



humanities at **BYU**

BYU COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES | FALL 2008



Dean John R. Rosenberg

Three Cups of Tea

While traveling recently in Korea I sat on the wood floor of the Oksan Confucian Academy, its boards polished by four centuries of students' comings and goings. There I listened as BYU Korean professor Mark Peterson recited a sixteenth-century poem by

Yi Yulgok:

While searching for herbs I suddenly lost my way,
Surrounded by one thousand peaks and the autumn leaves.
Then I spied a monk returning from fetching water;
At the edge of the woods, smoke for boiling tea arises.

The poem's delicate imagery, the motif of the lost traveler, and the monk's hospitality reminded me of the times I sat with fellow travelers on the stones of the courtyard at Spain's Salamanca University—worn smooth by centuries of student feet. There I read a seventeenth-century Spanish poem by Luis de Góngora—also about a traveler lost in the woods:

Lost and sick, a wanderer,
In the shadowy night, with uncertain foot
Treading the confusion of the wilds,
Gave shouts in vain, took aimless steps.

The repeated barking, if not nearby,
At least distinct, he heard, of an always wakeful dog,
And in a shepherd's shelter, poorly thatched,
He found kindness, if not his way.

The sun came up; and concealed among ermines,
A sleepy beauty with sweet cruelty
Assaulted the hardly well traveler.

He will pay for his lodging with his life;
It would have been better for him to wander in
the mountains
Than to die in the way that I am dying.
(Prose translation by Elias Rivers)

The two poems cross paths: travelers, woods, lost direction, refuge. The Korean verses lead us to a clearing. The monk's fire rises above the confusion of the forest, offering safety, warmth, hospitality, and nourishment.

The Spanish sonnet is more elusive. The lost traveler finds kindness but loses his way, profiling the difference between being physically and spiritually lost. "It would have been better for him to wander in the mountains / than to die the way I am dying," presumably of love.

Greg Mortenson was also a lost wanderer. Disoriented after a failed attempt to summit K2, he stumbled into a village in the highest of the Pakistani highlands. He recounts the following advice from the village elder:

"If you want to survive in Baltistan, you must respect our ways. . . . The first time you share tea with a Balti, you are a stranger. The second time you take tea, you are an honored guest. The third time you share a cup of tea, you become family, and for our family, we are prepared to do anything, even die. . . . You must take time to share three cups of tea."
(*Three Cups of Tea, One Man's Mission to Promote Peace . . . One School at a Time*, Penguin 2007)

Three wanderers: one finds refuge in wisdom; one falls victim to the world's seductive pleasures; a third learns to slow down and see beyond the far side of appearances, where in foreign tongues he deciphers voices that form part of the human conversation—a conversation that unites a Korean and a Spanish poet, a twentieth-century adventurer, and us, all pushing through what Dante's wanderer called the "cammin di nostra vita" (the journey of our life).

As ones who have been trained to perceive the varieties of human experience and connect them like the road lines on a map, we join these travelers, acknowledging the humanity of familiars and foreigners by greeting them in their own tongue, telling and retelling their stories, pausing long enough to prepare and share cups of tea. This greeting and telling and pausing is another name for "reading," not just the compulsory reading assigned by teachers, but reading and deciphering the lines of God's book—the world itself—which, according to Paracelsus, we read by turning its pages with our feet as we walk "pilgrimly."



JOINING THE

**HUMANITIES
CONVERSATION**

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Cover photo: Students enjoy the crisp autumn air as they walk to and from classes on campus

We'd really like to have readers update their email addresses with us. Please send updates to Carol Kounanis at cek@byu.edu.

Congratulations to several College of Humanities faculty members who were recently awarded college and university fellowships, lectureships, and awards.

Maeser Excellence in Teaching Award



George Tate
*Humanities, Classics, and
Comparative Literature*

James L. Barker Lectureship



Ray Clifford
Center for Language Studies

Part-Time Faculty Excellence Award



Jeannie Welch
Center for Language Studies

P.A. Christensen Lectureship



David Paulsen
Philosophy

Alcuin Fellowships



Cecelia Peek
*Humanities, Classics, and
Comparative Literature*



Penny Bird
English



Marc Olivier
French and Italian Languages



Trent Hickman of the English Department recently won first place in the adult division of the national Open-Door Poetry Contest sponsored by Borders Books. His poem describing a Picasso painting was selected from 2,600 entries. The judge of the contest, Mark Strand, Pulitzer Prize winner and former Poet Laureate of the United States, praised Professor Hickman's poem when he said, "This poem left nothing unsaid. It completely exhausted the possibilities of looking at a still life and did it in an elegant and lively way."

Benjamin Thomas, an April 2008 graduate in French and neuroscience, is one of 40 winners of the nationwide Phi Kappa Phi Award of Excellence scholarship. The award is based on academic performance, leadership, and career goals. Benjamin feels that his work as a volunteer tutor on campus and his work with homeless people on an internship in France also helped him qualify for the scholarship. He will apply the scholarship money to his dental school tuition at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill this fall.

A large collection of books owned by Myriam Ramsey, late professor of Portuguese at BYU, has been donated to a struggling university in Mozambique. To the students at One World University, many of whom have never owned a book, the volumes are a treasure of Portuguese and Brazilian literature. Professor Ramsey taught at BYU for over 25 years before dying of cancer in 2003. When her family offered the books to BYU's Harold B. Lee Library, Mark Grover, Latin American specialist on the library staff and a friend of Myriam, suggested giving the books to a school in need. With help from donors to cover the cost of shipping, the Lee Library was able to send the majority of the collection to One World University. "Those students will be able to read the greatest literature that Brazil and Portugal have produced," says Brother Grover. "They will have the chance to have an actual book in their hands." Myriam's son Paul said his mother would be honored to see her books used this way. "The knowledge that someone, somewhere, is still benefitting from her life's work is very rewarding to us. My mother would be thrilled to know that her books have a life beyond her own."



Students at One World University enjoy the books provided to them by Professor Ramsey's family



In the last several months, another College of Humanities professor taped a lecture as part of our series, "Voices in the Human Conversation." The tapings were done in the KBYU studios for later broadcast on BYU-TV worldwide. Greg Clark, professor of English, delivered a lecture called "Civic Lessons from

Jazz Music," with accompanying musical illustrations. No broadcast date has yet been set for Dr. Clark's lecture, but once it has been broadcast, the lecture will be available online, as are four previous lectures in the series by Royal Skousen, Donald Parry, Allen Christenson, and George Tate, all faculty in the College of Humanities. These lectures can be accessed at <http://www.byub.org/voices>. Previously announced lectures taped by Dale Pratt, associate professor of Spanish, and Roger Macfarlane, associate professor of classics, will also soon be broadcast and made available at the same website.

Randall Jones, professor emeritus of German and former dean of the college, is the recipient of the 2008 Outstanding German Educator Award from the American Association of Teachers of German. The award is given in recognition of Dr. Jones's "personal innovation, talent, and leadership which reflect uncommon excellence." It will be presented in November at the annual AATG meeting in Orlando.

Learning *Abroad* in Berlin

The Unplanned and Unique Moments When Learning Really Happens



Laura Smith
Department of Germanic
and Slavic Languages

Most educators will admit that it is often in the unscripted moments that real learning takes place. When the classroom is another culture, the opportunities for these unique moments increase substantially.



Students in Berlin have many unique opportunities not available in Provo

The seventeen students that participated in the Berlin study abroad program this past spring and summer are proof positive of this principle. Charged with two primary foci, improving their German language skills and conducting research toward their capstone papers, ORCA projects, or MA theses, these students rose to the challenge.

At the world famous Goethe Institut, BYU students spent four to five hours a day for eight weeks studying German alongside classmates from around the world. “Studying at the Goethe Institut was the best decision I have made regarding my study of German,” says Steve Peris, a returned missionary from the Berlin mission. This sentiment is echoed by another RM, Jon Smith, who said, “The Goethe Institut in Berlin provided one of the finest language learning courses I have had.” Sitting in on a class for just a week and a half with my students also gave me fresh ideas that I can now bring into my own classroom teaching. As part of the Goethe Institut’s efforts to teach both language and culture, students were able to attend daily excursions to historic sites in the city, hearing about life in the divided city during the Cold War from local scholars who had lived it, attending opera and theater performances, and touring the German *Reichstag*, the national parliament.

These learning experiences were in turn further enhanced and personalized by students’ individual research projects. Carrie Cox, a German MA student, came to

Berlin to conduct research on Bertolt Brecht and his Berliner Ensemble for her thesis. Not only was she able to find resources for her research, but she was also able to see performances of the ensemble firsthand at his Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. "This modern incarnation of Bertolt Brecht's epic theater troupe is a vibrant and innovative, tremendously talented group of artists," explains Carrie.

Nathan Bates, a senior in German literature, was also able to carry out research possible only in Germany on German novelist Clara Viebig. After traveling to Hontheim, he discovered that the Society for Clara Viebig was actually located in the basement of the caretaker's home. Of his experience, Nathan notes, "I never imagined I would learn so much. I discovered many details about Viebig's life and works." The caretaker of the society, Mrs. Aretz, even drove Nathan to a permanent exhibition in a town frequented by Viebig and her family. Mrs. Aretz has also since discussed Nathan's research in an interview with Radio Europe.

Berlin also afforded other students the opportunity to find a research topic that would otherwise not have been possible. For instance, Jon Smith knew he wanted to research German film, but didn't have a specific topic until he attended a program at Berlin's Arsenal Theater featuring films by German filmmaker Jeanine Meerapfel, a filmmaker relatively unknown in the United States who deals with issues of identity and multiculturalism. "At the program, I was able to see four films and one short film. Additionally, Jeanine Meerapfel was there and talked about the films we watched and answered questions. I was able to briefly talk to her and purchase a boxed set containing half of her filmography. It was a great opportunity that was only possible because I was in Berlin." Jon's experiences and research had an influence on others, including Kajsa Spjut, a new MA student, who developed her thesis topic on multiculturalism and started researching in Berlin.

Other students, such as Jon Neville and Hillary Aten, also made significant progress on their research and helped me with my own research. Thanks to his research on international relations, Bobby Sharp met important contacts providing him with leads for jobs overseas once he graduates. Quite simply, the opportunities afforded to these and many other students far exceeded what would have otherwise been possible on the Provo campus.

But the opportunities go beyond language and research. In Wittenberg where Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church, Tanner



Students explore and learn in Germany

Hardison and I bought Luther Bibles printed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We were able to attend a service in this historic church and sing Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

Students also grew individually. Steve Peris says of his experience, "Study abroad gave me a new perspective on what I want to study and how to accomplish my goals." Ashley Mordwinow echoes those sentiment: "I feel like I owe a lot of personal growth—in academics, language skills, spirituality—to the experience I had in Berlin." Tanner Hardison says of his experience, "Not only did I learn German far better and faster than I could have at home, but I also learned many life lessons."

Many, if not most, of the students were only able to go because of generous help from donors and scholarships. Is it worth the sacrifice? Perhaps Jonathan Brimhall says it best: "My study abroad experience was one that I wouldn't trade for anything! It was well worth the financial sacrifice both in terms of German language exposure and cultural experiences. . . . I learned to be a better student, a better language learner, and a better friend to others. To anyone doubting whether or not it's worth the money or time, I say an emphatic 'Yes!' Make it happen!"

Lovingkindness and Compassion in Dostoevsky

Fyodor Dostoevsky is an intensely psychological novelist who has delved deeply into the human psyche and spirit and, in the process, created characters, scenes, and images that are deeply disturbing for many readers. Numerous readers view him as a brilliant but dark and depressing writer who descends with his readers into a frightening chasm of human misery, degradation, and sin. Unquestionably, Dostoevsky does indeed ask us to explore and contemplate the abyss, and while I do not wish to minimize the harrowing aspects of his depictions of evil, for me personally, he is ultimately a writer of light whose fictional portrayal of the concepts of lovingkindness and compassion enables his novels to become luminous beacons of hope that dispel the gloom of despair. I would like to turn to my two favorite novels by Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, to illustrate these ideas.

Sonya is the character in *Crime and Punishment* who most fully embodies the concept of lovingkindness. Dostoevsky's choice of character to express his ideas on mercy and compassion is rather perplexing and paradoxical, however, for Sonya is a prostitute. Dostoevsky's reasons for choosing such a character need to be examined within the context of the polemics in which he

was engaged with his ideological opponents. In espousing their own utopian ideas, they frequently utilized the theme of the redemption of a prostitute as being emblematic of the redemption of a lost and fallen world. If their idealistic love for humanity could reclaim even a prostitute, then they truly could realize their utopian

ideals. Dostoevsky observed, however, that some of these thinkers, while motivated by intellectually enticing theories and an abstract love for humanity as a whole, were incapable of responding to the concrete moral obligations of everyday life and the emotional needs of flesh-and-blood human beings. In his works *Notes from Underground* and *Crime and Punishment*, he surprisingly but with great effect parodies the theme of the redeemed prostitute by creating prostitutes who, in contrast to the banal and fruitless salvational rhetoric of egocentric intellectuals, are capable, despite their sinful situation, of sacrificing

themselves in acts of selfless love for concrete individuals (Frank, Dostoevsky: *The Stir of Liberation* 332–33).

Sonya is precisely such a person, and her very decision to become a prostitute is an act of self-sacrifice. Her father is a kindhearted but incorrigible drunkard, her step-mother, who has three young children from a previous marriage, is dying of tuberculosis, and her own



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efforts to support the family as a seamstress have been thwarted by wealthy customers who defraud her. As her family is languishing in abject poverty, Sonya makes the agonizing decision to sacrifice her own spiritual life to sustain the temporal lives of her family members. She is deeply aware of the magnitude of her sin and, crushed by feelings of guilt and unworthiness, acknowledges herself to be “a fallen creature” (Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* 272). She has turned so frequently to the story of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead that she has the text memorized. She nourishes the hope that if Christ can raise Lazarus from physical death, then He also has the power to raise her from spiritual death and manifest His greatest miracle and triumph in her life (277). Despite her intense spiritual anguish and the dissonance between belief and action, her faith remains unwavering. When cynically questioned as to what role God plays in her life, she unhesitatingly declares, “He does everything” (274).

Sonya’s capacity for compassion is perhaps most vividly manifested in her relationship with Raskolnikov, the central character of *Crime and Punishment*. Raskolnikov’s very name (*raskol*—schism; *raskol’nik*—schismatic) suggests that he is being emotionally and intellectually severed by a tragic schism. On the one hand, he is grieved and pained as he sees the suffering of people around him. He feels pity for them and desires to prostrate himself “before all human suffering” (272). On the other hand, Raskolnikov experiences anger toward all those who are oppressors of the meek and the innocent. Dismayed by his recent encounter with an elderly pawnbroker, whom he deems to be a vile and vicious woman, and frustrated by his inability to respond to the needs of suffering humanity, he comes to the conclusion that he would be justified in killing the old woman, taking her substantial savings, and saving scores of families from poverty. He thinks that perhaps “thousands of good deeds will wipe out one little, insignificant transgression” (56). He hopes that he is an extraordinary individual who is sanctioned to overstep traditional moral barriers to advance the general welfare of humanity. Obsessed by this idea, he commits murder, but having transgressed the law, he finds that he is overwhelmed by “a dreary feeling of eternal loneliness and estrangement” (87).

In his alienation and isolation, Raskolnikov turns to Sonya. In his

mind, their “paths lie together,” for she also has taken a life, albeit her own, to save others (278). Despite the similarity that Raskolnikov perceives, their lives in many ways represent a stark contrast. Juxtaposed to Raskolnikov’s pride and self-absorption are Sonya’s meekness and selflessness. As Raskolnikov visits Sonya, Dostoevsky’s narrator notes that “an almost *insatiable* compassion . . . was depicted in every feature of her face” (268). Raskolnikov later confesses his crime to Sonya, and her reaction has stunned generations of readers who expect her to flee in terror and revulsion. She instead falls down on her knees before him and then arises and embraces him. Raskolnikov is stunned but deeply moved by her reaction. “Long unfamiliar feelings poured like a flood into his heart and melted it in an instant. He did not withstand them; two tears sprang into his eyes and hung on his lashes. ‘Then you will not forsake me, Sonya?’ he said, looking at her almost with hope. ‘No, no! Never, nowhere!’ cried Sonya. ‘I will follow you wherever you go’” (348).

Although Sonya is horrified by Raskolnikov’s crime, her response dramatically reveals her merciful heart, her capacity for lovingkindness, and the insatiability of her compassion. She meekly exhorts him to confess and to experience the full weight of the legal and spiritual suffering for his sin. Raskolnikov, both leery of and grateful for Sonya’s compassion, asks her, “Why do you embrace me?” He then answers his own question: “Because I could not carry my burden



myself, and have come here to put it on other shoulders: if you suffer it will be easier for me!" (349). Just like its English equivalent, the Russian word for "compassion" (*sostradanie*) consists of a prefix (*so-*) meaning "with" and a word meaning "suffering" (*stradanie*). The conception of "compassion" is thus to suffer with other people and help bear their burdens, so that eventually we can help lift or remove the suffering from them. For Dostoevsky, compassion is not a gift that we should render only to those who suffer innocently, who are repentant, or who respond with gratitude to our overtures of kindness. The fact that Raskolnikov still is not truly repentant and often is cold toward Sonya does not deter her in any way from serving him. From Dostoevsky's perspective, the most appropriate response to sin is not repugnance and disdain, for sin already severs an individual from a sense of community with others. Lovingkindness and a willingness to bear others' burdens is the requisite response of those who themselves have abundantly partaken of Christ's compassion.

Dostoevsky's ideas on compassion serve as an important counterpoint to the profound spiritual and philosophical questions in *The Brothers Karamazov* as he explores the question of possible responses to evil and suffering. Ivan, the middle of the three Karamazov brothers, is an intellectual who is deeply disturbed by the suffering of innocent children and their seemingly unredeemed tears. He relates to his younger brother, Alyosha, heart-rending accounts of nearly unfathomable cruelty and evil perpetrated against children. In the name of his profound love for humanity, he contends that he cannot accept God's plan for happiness, and he constructs an edifice of rebellion and unbelief on a seemingly moral foundation of sympathy and compassion.

In his fictional tale of the Grand Inquisitor, Ivan again utilizes a framework of charity and compassion to reject Christ and His principles of spiritual freedom. The Grand Inquisitor had been one of Christ's most devoted disciples as a young man, but he eventually comes to the conclusion that only perhaps tens of thousands of people have the spiritual strength and fortitude to follow Christ of their own free will, while the vast multitudes of humanity are too weak and undisciplined to attain a heavenly reward. He acerbically accuses Christ of having "ceased to be compassionate" because He demands too much of us (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* 256). Desiring universal human happiness, he attempts to correct Christ's work.

Viewing moral agency as a primary source of suffering and unhappiness, he advocates its abolition and contends that the foundational stones of human happiness are earthly bread that satisfies our bellies and the appeasement of human conscience by allowing us to surrender responsibility for our actions to someone else (252–54). He consequently persuades himself that he has greater compassion and love for humanity than Christ.

Dostoevsky was cognizant of the intellectual appeal in Ivan's and the Grand Inquisitor's rejection of God and Christ, and he did not intend to leave these arguments unchallenged, but he could not endorse a strictly logical rebuttal. As Joseph Frank notes in his superb biography of Dostoevsky, the years that the young writer spent in a labor prison camp "proclaimed the feebleness and paltriness of reason when confronted by the crisis situations of human existence" (*Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal* 161). Given his concerns about the limitations of reason, Dostoevsky as an artist felt that he could not use rational, philosophical debate to dispute each of Ivan's intellectual arguments. In a letter written while working on the novel, he notes that he trembled



as he contemplated his answer to the atheistic propositions set forth in the novel. “Will it be answer *enough*? The more so as it is not a direct point for point answer to the propositions previously expressed (in the Grand Inquisitor and earlier), but an oblique one. . . . Again it appears not point by point but so to speak in artistic form. And that is what worries me, that is, will I be understood and will I achieve anything of my aim?” (Matlaw 761–62).

Dostoevsky’s treatment of the theme of loving-kindness in the novel provides at least a portion of his indirect answer to the novel’s fundamental spiritual questions. Although Ivan ostensibly rejects God’s plan because of his love for humanity, he himself finds it difficult to love a concrete human being. He acknowledges to Alyosha, “I never could understand how it’s possible to love one’s neighbors. In my opinion, it is precisely one’s neighbors that one cannot possibly love” (236). Our neighbor, after all, may have a bad smell or a foolish face or have done us some harm, and Ivan therefore asserts, “If we’re to come to love a man, the man himself should stay hidden, because as soon as he shows his face—love vanishes.” Ivan concludes that it is “possible to love one’s neighbor abstractly, and even occasionally from a distance, but hardly ever up close” (237). Unfortunately, his abstract love tragically sentences him to a state of rather solitary alienation.

The Grand Inquisitor similarly acts in the name of love for humankind, but his love diminishes rather than enlarges human nature. He comes to view the vast majority of people as “feeble creatures” and “pitiful children.” He declares that humankind, for whom he has sacrificed so much, “beyond the grave” will “find only death. . . . For even if there were anything in the next world, it would not, of course, be for such as they” (259). He claims that he and his followers “have saved everyone,” but his view of salvation is strictly earthbound. To save us, he deprives us of moral agency and deems us to be strictly material beings devoid of any spiritual existence. Moreover, having been deprived of faith in divine law and immortality, the Grand Inquisitor suspends the

moral law. The ends justify the means, and everything is now permitted to attain his aims. The Grand Inquisitor has no qualms about burning at the stake any person who dares to utter a heretical or opposing word. In his rebellion against the tragedy of abstract humanity’s suffering, he is curiously prone to sanction the suffering of concrete individuals. Ivan and the Grand Inquisitor inhabit a world constructed on a foundation of abstract love for all humanity, but without the animating and vitalizing force of concrete love for individual people, the foundation crumbles, and the rubble reveals a bleak world of isolation, despair, and death.

The teachings of Alyosha’s spiritual mentor, Father Zosima, stand in stark contrast to the Grand Inquisitor’s ideas. Father Zosima teaches

We must strive
through
“active
to
love”
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that
surrounds us.

that we must strive through “active love” to alleviate the suffering that surrounds us. Our capacity to love actively stems at least in part from an idea that Father Zosima imbibed from his elder brother that “each of us is guilty in everything before everyone” (289) and that we must “make [ourselves] responsible for all the sins of men” (320). If we genuinely acknowledge responsibility for other people’s sins, then, according to Father Zosima, we will not attempt by compulsion to correct or rise up indignantly in

self-righteous condemnation. We rather will always be on guard to ensure that our image is “ever gracious” (319) and examine ourselves to discover ways in which we might serve as a greater force for good and righteousness, recognizing that if we have failed to set the proper example, we bear some guilt for others’ failings. As Father Zosima teaches, “If you had shone, your light would have lighted the way for others, and the one who did wickedness would perhaps not have done so in your light (321–22). In his novels, Dostoevsky espouses the idea that we cannot retreat into an insular world of individual righteousness, for we bear responsibility for emanating light through our compassion and loving-kindness toward concrete individuals.

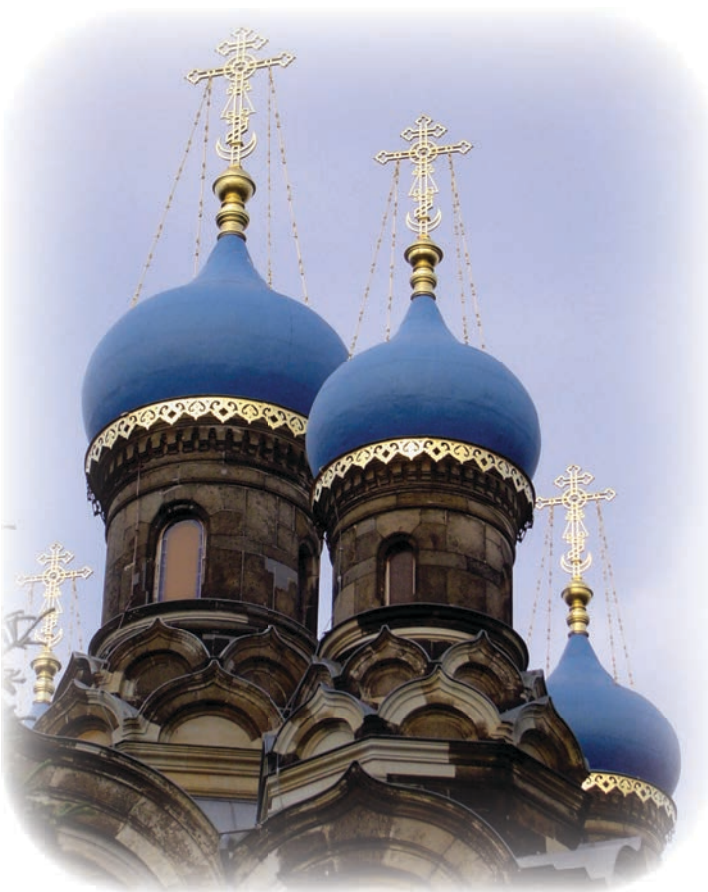
Alyosha, the youngest of the Karamazov brothers, strives genuinely to incorporate into his life the teach

ings of Father Zosima. Whereas Ivan rejects God because of his abstract love for children, Alyosha, through his concrete and active love for individual children, reinforces faith in God and a sense of the divine within individuals. One plot event is particularly illustrative. As Alyosha intervenes in a fight among schoolboys in an attempt to protect the lone classmate who has been taunted and humiliated by the others, this alienated boy, whose name is Ilyusha, lashes out at his would-be protector in a fit of angry despair and painfully hits Alyosha with several rocks. Expecting that his “opponent” will return the attack, Ilyusha is infuriated by Alyosha’s lack of anger and his calm and sympathetic manner. He rushes forward, grabs Alyosha’s hand, and bites his middle finger down to the bone. “Though I don’t know you at all, and it’s the first time I’ve seen you,” Alyosha says to him gently, “it must be that I did something to you—you wouldn’t have hurt me like this for nothing. What was it that I did, and how have I wronged you?” (180)

Rather than condemning this young boy for his brazen violence, Alyosha truly believes that he must bear some responsibility for his insolence and that he should return lovingkindness for enmity. As it turns out, Alyosha’s eldest brother Dmitri had publicly humiliated

the boy’s father and ignored the boy’s crying pleas on his father’s behalf. Rather than seeking revenge, Alyosha accepts responsibility by seeking out the boy’s family and becoming a source of light and comfort to this family that is living in poverty and is weighed down by the challenges of mental and physical illness. As Ilyusha himself becomes gravely ill, Alyosha gathers the other schoolboys and reconciles them with Ilyusha. Their frequent visits to the home bring peace to Ilyusha and some degree of solace to his brokenhearted father. Although Ilyusha dies, Alyosha and the schoolboys use the occasion of his burial to affirm their love for one another, to rejoice in the promise of the resurrection, and to pledge that they always will retain a memory of Ilyusha and how he united them in good and kind feelings.

Through his harrowing depictions of evil and suffering, Dostoevsky fully acknowledges the difficulties and tragedies of the human condition. His characters reflect a wide spectrum of reactions to this condition. Ivan responds with despairing resignation. The Grand Inquisitor takes assertive action, but his compulsory plan negates agency and human spirituality and reveals an ultimately bleak universe in which salvation is swallowed up by death. Through Sonya, Alyosha, and Father Zosima, Dostoevsky demonstrates how lovingkindness, insatiable compassion, and the hope of immortality enable us to act assiduously in alleviating suffering while never trampling on or diminishing the potential for the divine within people. We view ourselves as being responsible for the salvation of all people by preserving within us, as Father Zosima teaches, “the image of Christ, that it may shine forth like a precious diamond to the whole world” (316). For me, therefore, Dostoevsky’s novels, in spite of the scenes of degradation and misery, are ultimately proclamations of light and hope.



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the Emily Dickinson *Lexicon*

The Emily Dickinson Lexicon website has received an Albert J. Colton Fellowship for Projects of National or International Scope from the Utah Humanities Council. The Emily Dickinson Lexicon (EDL) is an online dictionary of nearly 10,000 words and variants found in the 1,789 collected poems of Emily Dickinson. The EDL is an ongoing project conducted by Professor Cynthia Hallen of the Department of Linguistics and English Language. She has mentored hundreds of students on the project as apprentice lexicographers, where they have gained hands-on experience in etymology, grammar, morphology, pragmatics, semantics, syntax, editing, proofreading, and web design.

The Colton Fellowship is named after the late Albert Colton, Salt Lake attorney and Episcopal priest who loved the arts and was a member of the board of the Utah Humanities Council. The award established in his name provides a \$3,500 award to further the work of the selected project. Dr. Hallen is pleased that the project has received this kind of validation.

Central to the project is making available the definitions of Dickinson's words as shown in the 1844 Webster's Dictionary—the edition used by the poet herself. Thus, scholars and others can see what a particular term or idiom probably meant to Dickinson, rather than simply what the term or idiom means today. In addition to definitions, the entries include biographical, historical, cultural, and linguistic commentary.

The guiding principle of the lexicon is description rather than prescription. The lexicon team strives to reveal rather than suppress the semantic potential of Dickinson's words and idioms. Team members work towards clear, complete, and accurate entries without

deliberately favoring or excluding any particular interpretation or critical stance.

Users of the website are students, scholars, translators, and lovers of poetry, and they come, so far, from five continents. One of the primary aims of the lexicon is to facilitate accurate translation of the poems into

many languages, and many users are translators whose first language is not English. The EDL can help them preserve the semantic richness of Dickinson's work in their target languages.

Like most dictionaries and lexicons, the EDL is a collaborative endeavor including many scholars across the world—but not only scholars. The project would not have been possible without the help of students. When the fledgling project was mentioned in a class in 1992, fifteen students spontaneously volunteered to help. Since then, more than 400 students have worked on the project, some as paid research assistants, but most as undergraduate volunteers. Institutional support has come from several units in the College of Humanities, as well as from other campus units.

The lexicon is unfinished, yet is already having an impact on Dickinson scholarship across the globe as more and more scholars access it and cite it in their own research. One such scholar, Dr. Stephanie Tingley of Youngstown State University in Ohio, says, "My students have already begun to make regular use of the EDL, as have I. These tools are extremely important to help us read a poet who paid particular attention to the nuances and layered meanings of words and who was keenly aware of the power of words to heal, to harm, and to inspire."

The lexicon is already
having an impact on
Dickinson scholarship
across the globe

books that made a difference

Georgia Huggins Nichols
Johnstown, Colorado
English, 1968

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne

I have probably read this book more times in my life than any other, except the *Book of Mormon*. With each reading, either by myself or with one of my children who was reading it as a class assignment, I have had different insights into Hester Prynne, depending on the experiences in my own life at that particular occasion. The first times I read it in high school and for a BYU class, I desperately wanted the relationship between Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne to work out to a happily-ever-after ending. Later, after having been married for a few years and knowing firsthand what characteristics a true partner possesses, I silently encouraged Hester to get away from Mister Dimmesdale—she was a strong woman of character and too good for him. He was a wimp! Still later, when my marriage was being tested after the death of our son, I wept with Hester when she begged Arthur to come away with her and

make a new life. More years passed, and I came to see Hester as the embodiment of Christ's example of charity and compassion. She atoned for her sin in the only way that could be a measure of restitution (as Elder Maxwell taught): she served. Hester is my heroine.

Nancy Ann Gauld
Independence, Missouri
English, 1958

Essays of E. B. White by E. B. White

I love E. B. White. Not so much through his books for children, but through his honest, witty, and memorable outlook on life. I've enjoyed the collection of his letters and essays, which reflect his observations over a lifetime of writing for *The New Yorker*. His use of language is enviable, entertaining, thought-provoking, and just plain enjoyable.

book club

The Humanities Alumni Board announces their sponsorship of a college book club. The board hopes through this club to connect alumni to events on the BYU campus, and to other alumni in their area. We plan to select three books a year, and to provide supplemental materials on the Humanities college website to guide both individuals and groups in their reading.

First Democracy: The Challenge of an Ancient Idea by Paul Woodruff is our initial selection. The author spoke to the faculty and staff in the College of Humanities this fall (see accompanying article), and with his permission we have posted his talk and other materials on the college web page.

We hope to promote discussion groups in many regions, and these will be noted on the web site as they develop. Please contact Tom Taylor at taylor745@earthlink.net to host a group.

college book of the year

For the second year, a book was selected and a copy provided for all faculty and staff in the college who were interested in reading it. This year's book is Paul Woodruff's *First Democracy: The Challenge of an Ancient Idea*. The book is a thoughtful consideration of civic life and provides concepts applicable to the work of scholarly research and teaching in the humanities.

Dr. Woodruff is Darrel K. Royal Professor in Ethics and American Society and Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Department of Philosophy, at the University of Texas at Austin. He was invited to campus to speak to the college faculty and others in mid-September and discuss the book.

Readers: For future issues, we would like to hear about a book, or several books, that made a difference for you. Please include your name, your major, year of graduation, and city of residence, with a short write-up about the book's influence on you. Please email SOON to ron_woods@byu.edu

why we choose to *give*

Nancy Knight

I am a fan of the humanities. I learned long ago that the humanities make humans out of people. It is the humanities that help us understand other cultures, the way people live, the way they speak, the way they think, what makes a person great—to name just a few. These are the building blocks in getting along together. Since we are all truly brothers and sisters, there is nothing more important than learning to love each other.

I am glad that my husband, Ken, and I were able to contribute to the Joseph F. Smith building. And I am happy to be able to continue to help the humanities programs prosper at Brigham Young University. There is a great need, and I feel that helping students become immersed in areas of the humanities is helping them understand and care about other people.



how I have been *blessed*

Nettie Kero, linguistics major



I would like to say how grateful I am for those who contribute to the College of Humanities! Everything you have done to assist students in study abroad experiences is well worth the effort. I am speaking firsthand, as I just returned home from study abroad in Guadalajara, Mexico.

I love languages and have aspirations to be an interpreter fluent in at least five languages. There was great value to me in going to another country and completely immersing myself in its language. What joy I felt when I realized I could finally carry on a real conversation with my host family, or when I realized that I was constantly thinking in Spanish, or the time that I first dreamed in

Spanish. These moments were priceless.

What a blessing it was to travel abroad specifically through BYU and to be connected with the Church while there. Not only did our coordinator have numerous cultural experiences planned for us, but our connection with the Church gave us the chance to interact with many native speakers. I'm so grateful for this experience. I have been blessed by the generosity of donors, and I know that others in the future will be, too.

Those who donate to the **Humanities Annual Fund** make it possible for the college to provide students with study abroad, mentored learning, and other education-enhancing experiences. For more information, please contact Carol Kounanis, LDS Philanthropies at BYU, 801-422-8294, cek@byu.edu, or visit our website at byu.edu/giving/humanities.

Humanities at BYU is the alumni newsletter of the College of Humanities.

feedback?

We'd be glad to hear from you with your views, memories of campus experiences, or an update on your life since leaving BYU. Please e-mail ron_woods@byu.edu.

**The sun
makes unique
patterns in
the halls of
the JFSB**

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