, Political Science, Anthropology
Wonderlands: Through the Traveling Lens
Sabina Pendse, College ‘07, Environmental Studies, Philosophy, Politics and Economics
Traveling to Save Farms: A Look at Agritourism
1:45–1:50p | Break

1:50–2:45p | Explorations
Chair: Neil Safier, Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Penn Humanities Forum
Megan Curtiss, College ‘07, Arts and Society in the Middle Ages
*West into East and East into West: Maps, Merchants, and the Mediterranean World of the High Middle Ages*
Andrea Felber Seligman, College ‘07, African Studies, World History
*Traveling African Ambassadors and Encountered Hospitality: A Dimension of African-European Diplomatic Relations in the 15th–17th Centuries*

2:45–3:00p | Break

3:00–4:15p | Immigration
Chair: Jeehyun Lim, PhD Candidate, English
Rachel Han, College ‘08, Economics, Health and Societies
*The Backlash of Immigration on Health: A Study of the Malay and the Chinese in USA*
Kojo Minta, College ‘09, History, Classical Studies, Religious Studies
*The Reverse Diaspora: African Immigrants and the Return Home*
Cheryl Yang, College ‘08, Biology, Economics
*Doctors’ Flight, Patients’ Plight: The Catch 22 of Health Care in Developing Countries*

4:15–4:20p | Break

4:20–5:35p | Religion
Chair: Susan Shifrin, PHF Mellon Research Fellow and Assistant Professor, Ursinus College
Sarah Breger, College ‘07, Jewish History, English
*Sentenced to Marriage: “Chained Women” in Wartime*
Sara Gorman, College ‘07, English, Psychology
*“Sche knelyd upon hir kneys, hir boke in hir hand”: Manuscript Travel, Devotional Pedagogy, and the Textual Communities of The Book of Margery Kempe*
Justin Tackett, College ‘07, English, Philosophy
*“What matter where?”: Epic Geography and the Defense of Hell in Milton’s Paradise Lost*
Abstracts

Gisele Aris, The Power and Politics of Dress in Africa
In different ways, power is represented, constituted, articulated, and contested through dress. A compelling political language, dress is comparable in eloquence and potency to the words of the most skilled orator, or the writings of the most persuasive propagandist. How does moving across time and space change the meanings of a particular item of clothing? Why is fashion never a universal language? How, specifically, has the role of dress in Africa been shaped by encounters created by travel?

Sarah Breger, Sentenced to Marriage: “Chained Women” in Wartime
Under Jewish law, a woman may only remarry if she has received a valid bill of divorce or if there is proof of the death of her husband. Without one of those conditions, the woman becomes an ‘Agunah’ or chained woman, unable to remarry for fear her children will be classified as Mamzerim (bastards) and forbidden to enter the congregation of Israel (i.e., marry a Jew) for ten generations. How valid is the pre-conditional bill of divorce in wartime? What does the U.S. experience in wartime reveal about what happens when the husband never returns home?

Sharon Cantor, Treading the Abyss: The Distressing Journey in Kierkegaardian Faith
Between 1841 and 1843, Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard left his fiancée, traveled to Berlin twice, and wrote three groundbreaking works. His personal reflections on travel amid love and loss gave way over time to a complex conception of Christian faith as an unremittingly taxing journey to reconcile, overcome, and even incorporate opposing forces such as doubt and despair. With particular attention to *Fear and Trembling* (1843) and *The Sickness Unto Death* *(1849)*, I will consider developments and continuity in Kierkegaard’s use of travel imagery. I hope to contextualize his innovative and challenging conception of faith.

Megan Curtiss, West into East and East into West: Maps, Merchants, and the Mediterranean World of the High Middle Ages
The Crusades often were seen as the conduit through which western Europe was exposed to the rich intellectual and cultural traditions of the Byzantine and Arab worlds. Yet merchants were active in the eastern Mediterranean before the crusades. Where, when, and why did these merchants travel? What goods did they bring back and from where? How were those artifacts, texts, and ideas understood and expressed in the art, writing, and actions of those who received them?

Michael Ellis and Di Hu, Wonderlands: Through the Traveling Lens
Travel photographs are a hallmark of modern tourism. It is well known that people with different purposes for traveling take different pictures. Yet no one has systematically analyzed that difference. What do photos reveal about the reasons why people travel today—business or pleasure, conquering places or self-discovery? This survey and exhibition will consider what such things as the size of the subject in the photo, where the subject is situated, and how it is oriented can reveal about those differences.
Sheira Feuerstein, *Me Mout’ Haf Fe Sympat’ise Wid Somewe: Dialect-Poetry of Ambivalence in the Postcolonial Caribbean Context*

The postcolonial era has incited both backlashes against colonial education and attempts at assimilation from the once colonized peoples of the Caribbean. With language and education often at the center of the struggle for identity, Anglophone Caribbean poets write poetry in dialect and in forms that reflect their multiple origins and hybrid identities. In response to the polarization of postcolonial Jamaica, dialect poet Louise Bennett exemplifies ‘Ambivolance,’ an ambivalence of her own volition, and pride in her complicated and hybrid identity. How did Bennett’s use of dialect and form characterize her articulation of Jamaican identity in the wake of its colonization?

Sara Gorman, “Sche knelyd upon hir kneys, hir boke in hir hand”: Manuscript Travel, Devotional Pedagogy, and the Textual Communities of The Book of Margery Kempe

*The Book of Margery Kempe*, a fifteenth-century mystical work written by an illiterate lay woman from King’s Lynn, has often been considered a generic anomaly. This project proposes that the transmission that the manuscript’s marginalia suggests indicates that Margery Kempe’s *Book* should be taken as a piece of devotional pedagogy inscribed in a community of similar manuscripts. In anticipating the travel of the manuscript, both within and outside the monastery walls, the monastic annotators associate the *Book* with particular manuscript communities in late medieval England.

Rachel Han, *The Backlash of Immigration on Health: A Study of the Malay and the Chinese in USA*

How does travel, specifically immigration, affect the epidemiology of chronic disease? For Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) immigrants, an unusually high rate of diabetes is puzzling, given the group’s relatively low rate of obesity and other typical causes of diabetes. The unique mix of AAPI patients in a free health clinic of Philadelphia’s Chinatown (half Chinese, half Malays) is the basis for this study of how immigration affects health and lifestyle.

Gerard Leone, *The Suburban Jeremiads: Critical Dialogues on American Suburbia*

The theme of travel often lends itself to highly exotic topics. Yet the ubiquity of the American suburb belies its important relation to travel. Travel is bound by the idea of location, and in the debate about suburbia we have a fascinating, largely unanalyzed discussion about the nature of the locales and daily travels of half the population of America. What can books and periodicals from the past 15 years tell us about the implicit messages of the nature of those locales and travels?

Andrew Meyer, “The Journey Itself Home”: Wandering Poets of Japan

In traveling, the journey itself is conventionally conceived of as a means to an end—a process that would not be chosen but for the destination,
which is always in mind. For the Japanese poets Saigyo (1118–1190) and Basho (1640–1694), the act of traveling was much more than a disposable means. For them, the journey itself was an end, each fleeting moment a Mecca in their quest to realize and embody spiritual truth. In what ways was travel integral to the life and work of these two brilliant artists and spiritual wayfarers?

**Kojo Minta, The Reverse Diaspora: African Immigrants and the Return Home**
Among African immigrants to America, there is a belief, sometimes uttered, sometimes not, that eventually they will return to Africa. Why is there this urge in the African immigrant community to return to their country of birth, to “return home”? How actualized is this urge? Is it some fond yet quixotic longing to return to what was remembered as old and familiar? Or is it the product of a more deep-seated nostalgia, one supplemented by careful planning and serious intent? To answer this question I set out to craft a survey in which the questions, and answers, would provide insight into why these immigrants to America, many who are citizens, many who have been in the US for decades, would decide to leave and return to places they departed long ago.

**Ellen Mossman, Charming Charleston: Elite Construction of an Idealized History in Twentieth Century Tourism**
Tourism boards, preservationists, and residents all play important roles in shaping tourism and travel. One particularly rich example of this is Charleston, South Carolina. This antebellum city’s ‘historic charm’ was carefully crafted in the early twentieth century by a group of elite Charlestonians who refashioned history into a happy story between races and classes. This rosy image is what continues to draw tourists to the city today. What role has this false vision created in “preservation” served in the development of tourism in Charleston and in the construction of the Southern Identity?

**Sabina Pendse, Traveling to Save Farms: A Look at Agritourism**
By exploiting the public’s desire to travel, communities, as well as entire countries, benefit from the money spent. Building on this desire to travel, farmers not only can remain profitable but also save a fading industry and pastime and, most importantly, enhance their nation’s economy. What do different models reveal about the positive implications of agritourism in North America and the possibility for success in the developing world?

**Andrea Felber Seligman, Traveling African Ambassadors and Encountered Hospitality: A Dimension of African-European Diplomatic Relations in the 15th–17th Centuries**
The 14th through 16th centuries were an era of unprecedented discovery for the Portuguese and other Europeans as they traveled for the first time along the coast of Africa. This analysis of the existing body of Portuguese travel narratives, court records, and letters, along with available African records will shed light on the nature of encounters between African diplomats and Europeans. What do they reveal about specific African foreign policy goals and experiences while traveling for diplomatic missions?
Justin Tackett, “What matter where?”: Epic Geography and the Defense of Hell in Milton's Paradise Lost
In Paradise Lost, we are presented with a vision of Hell that is both complex and purposeful. On the one hand, Milton follows the classical tradition of the Odyssey and Aeneid by saturating his descriptions with geographical references and toponyms. On the other hand, his Hell is a distinctively seventeenth century one that highlights interiority and the psychological torment of the damned. How has Milton transmogrified the classical tradition and previous conceptions of Hell? What does the physicality of his “Hellscape” have to say about the religious beliefs (and heresies) of his contemporaries?

Leonard Tso, National Variations of a Socialist Bloc Symbol: Foreigners-Only Facilities in Four Cold War Era Communist Capitals
During the Cold War (1945–1990), traveling to the Socialist Bloc was an exciting experience for many western tourists. However, their experiences were colored by the careful crafting of the “Communist Impression,” one that restricted what tourists would see by channeling them into “for foreigners only” hotels, shops, and restaurants. What did those places look like? While such facilities were special icons of the Socialist Bloc, the various countries did differ in their places, architecture, and policies toward foreigners. What were those differences and how can we relate them to the broader context of cultural and political differences between countries in the Socialist Bloc?

Cheryl Yang, Doctors’ Flight, Patients’ Plight: The Catch 22 of Health Care in Developing Countries
The basic health care needs of many people in developing countries remain unmet because of a shortage of skilled physicians and nurses. A major cause of this shortage is “brain drain,” the exodus of health care professionals to other countries in search of a better life. What are the migration experiences of foreign-trained health care workers in Philadelphia? What economic, social, and political reasons influenced their decision to emigrate? How did their medical career influence that decision?