MALS Quarterly

COMBINED VOICES OF CURRENT STUDENTS AND ALUMNI
SUMMER 2006
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Special thanks to all our contributors for their patience, effort, creativity, and, most importantly, their time.

Meghan Julian  
M ALS Quarterly Editor

Cover: Noiz, by Jennifer Kocsmiersky ‘06, 2006 (watercolor, marker, charcoal, graphite, collaged cut-out on paper)
Deborah Scranton is, like many of us, a MALS student on the general studies track. But she is known beyond our own small world of Dartmouth as a documentarian whose most recent project, The War Tapes, won “Best Documentary Feature” at the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival in New York City, and “Best International Documentary” at the Brit-Doc Film Festival in England.

What drew you to the Upper Valley?
My family has lived in Goshen, NH (which is 45 minutes south of Hanover) since the 1700s. After living in New York City off and on for 12 years and living in Europe for 2, I moved back to my family's farm with my son Benjamin in 2003.

What is your academic/professional background?
I went to Brown University and majored in Semiotics and minored in Classics. I also did 2 1/2 years at RISD (Rhode Island School of Design) in photography. Once out of school, I moved to New York and started my career in journalism, freelancing for ESPN, CBS Sports, ABC Sports, MTV Networks, USA Networks, and The Outdoor Life Network, covering a variety of world-renowned events including the Tour de France, Winter Olympics, Davis Cup, U.S. Open Tennis, and Alpine World Cup Skiing. My first film was on the WW II veterans from Goshen, Stories from Silence, Witness to War, which aired locally on PBS stations.

What drew you to apply to the MALS program?
When I was working on Stories from Silence, Witness to War, I realized that I might at some point want to teach at the college or university level and having a Master's Degree seemed like it might be a good idea. I see the MALS program specifically as a wonderful opportunity to be back in an academic setting that challenges and encourages alternate interpretive frameworks to looking at life and art.

The MALS program...challenges and encourages alternate interpretive frameworks to looking at life and art.

Have you been particularly struck by any of the courses you have thus far taken? Absolutely - Tom Powers' course in nonfiction writing really challenged me to write concisely and with evocative power. In Screenwriting, taught by Bill Philips, I gained wonderful, wonderful "real-life" wisdom and experience. I found Bill to be invaluable in helping me think about story structure and character arcs in my work. And the Frommers' Oral History class - because I love the genre of real people telling their own stories. Phyllis Katz, Classics - because I think these are the foundations of all stories.

What was the Tribeca Film Festival like?
What have responses been in wider screenings?
The world premiere of The War Tapes was at the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival in April 2006. It was an incredible experience. The five soldiers who filmed the whole year, Zack Bazzi, Mike Moriarty, Steve Pink, Duncan Domey, and Brandon Wilkins, were there with the entire production team. Ken Burns presented the prize at the Awards Dinner, which was of particular significance for me. As I stepped onto the stage after he had an-
nounced The War Tapes as the “Best Documentary Feature,” he said (just loud enough for me to hear him) “Live Free or Die.” I started laughing, which was perfect.

We’ve had an incredibly overwhelmingly positive response to the film – multiple standing ovations, rave reviews. It’s just been wonderful. The War Tapes recently also won “Best International Documentary” at the BritDoc Film Festival in England, which was quite an honor also.

Do you have any new documentaries in motion? Do you think you’ll turn your hand to other types of film?

I love telling stories through the eyes of the people who live it and am open to all genres – whatever works to best tell the story. Right now I’m in pre-production on a new project using the same hybrid “integrative filming” production model as on The War Tapes.

If there was one piece of advice you could pass along to incoming and current MALS students, what would it be? Follow your interests, don’t be afraid to try new things and lobby hard for an independent study that you might want to do.

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Reprint of Deborah Scranton’s Director’s Statement for The War Tapes

We all have pivotal defining moments in our lives. For me, one of those was stumbling across James Agee’s and Walker Evan’s Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.

Agee’s philosophy of "living journalism," of getting close enough to hurt, of investing to the core of your being in the lives of those you are documenting, became my mantra. To get their stories, you have to give of yourself – confront the wall of “objectivity” and smash through it. It’s about being human first, a journalist and filmmaker second. And it is only when we are a human being first that we approach truth.

February 12, 2004, I got an offer from the New Hampshire National Guard to embed as a filmmaker. I called the public affairs officer and asked if I could give cameras to the soldiers instead? He said yes... but it would be up to me to get soldiers to volunteer to work with the project.

Less than two weeks later I was on a plane down to Fort Dix, NJ. I stepped out in front of those 180 men and told them of my vision. I was met with a hailstorm of questions.

Are you for the war, Are you against the war, What are your politics, How are you going to take and twist our words, Why do you want us to film, Why should we believe you... .

At the heart of their questions was - why should we trust you with our experiences? My reply was, we would do this together. We would tell the story, their story, wherever it took us, no matter what. Ten soldiers volunteered – five soldiers, Zack Bazzi, Mike Moriarty, Steve Pink, Duncan Domey, and Brandon Wilkins, would end up filming the entire year.

Each was given a one chip Sony high-end consumer grade camera, tripod, microphone, various lenses, and piles of blank tape, as well as my instant message handle. The tapes on average took two weeks to get from Iraq to New Hampshire. In the meantime, the soldiers uploaded Quicktime files of scenes, explosions, and ambushes. We chatted on IM about what had happened, together refining how best to tell the story. The experience was a mesh of interplays of present, future, perspective, and reverberating memories. We filmed events in real time. We conducted interviews 24 hours later. These interviews were followed by more interviews months after incidents. This became a mutual journey.

I believe the power of film, image, and sound, lies in its ability to evoke empathy. If war negates humanity, then film – maybe especially film that shows war from the inside – can ensure that even when we fight, we hold on to and bear witness to our humanity. We found a way in this film to smash through that wall. We found the possibility of empathy in the middle of war.

Goshen, New Hampshire March 2006
Kate Benson graduated from Princeton in 2003 with a degree in English and creative writing. She spent a year working in educational policy before leaving the world of government research to become a teacher herself. She has spent the past two years teaching in boarding schools in Massachusetts and will return to the English department at Andover this fall. Kate’s first novel was published by Harcourt last October, and she’s hoping to find inspiration in the MALS program to begin her second. She also looks forward to exploring other interests in the fields of cultural studies, trauma literature, and psychology.

Edgar Blatchford received his B.A. from Alaska Methodist University, his J.D. from the University of Washington School of Law, and an M.S. from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. He is an Alaska Native who has served several times as chairman of the board of Chugach Alaska Corporation, an Alaska Native regional corporation. He is the former mayor of the City of Seward (Alaska) and has served in the cabinet of two Alaska governors. He has also been an associate professor of journalism and public communications at the University of Alaska, Anchorage.

Jordan Burke is a 2004 graduate of Colby College. Following graduation she spent a year teaching middle school social studies and physical education at a project-based, teacher-led charter school for at-risk students in Minden, Nevada. Currently, she teaches 7th grade social studies and coaches track at Haverhill Cooperative Middle School in North Haverhill, New Hampshire. She is a James Madison Senior Fellow. Jordan is an avid runner and cyclist and enjoys outdoor sports, especially telemark skiing. At Dartmouth she looks forward to studying issues related to Educational Policy and American History.

Aaron Hanlon graduated from Bucknell University with B.A.s in political science and legal studies (2004) and an M.A. in English (2006). A bohemian-iconoclast hybrid, Aaron is interested in literary and cultural theory, hermeneutics, linguistics, and knowledge production. He is claustrophobic, and looks upon both closed spaces and strict disciplinary boundaries with commensurate fear and contempt. That said, Aaron is delighted to postpone doctoral study to satiate and investigate his multidisciplinary passions in the MALS program at Dartmouth. Aaron is a dilettante in the arts of poetry, soccer, and psychoanalysis, and a proud alumnus of the Bucknell track and field team.

Born and raised on the Texas-Mexico border Delia Flores is a graduate of Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism where she also taught both graduate and undergraduate courses. She worked as a reporter for papers in-
Stephanie Hauck is a California native who holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Rutgers University in Evolutionary Anthropology. Stephanie has traveled extensively in East Africa and Europe and was named a U.S. Fulbright Scholar in 2003-2004 to study Anthropology in Tanzania. After completing her tour of duty as a Fulbright scholar, she briefly taught high school biology at a private Shiite Muslim school in Tanzania and in 2005 founded and directed Kitumusote, a Tanzanian non-profit organization that works with marginalized Maasai communities on the issues of women's empowerment and environmental conservation. She entered the MALS program hoping to develop her critical intellect and theoretical shrewdness. She plans on concentrating in Globalization studies and to study the interplay between ecology and economics. Her true passions lie in art, culture, and travel and she hopes to see all seven continents before the age of 30. She wants to become a permanent East Coast transplant and get her Ph.D. in Evolutionary Biology after completing the MALS program.

Before that, he taught in the history department at Groton School. At Andover, he coaches football, hockey and baseball, and also acts as a house counselor in a dormitory of forty boys. Matt is a local boy, having grown up in Bedford, New Hampshire. His academic interests lie in the Constitutional framing and Jacksonian periods of American history. He is a graduate of both Bowdoin College and Groton School. He's excited to be learning in the classroom again and looks forward to incorporating his summer's course work into his classes this fall. Matt has particularly enjoyed his course work in Professor Chris Schmidt's Constitutional History of the United States. "I've really enjoyed the perspective we've given to the dynamic between law and society in Constitutional History with Professor Schmidt. We've looked very closely at how the Constitution has changed and evolved with respect to American culture. The interaction of history and Constitutional development is very exciting."

Cynthia Hill graduated with a B.S. from Dickinson College in Biology and Spanish in 1999, and in the years following worked in research laboratories at the Yale University and Boston University Schools of Medicine. She then earned her M.S. in Exercise Science at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where her research focused on the biochemistry of muscle cells in vitro. She now teaches courses in Biology, coaches crew and swimming, and is a house adviser at Choate Rosemary Hall during the academic year. Her research interests lie within the fields of the History of Science and Medicine, architecture, and literature.

Anne Hyde is originally from St. Paul, MN, and she graduated from Lawrence University (English and Psychology) in Wisconsin in 2004. She stayed in America's Dairyland and worked for Beloit College as an Area Hall Director/Volunteer Center Director for two years. She'd like to return to Student Affairs after graduating from MALS, and plans to study something like English or writing here. She has a twin sister and really wants a dog (not to replace the sister, just in addition). She likes to eat, bake, bead, and make inappropriate jokes. She dislikes exercising, tripping while walking, and when people take handfuls of mints instead of just one. Also, the third person - she really dislikes talking in the third person. She thinks it's because she had a music teacher in third grade who did it all the time.

A Canadian import with a great big love of Vermont, Diana Lawrence works as director of communications in the Dartmouth Office of Alumni Relations and commutes every day for an hour along I-91, when she tries to think up new ways to deliver old messages. The call of the classroom was just too strong for this English major, master gardener, human
social calendar, laundry expert, and chick lit addict. Two kids, marriage, full time job, bad hair - nothing can stand in the way of a girl and a good discussion. So it's back to school on a part-time basis for the chance to work with those legendary Dartmouth professors. Let the juggling begin.

Chrissy Kirkmire Mazzola graduated from Dartmouth in 1990 and ever since has been dying to get back to Hanover to pursue a MALS degree. Chrissy has worked at The Thacher School in Ojai, CA, for 15 years as a French teacher, Dean of Students, and currently serves as the Associate Director of Admission. Her husband Rich (also Dartmouth Class of 1990) and she live on campus at Thacher with their two children, Madeleine and JJ. Chrissy plans on pursuing the Cultural Studies track in the MALS program.

Kristin McAdams has lived in MA, NH, NJ, IN, NY, PA, TX, MN, CA, and WA State at various points in her life. She received her B.S. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Notre Dame in 1991 and her M.B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin in 1998. She has been a computer programmer and IT project manager for the past 15 years, most recently spending 4 years at Notre Dame working in the Graduate School. While working at ND, Kristin took several classes in Psychology, Theology, and Arabic. These classes uncovered her previously hidden interest in the Humanities and Social Sciences and led her to the Dartmouth MALS program.

Timothy McNamara is a native of Lebanon, NH, where his family goes back to the 1850s; he grew up here, went to school here, and never really left. He received an AB in Geography/Environmental Studies from Dartmouth College in 1978 and an M.S. in Resource Management and Administration from Antioch New England Graduate School in 1983. He is presently employed as Associate Director of Real Estate for Dartmouth College, where he is responsible for design, permitting, and construction of housing for faculty, staff, and graduate students.

Prior to that, he was a land use planning and environmental consultant in private practice for 16 years. He also recently retired from the U.S. Navy Reserve with the rank of Commander after 21 years of service. His hobbies include hiking and kayaking, and he has climbed 39 of the 48 New Hampshire peaks over 4,000 feet. He hopes to finish the remaining 9 within the next year.

Christianna Morley graduated in 2000 from Villanova University with a B.S. in Comprehensive Science and Minors in Biology and Peace and Justice Studies. For the past six years she has taught science (Biology, Anatomy and Physiology, and Chemistry) in North Carolina’s public school system and summered as a tech in a plant physiology lab at Wake Forest University. She, her husband, Ben, and dog, Mia, love being outside and are very excited about their move to the Upper Valley. Chrissy hopes the MALS program will provide her with the opportunity to continue learning about her passions: Environmental Science, Biology and Education and thus make her a more capable participant in these fields. In the future, she intends to have a role in public policy and feels honored to be here at Dartmouth with such an exceptional group of people as she works toward that goal.

Abigail Russell comes to Dartmouth as a Spanish teacher at a public high school in Goshen, NY. She grew up in Shelbina, MO, then attended Grove City College (PA), from where she graduated in 2005 with a B.A. degree in Spanish. Abigail is
Despite the MALS program’s description of its summer symposium as the “highlight of the summer term,” the traditional attitude towards the required lecture series among students has been to just get it over with – preferably as quickly and painlessly as possible. Upon first glance, that would seem like a surprising reaction. With the provoking titles of past symposia, including “Race Matters” in 2003, “Ideologies of Terrorism” in 2004, and “Return of the Sacred: Fundamentalism and Politics,” one would think that MALS students would, as mature intellectuals, be chomping at the bit to participate. However, that has not been the case. Perhaps the hot, sticky weather of Hanover has crept into the pores of the MALS student body, slowing their otherwise sharp minds to a sloth-like pace as July and August have slid lazily by. Possibly, but sunny days aside, the typical MALS student is a far cry from a hungover undergrad, trying to blow through his summer term on 101 classes designed to pose the least amount of disruption from his otherwise enjoyable summer at Camp Dartmouth. Add to that the fact that summer term marks the start of the program for many newly minted MALS students, plenty of whom are eager to get a running start on their Dartmouth careers. So what is to account for this lack of enthusiasm? Perhaps it is time to take a look at the symposium structure itself.

In the past, the MALS summer symposium has consisted of a series of weekly lectures surrounding that year’s theme, made by resident scholars or guest speakers. The symposium substitute, called the Future’s Institute, is even more intimate and ultimately baffling. Cramming a summer’s worth of lectures into two weeks’ time, the sheer drudgery of sitting in a lecture hall for, on some days, up to fourteen hours, is alone enough to send students running for the hills. But on top of that, the institute isn’t really made for MALS students; rather, they are merely sitting in as guests to a conference in which academics from around the world read their very complex papers on very niche – and often seemingly irrelevant – topics. Not only does this make the students feel even more marginalized than in a normal symposium, but the language used by these scholars is so lofty (often unnecessarily so), that many students, including myself, find that the only way to keep up is with a dictionary. Although told I should be honored to be attending such a prestigious seminar, I often found myself too busy feeling lost, confused, bored, and ultimately frustrated to be grateful. Granted, MALS students do volunteer to replace a symposium with Future’s Institute, but those who are attending the Oxford Program, or who need to, for whatever reason, finish both symposia requirements in one term, are forced to submit it. However, rather than being enlightened by the experience, I merely felt angered by the fact that, other than fulfilling a graduation requirement, I’d wasted my time.

Clearly, the MALS summer symposia offerings are in dire need of an overhaul, and this year, program chair Donald Pease and director Lauren Clarke have begun to make some changes. 2006’s symposium, entitled “Examining American Exceptionalism,” has been restructured to make it more student-based, and somewhat more user-friendly. This summer, Pease and Clarke decided to do...
away with the lecture-based format, and dedicate the entire session to discussion. Now, students are assigned weekly readings on Blackboard, and are asked to pose pertinent discussion questions on the internet forum prior to the class meeting. Then, during the symposium session, Pease and Professor of History, Ronald Edsforth, along with groups of MALS students, lead discussion amongst the the rest of the symposium attendees. The result has been a much livelier discussion, and, since the reactions of students to the readings dictate the flow of the conversation, a much greater flexibility in subject matter. With this new forum, I finally see a glimmer of that all-important dialogue emerging. Rather than being simply talked at, the students are able to talk back. Rather than being completely sidelined, summer symposium has made students the focus.

However, despite these improvements, there remains much to be done. The problem with completely free-flowing discussion has been that it tends to revolve in circles. As the summer has worn on, the readings continue to come back to the same thing again and again – America as Exception – and without some direction, there's only so much to be said about a topic which most MALS students only have a basic understanding of. Rather than deepening our knowledge of the subject, we are only talking about what we already know with little guidance. Just when something seems to be gaining momentum, one of the participants kills it by switching gears, often at random. Perhaps more of a balance needs to be struck between lecture and discussion, where students are both asked to examine and made to understand.

But the real problem lies deeper than simple formatting issues. In reality, the entire concept of symposium seems to be fundamentally flawed. In my own experience, what has frustrated students most about symposium is the lack of focus on current global events. The issues dealt with in the summer series, whether those of race, terrorism, or exceptionalism, are hot button enough to easily tie-in with current newspaper headlines. As such, MALS students are practically jumping out of their seats to debate them. However, rather than tapping into this interest, symposium directly discourages students from looking at these issues with anything other than a historical perspective. Why? Instead of focusing solely on historical basis and readings, why can't symposium be used as a forum for practical discussion? For example, following North Korea's failed missile tests, there were several murmurs from MALS students in symposium, wishing that the class time could be used to discuss this latest international development, rather than rehash American Exceptionalism once again. The event wasn't even mentioned. By choosing to ignore the issue, symposium missed a golden opportunity to allow MALS students to turn a critical eye on the current state of the world. It just made me again realize how, too often, academia restricts itself to its collegiate bubbles and halls of books, and forgets to acknowledge the living organism which is today's society. To say symposium does this would be unfair; however, the potential for debate among MALS students and faculty about current events is too great to, in my opinion, be overlooked. At the very least, it would give students the sense that they are participating in something relevant to their liberal arts education, rather than simply forced into it as just another graduation requirement. Perhaps, instead of asking what is wrong with summer symposium, the MALS program should be asking, what could make it right?

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The result has been a much livelier discussion, and, since the reactions of students to the readings dictate the flow of the conversation, a much greater flexibility in subject matter.

Tigers, Black-eyed Susans and Fuchsias... Oh, My!

In a variegated country landscape, Much is going on...

At that edge of the woods, See that tiger lily, spicy And stylish in its assertive orange. Such ebullience sings a song that Exuberantly proclaims: "Here I am. Glad you are."

Over there, Eye witness those wilting, Battered, black-eyed Susans, left in a ditch. Their parched throats are dry. Bulbs burnt out. Then torrential rains drench The poor waifs. Then, thirst quenched, The blooms revive.

Down the road, Potted, unpretentious fuchsias, Are having a ball. Quel joie de vivre! "Go with the flow! Come dance with me."

Such goings on...

By Nancy Silliman '96
I'm going my independent study this summer with Myrna Frommer, and I'd love to be able to do an oral history piece for my thesis requirement.

What drew you to the Upper Valley? Family in the area, a job prospect, the MALS program?

My husband and I were living in Cranston, RI, a suburb of Providence. His job was going nowhere fast and the crime rate was increasing so we moved to New Hampshire, where we'd heard a radio news report that the "biggest drug bust ever" had netted marijuana with a total street value of $1200. That was in 1977.

My husband's position was such that he could actually lay himself off, and Rhode Island law said that it was a wife's duty to accompany her husband if he had to move out of state to seek employment, so we packed up everything and moved to Claremont financed only by unemployment benefits from the State of Rhode Island.

We were confident making this move since we'd been trying for five years to have a baby and figured it just wasn't going to happen. Two months after our move to NH, one week after I found a job, we found out I was pregnant. I think it's something in the water up here - or it could have been all those Days of Our Lives episodes we watched as we waited for calls back on job interviews. About a month later my husband found his job. It was a very exciting time for us. We were completely on our own. No family nearby, and we'd yet to make any close friends. Up here it takes time to make close friends.

I'm going my independent study this summer with Myrna Frommer, and I'd love to be able to do an oral history piece for my thesis requirement.

Where are you originally from?

I'm originally from North Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Dartmouth is in my blood.

What drew you to the Upper Valley? Family in the area, a job prospect, the MALS program?

My husband and I were living in Cranston, RI, a suburb of Providence. His job was going nowhere fast and the crime rate was increasing so we moved to New Hampshire, where we'd heard a radio news report that the "biggest drug bust ever" had netted marijuana with a total street value of $1200. That was in 1977.

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What is your academic/professional background?

After I graduated from Dartmouth High School, the last thing I wanted was four more years of classroom lectures. So, I spent nine months getting a super-secretarial certificate from Katharine Gibbs School in Providence, RI. After I got married, the company I worked for paid 75% of my tuition to go to Bryant College, where I got an Associate Degree in Business Administration summa cum laude. I loved the management courses, especially industrial psychology. Before we left Rhode Island, I'd been working as a department manager at United Way of Southeastern New England. At UWSNE we prided ourselves that 90% of every dollar contributed went directly to the agencies. That remaining ten cents meant that staff were underpaid and overworked to the max. Just the stuff that extreme job satisfaction comes from.

When we moved to Hanover, I got my job at Dartmouth working for President Emeritus David McLaughlin for one year while he tied up his loose ends after resigning from the presidency. When he left, I transferred to the Medical School Dean's office and worked for Dean Bob McCollum for two years, until he retired from the deanship. By that time I was taking Dartmouth classes as a community student toward a baccalaureate degree. During the rest of my undergraduate years (seven of them), I was the senior administrative staff supervisor in Chemistry. I got my A.B. magna cum laude from Dartmouth in 1995, and in 1998 came to Biochemistry as department manager. I love this job and will probably be here until I retire — although I'm really loving oral history and may take that up as a sideline.

What drew you to apply to the MALS program?

I'm a lifelong learner. I love the stimulation of an academic environment, and I love Dartmouth. The MALS program is perfect for me. I can take courses that interest me and learn about things I never could have imagined. I love the flexibility and the ability to meet the most amazing students who I know will go on to do great things.

Which concentration are you pursuing? What motivated you to choose it?

I couldn't choose, so I'm still in the Liberal Studies track. Though my spring 2006 course with the Frommers really sparked my interest in oral history. I'm doing my independent study this summer with Myrna Frommer, and I'd love to be able to do an oral history piece for my thesis requirement.

Do you see the MALS degree as a stepping stone to a further degree program, or more as a personal goal to be achieved, to enhance your educational experiences?

At my age, MALS is probably going to be the last degree I have time for. It took me 7 years to finish the undergraduate degree and it'll be at least 4 years for MALS. Plus, I need to work full-time, and I don't know of any part-time Dartmouth Ph.D. programs.

Have you been particularly struck by any of the courses you have thus far taken? By any of the professors you have worked with?

I've loved SO many of my Dartmouth courses. As an undergrad, I pretty much majored in Andrew Garrod. I took every course he offered back then as we share a strong interest in adolescent de-
velopment. In MALS, my favorite courses have been the Oral History course with Myrna and Harvey Frommer and the two taught by Priscilla Sears - the first teamed with Mara Sabinson and the second with Dorothy Wallace.

Has being enrolled in the MALS program affected your day-to-day experiences? Oh yes. Graduate study is more in-depth than undergrad, and although I’ve had my challenges with the research papers, I prefer them to mid-term and final exams. Being a full-time employee, I am forced to use good time management to get everything done. I’m the Queen of Multi-tasking.

How did you come up with your independent study idea? Whom are you interviewing? Has any part of the oral history experience particularly stuck with you? My nine-year-old granddaughter now splits her time between our home and her mother’s. My daughter was only eighteen when Shiloh was born, and my husband and I raised Shiloh for about three years while her mother focused on learning to take care of herself as an adult and then how to be a good parent to her child. Now we share Shiloh, and it’s absolutely wonderful. My daughter is a wonderful mother and we are a very strong extended family. Myrna has been very supportive of my oral history project about the lives of grandmothers who step up to raise their grandchildren. By talking with other grandmothers, I have gained a lot of insight into some of my own experiences as a parenting grandmother. Myrna is also wonderful to talk to about what I should include and not include to make the oral history the best it can be.

Now whenever I get into a conversation with someone I’m tempted to whip out my little tape recorder so I can get it down. I’ve learned that I’m not a very good listener the first time through. I thoroughly enjoy listening to the tapes and hearing things I don’t remember from the initial discussion. It’s all new. Can you tell I’m getting old?

Do you plan on staying in the area after graduation? Most definitely. This is our home.

If there was one piece of advice you could pass along to incoming and current MALS students, what would it be? Make a point of talking with the other students as much as possible and get their comments on courses and professors you think might interest you. Some courses are much more interesting than their descriptions in the syllabus. Also, since faculty presentations at town meeting happen AFTER you’re enrolled, that’s too late to decide which courses and faculty are the best match for you.

If you are interested in writing an article about a current or upcoming MALS event, a news piece, a book review, or a student/faculty/alumni profile piece, please blitz your ideas to Mals.Quarterly@dartmouth.edu.

The Quarterly also welcomes all original submissions of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and artwork from current MALS students and Alumni.

**Student Notes**

This summer, **Dave Norman** has covered two world-record setting sporting events for various national magazines, travelled extensively across the east and midwest playing paintball, and had more than a dozen articles published between various newspapers and magazines. As his creative writing MALS thesis winds down, he looks forward to moving to California for photo journalism school in a town about as far away from MALS as he can possibly move without falling into the ocean.

**Kevin Ramos-Glew** and his wife are expecting their first child in early October, while he works on his Independent Study with Dr. Harvey Frommer. In other news, as Director of International Programs at Kimball Union Academy, he is currently developing an ESL Summer Institute for July ’07 – so MALS linguists: think about working there part time next summer!

**Ron Schildge** married Story Parker on July 29th in Stowe, Vermont.

In July, **Karen Liot** welcomed a baby girl, Zoe.

Since being on Campus last summer it has been a crazy year for **Sarah Giarraputo-Fischer**. She got married in March to Owyn Fischer in New Orleans, where she is from, despite Katrina’s aftermath and its effect on her family. While employed at the Harvey School in Katonah, NY, she implemented the Harvey School Adoption Committee, which raised $10,500 for the Samuel J. Green Charter School in New Orleans. She quit her job so this fall she and her husband can come to Dartmouth so she can finish her MALS degree and commit herself to raising money for the Gulf Coast full time. She hopes to have an event at Dartmouth this spring to raise money and would love anyone interested in helping to contact her.

**Monique Roy** was recently hired as a Community Director in the Office of Residential Life at Dartmouth.
Operatic singing characterized by a brilliant display of vocal ability is the definition of canto, and it is the bel canto, the beautiful soprano voice of acclaimed operatic singer Roxanne Coss, a lead character in Ann Patchett’s Bel Canto (Harper Collins, 2001) that is central to this passionate story about the blending of music and love. When terrorists take over a black tie cocktail party it seems likely that killing, brutality, and violence will follow, but the beauty of Patchett’s story lies in the originality of the circumstances that follow.

Ms. Coss is the star entertainment at the elegant birthday party in honor of Mr. Hosokawa, founder and owner of Nansei, the largest electronics corporation in Japan, taking place at the home of Ruben Iglesias, the Vice President of a country which is never named, but instead described as having a poor economy that relies on the farming of coca leaves and black-hearted poppies, and the trafficking of cocaine and heroin. In fact, the idea for the party is motivated by the desires of the country’s VIPs to woo the Japanese businessman into building a local factory, an achievement that would greatly help the country in many ways.

Deeply affected by opera since his father took him to see Rigoletto as a young boy; Mr. Hosokawa has been in love with opera ever since. The music and singing affected him so deeply that first time, he could not help but reach out for his father’s hand during the duet in the second act. “He had no idea what they were saying... he only knew that he needed to hold to something.” Opera led him to believe, “… true life was something that was stored in music,” therefore becoming his life’s passion. Above all, he loved the magnificent voice of Roxanne Coss. No one else knows she is the sole reason he attends the party or that he has no intention to build a plant in the party throwers’ country.

Mesmerized by Ms. Coss’ singing voice, the guests hardly notice when the lights go out, the first sign that the elegant party has been stormed by several masked, gun-wielding men. To the terrorists’ surprise, President Masudo, who they planned to kidnap, is not at the party. Forced into an unexpected situation, instead, they take hostage all of the guests at the party, demanding what they will never get, that the president be brought to them.

After this swiftly elapsed introduction, the story focuses on what happens during the several months that it turns out the terrorists and hostages are forced into confinement together. Early on, one of the generals in command of the terrorists decides to release the servants, a priest, and all of the women, except one. He insists that the singer stay. Not long afterwards, the generals order the outside negotiator, Messner, to deliver a box of sheet music so she can continue to sing. As the houseful of some fifty people try to create an existence for themselves in this most unusual of settings, what results is a fascinating and engaging dynamic revolving around the junctions of people, place, and time.

The present moment becomes all that can be appreciated by the hostages, who have no expectation how long they will remain captive, and the terrorists alike, who are unwilling to give up their mission. Neither the past nor the present matters, except for perhaps a passing memory of a wife or husband, or children or jobs, who exist somewhere in the outside world frozen in time. Together the group readily conforms to living in the moment. The barriers dividing hostage and terrorist blur and then disappear as emotional bonds develop, friendships form, and romance takes flight. With only the moment to truly live, passion and love flourish, aided by the hypnotic trance of Roxanne Coss’ bel canto.

Patchett’s scenes in the Vice President’s mansion are as vivid as any seen on an operatic stage. It is impossible not to imagine the book as a live play or a film. In the living room Ms. Coss performs her daily rehearsals and performances by the Steinway. At night, the hostages, in their tuxedoes and gowns, sleep on the living room floor, while the guards ordered to watch them, fall asleep, too, their guns falling from their loose grips. In the kitchen, one of the French guests assists in meal preparation under the lazy watch of a guard who allows him to use a butcher’s knife to cut up a delivery of chickens. The upstairs bedroom, where only the diva, Ms. Coss, is allowed to sleep, becomes the scene for her love affair with Mr. Hosokawa. When terrorists further relax their guard, the backyard becomes a place where the hostages team up in games of soccer against the terrorists, while the generals root from the sidelines, as the Vice President prunes the gardens overgrown from months of neglect.

The romance of Ms. Coss and Mr. Hosokawa is not the only one to bloom under the spell of freedom to live in the moment. Everyone is in love with the opera star and her music. It is difficult to separate the two. Her voice enchants a list of characters, each developed with depth and sensitivity, from the Russian guest Victor Fyodorov to Cesar, one of the young male invaders in whom she discovers a gift to sing and who thereafter becomes her pupil. Mr. Hosokawa’s translator, the talented Gen, an expert in

(True Life continued on page 23)
Ministry: An Interview with Suzanne Semmes ’98
By Meghan Julian

What drew you to the Upper Valley?
My husband had attended Middlebury College and wanted to return to Vermont. He found an Upper Valley job, so we moved here in 1981 from London via Connecticut.

What is your academic/professional background?
I received a bachelor of arts degree from Kirkland College, worked nine years in London, England, as a Book Production Manager in publishing companies, then was a parent to two children at home for seven years. I worked at Dartmouth as a Library Specialist, writing tutor, and teaching assistant for 13 years, during which time I completed the M.A.L.S. degree. Now I am a candidate for the Unitarian Universalist ministry, and anticipate receiving my Master’s in Divinity in May 2007.

What drew you to apply to the MALS program?
Several friends had completed the program, and I was drawn to the opportunities to study subjects I hadn’t been able to study when I did my undergraduate degree, e.g., studio art, gender studies, and writing. I appreciated the flexible nature of the program, that one could go full-time, part-time, or, in my case, one course at a time. I was thus able to study, work, and care for the household simultaneously.

What was your thesis topic?
My thesis was a series of autobiographical fiction stories entitled “Serious Daring.” Ernest Hebert was my advisor. So many of the books I’d admired were of this genre; I wanted to try my hand at a sustained writing project. I learned, however, that the solitude of “being a writer” was too much at odds with my personality, which tends to extroversion.

Has your thesis played into the career you have chosen post-degree?
Not in a direct way, but all my work as a chaplain involves people’s life stories: what they are, how they are told, what their meaning is.

Did you originally see the MALS degree as a stepping stone to a your next degree program?
At first I thought it might be, but I then realized the study was 1) a continuation of my liberal education, and 2) a discernment process about what my next career move might be.

How and when did you decide to pursue the ministry?
I first wanted to be a minister when I was a child. But women were not ministers in my church (formerly Episcopal) until the 1970s, so I pursued other work.

When the world changed, and my call to ministry re-asserted itself, I worked as a volunteer minister for four years in the 1990s, and finally, when both our children finished high school, I felt free to follow that call. It was necessary to leave the state to attend seminary. I decided to go to California because I had always wanted to try living there, and one of my children already did; I am very glad of the choice I made. The place I study, the Graduate Theological Union, is a consortium of nine seminaries of various denominations, and draws students from all over the world. I feel very fortunate to be able to study among such a diverse group.

What has it been like?
The social milieu of the Graduate Theological Union and the Bay Area is just wonderful. I have breakfast with a nun from Kenya, a Protestant from San Francisco, a Jewish person from West Virginia who used to be a Byzantine Christian, and a Presbyterian from Beijing. In my work, I have ministered to people of at least twenty other national and religious backgrounds. My particular class at seminary included both genders, people from 23 to 64, and people of all sexual orientations (GLBT).

In class, the academics are very challenging and inspiring. When we began our studies, those who advised us said, “If there is anything else you can do, do that instead of ministry. It is lonely, expensive to train, not well-paid, and very, very difficult.” But I had tried two other careers, and this one felt like the right fit for me at this point in my life. The wide roads had narrowed to this one, and now I walk along it.

How did being a part of MALS help you?
Because I did it on the “eternity plan,” over six years, MALS allowed me the time and the academic support to really explore what I might study next. Obtaining the MALS degree proved to me that I was capable of graduate work while working and managing a household.

What has been the benefit of the degree?
When I lived in the Upper Valley, this was not clear to me. But having the degree has opened some doors for me in the West, where an M.A. is respected.

Alumni, please verify your information with the Dartmouth Alumni Office:

http://alumni.dartmouth.edu/
especially one from an elite East-Coast college. Because of the degree, my supervisors here have no hesitation in offering me opportunities to teach in university, hospital, and church settings. The people I teach range from homeless women veterans to wealthy, retired male Ph.D.s in physics, and those in between. But more than this, having the degree affirmed my joy in learning, and enhanced my confidence in my own abilities.

Were you particularly struck by any of the courses you took? “Religion, Gender, and the Contemporary Feminine Voice,” taught by Professors Nancy Jay Crumbine and Priscilla Sears was the most mind-expanding course I have ever taken, and taking it paved the way for my later study of theology. “Art and Literature of the American West” offered me the opportunity to combine my two great passions, and to study about a part of the world I did not know, but where I now live. Most months I use something from one of these two courses in my current life.

“The Masculine Mystique,” taught by Professors Andrew Garrod and Peter Travis, was also very powerful, and put me in touch with academic resources for gender study which I still use a great deal in my work today, in the diverse matrix which is the South San Francisco Bay area.

I also took several Dartmouth College courses. Two in Medieval European history, taught by Professor Walter Simons, sharpened my scholarship and critical thinking, and refined my academic writing. During the time I was in MALS, and after, I also worked as a teaching assistant for Professors Louis Renza and Bill Cook, and “American Prose” and “Modern Poetry” are wonderful courses: developed over a lifetime of teaching, they epitomize, in their combination of great literature creatively presented, what makes a Dartmouth education unique and valuable.

How did you decide on California? There are three Unitarian Universalist seminaries in the United States: Meadville Lombard in Chicago, Harvard in Cambridge, and Starr King in Berkeley. Looking at each, after 22 years of Vermont winters, I decided I was going to try some time off from the cold and the snow! I haven’t regretted that choice. When I want to ski, I go to the Sierras!

Tell me about your work as a hospital chaplain. Is it the field you want to work in permanently? Having trained six months part-time at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center when I lived in Vermont, I realized that this was the work I wanted to do. It was necessary for me to attend seminary as a next step. This I did for two and half years, then took time off for fieldwork, which is called Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). I have now trained full-time for nine months in California as a hospital chaplain: six at Stanford University Medical Center, and three at the Veterans’ Administration Palo Alto Health Care System, known as the “flagship” of the USA Veterans’ Hospitals. (These days, the VA is the first point of return for many of our wounded veterans from the Iraq War.) I have completed the CPE for now. I have one semester left to go to seminary.

I work as an interfaith chaplain, on a team with people of various denominations: Roman Catholic, other Protestant, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, etc. Although each chaplain is sponsored by a particular faith, our duties take us to people of all faiths, and, in my case, because I am a member of a liberal religious denomination, especially to people of no professed faith who still need spiritual care. One of the early Unitarians was Clara Barton, Civil War nurse and founder of the American Red Cross; her work was to anyone on the battlefield who needed it. So is ours, to people in hospitals.

Our duties are to provide spiritual care for patients, their families, and staff at the hospitals. We visit people at the bedside or in outpatient units, offering support, counseling, and our spiritual presence through challenging times. Of course, it is entirely up to the patient whether they choose to have us with them. We also offer connection to religious resources, and we facilitate groups and lead worship in the institution. We provide bereavement counseling, and sometimes we also perform funerals or memorial services for patients who have died.

Have you held other ministerial positions prior to your work in the hospital? I did much volunteer work, including as a campus minister at Dartmouth, when I received my first paid work from Rev. Dr. Stuart Lord. I worked as Program Coordinator for Religious Life at the Tucker Foundation in 2000. Working at Tucker and with students, faculty, and other campus ministers focused my intentions for myself, and was wonderful experience. My colleagues at Tucker were mentors and people for me to emulate, and I will always owe a debt of gratitude to them all.

Do you plan on staying in the Bay Area? Yes. I currently live in Santa Cruz, and would like to find a job within commuting distance of here.

If there was one piece of advice you could pass along to incoming and current MALS students, what would it be? Well, sorry, it’s more than one! Get an advisor with whom you can really work. Take as long as you need to to wait for the courses you really want to take; advocate for the subjects you want for your learning.
“Flower Series” by Jennifer Kocsmiersky ‘06
(collaged paint samples, acrylic paint on paper)
(Note: All pieces are 8x10 and part of an ongoing graffiti series.)
confident that this graduate program will help her become a more well-rounded teacher and individual. In addition to gaining a wider breadth of knowledge across different disciplines, Abigail hopes that the MALS Program will aid her in focusing her interests for possible further post-graduate study.

Frank Tallman

Frank Tallman has spent the last six years in the hectic lifestyle at boarding school as a teacher, coach, and dorm-master. At Woodberry Forest School, he currently teaches Ancient/Medieval History, US History, and yearlong electives that are on the 1760s, 1860s, and 1960s. In the past, he has also taught US Government and Modern European History. It has been refreshing to get back in the classroom as a student. At MALS, he is taking the General Studies track and will focus on the social sciences and humanities. Frank, his wife Tricia, and son Parker love this area and look forward to spending the next few summers up here.

Jackie Silverman

Jackie Silverman received a Film Studies degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara and a Drama degree from the University of Kent at Canterbury, U.K. Immediately after graduation, she started a media research and consulting company in southern California. After a year of analyzing the interests of others, she decided she wanted to pursue her own line of research. Now at Dartmouth, Jackie is very excited to begin the MALS program where she intends to focus on the prolific exportation of American entertainment media and the effect this has on foreign cultures.

Neerav Vyas

Neerav Arun Vyas graduated from Lehigh University in May of 2005 with a Bachelor’s in International Relations and Economics. He spent his last term at Lehigh as an intern for Lehigh’s NGO office at the United Nations, and as a Teaching Assistant in a Research Seminar in development. He intends to pursue a concentration in globalization studies at Dartmouth and is interested in economic development and ethnic conflict studies.
Overcoming Resistance to The Artist’s Way
By Nancy Silliman ’96

"Do you curse me?" One of my creative friends asked me this question, three weeks after having practically coerced me to buy The Artist’s Way, by Julia Cameron. At the time of her question, I was in “week three” of reading and furiously wading through Cameron’s writing exercises in the book. “No,” I replied. (Reason: it is one of my personal rules not to curse anyone, no matter how tempting.) Truthfully, this book was already putting me through the wringer. Why? In my opinion, there are obvious reasons for initial negative reactions: resistance and cynicism due to the book’s concepts which implies that one needs recuperation from an “artist block”, and therefore, implying a need for a cure from a disease; secondly, the daily time commitment needed for success, for a grand total of twelve weeks of following the author’s suggestions, and third, the “spiritual” bent of the book, which, for me, normally raises a cautionary “red flag”. Not for the faint of heart, I decided, after reading several pages but, still, I proceeded to give the book a chance. After reading the book, I highly recommend it.

Her techniques work. Though I do not completely agree with Cameron that a “writer’s block” is something that needs “curing” or “recovering from,” I do agree with her amazing ability to help each artist get the creative juices flowing when they have stopped. “Artist,” for Cameron, is a term defined as anyone who creates, whether painter, writer, filmmaker, lawyer, or writer. She wants to help the “blocked” artist, who may be in this position due to any number of reasons and for any length of time. The author warns the reader that in the beginning, resistance to her ideas may happen.

I managed to overcome my resistance and read on. My curiosity was piqued. Does her technique actually work? This book is something that could almost be compared to a thriller or detective novel. Using her techniques conjured up memories and ghosts of the past. I began to ask myself questions. Will my artist’s block be actually gone by the conclusion of twelve weeks, if I follow Cameron’s directions? How does she do it? Who else fell (a literal leap of faith) for her ideas?

In reading Cameron’s book, I discovered that many famous people were helped by her technique. They overcame their artistic blocks and went on to win awards, including Emmys and Pulitzer Prizes. Up to the challenge and newly convinced, I desired to learn more. First, I needed to get past the “spiritual” part.

Her “spiritual” way is to go straight to the source. She touches upon whatever may be the reader’s concept of exactly what it means to each person to be spiritual. Therefore, this can easily encompass everyone. An artist may begin by believing in himself or herself. It’s a concept of spirituality that is loosely defined, even for the most hardened, cynical intellectual. Creator to creative to creation, that is her way. Slowly and arduously, each artist learns how to reconnect to his or her “source.” It is a leap of faith as an artist. In other words, believe in yourself and eventually, the block disappears. This also includes Cameron’s help, with “the Creator’s” assistance and also the reader’s own hard determination to follow and act upon the author’s directions. It’s teamwork with some very invisible players or guides.

Julia Cameron, who has been inspiring and teaching artists for decades with her many workshops and numerous books, is seductive in her approach. Difficult though it is to get past an artist’s block, she helps the artist overcome the obstacles. Her artist’s way sandblasts the frozen creative juices that may have been mired in procrastination and excuses for any number of reasons. The result is the ideas begin to flow. These same ideas are then acted upon. It works.

Is it worth the challenge and the precious time that it takes to read and to follow the suggestions in The Artist’s Way, by Julia Cameron? Yes, it is. Will you bless me or curse me after “week three” as you read and do the exercises in the book? I think you will be too busy, from now on, (creating and following Cameron’s ideas, techniques, and suggestions that are more than enough to last a lifetime) for you to let me know if it is a blessing or not.

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE DEADLINE!

October 15, 2006, is the deadline to submit proposals to the Curriculum Committee for projects commencing in the winter term. The following proposals should be submitted at this time:

Independent Study proposals
Thesis proposals
Symposium substitute petitions
Requests for thesis research funding
Tell me about growing up in “rural Hungary,” as your initial new student bio mentioned. There is a Hungarian saying that immediately comes to mind when I think about this. So to best describe the experience and the place where I grew up, try to imagine living “behind the back of God.” There was nothing romantic about it, that’s for sure. Time stood still and my parents raised my younger brother and I thinking that changes would never come our way. The best one could do was to live and accept the hardships without complaints. Neither questions nor critical thinking were encouraged in my family. Silence surrounded even erratic conversations around family meals and there were lots of taboos, like politics, for instance.

My brother and I, not that we had liked to, but we had to help with agricultural work often. This was a way of earning some extra income for our family. At the same time, I really liked school and learning. My mother noticed my talent with Russian. So eventually my parents sent me to learn English with a tutor and four other students at the age of 11 once a week for an hour in a town nearby. That was going to be my ticket to the wide world I could only fantasize about at the time. Learning English itself did not make much sense for a while at all. Then at 14 I left home and went to boarding school. That is when my personal growth through the journey of education started. And now my hope is that it never ends.

When I go back and visit my hometown these days, I do see that change inevitably comes, even to places “behind the back of God.” This is the nature of life. And it is for the better. The area where I grew up will always have economic as well as social problems but at least things are moving. Maybe one day I will be able to bring something home, too. I have been thinking of starting a language school, for instance.

What drew you to the Upper Valley? MALS. I did not know the area at all before I started the program last fall, in 2005. All I knew was that I wanted to study and Dartmouth was an hour from where I was living in Southern Vermont. And that it was a very good school.

...having found my voice— and in another language than my own—is a big deal for me.

What is your academic/professional background? I have earned a master’s degree from ELTE University in Budapest, Hungary, in English Language and Literature. My thesis, also an interdisciplinary topic, was an unusual choice within my department but I felt very strongly about it so I got permission to work on it. Eventually, it allowed me to look not only at art theory and art history but also semantics, cultural studies, some sociology… It became a complex project but when I look at it today, I can see lots of things that I would want to change about it.

When I finished in 1999, I was thinking about continuing my studies in a postgraduate program. Eventually, however, I decided I was not ready, and I also needed to start making a living. First, I worked as a teacher (ESL) in a gymnasium. I have always loved teaching and was able to bring something home, too. I was moving. Maybe one day I will be able to support myself as well as social problems but at least things are moving. Maybe one day I will be able to bring something home, too. I have been thinking of starting a language school, for instance.

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When I finished in 1999, I was thinking about continuing my studies in a postgraduate program. Eventually, however, I decided I was not ready, and I also needed to start making a living. First, I worked as a teacher (ESL) in a gymnasium. I have always loved teaching and did some even while I was still a student. After 1989, there was a great demand for language schools in Hungary – people wanted to reconnect with the world and were willing and motivated to learn Western languages. So there was a need for lots of young enthusiastic language teachers. For students in language departments, teaching was an easy way of making a living. I also remember how easy it was for native speakers – Americans, Brits, and Australians – to find work in those early years of transition in Hungary. We even didn’t mind that they earned more money than us because we could exchange ideas and practice speaking with them as well as learn about various cultures from first hand. Later, as my command of English grew stronger, I became a translator, primarily for art galleries and museums. And for a while I also worked for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Budapest. This was right around the time of the war in Yugoslavia. We were helping refugees to get out of Serbia and settle in Australia, Canada, and the USA.

Why did you decide to apply to the MALS program? I liked the idea that in this program I was not required to become an expert in a specialized field. As I have mentioned before, I love learning but it only happens most effectively when I am allowed to remain open as well as broad-minded. The interdisciplinary approach encourages me to dare to be a creative, individual thinker and make connections rather than conclusions. I guess I am very die-hard about the value of this because especially in my early education, my mind was very much shaped by the notion that there was only one right or correct answer for a certain question. Later it was traumatic to realize how mechanistic that made my thinking and it took a lot of effort to overcome that indoctrination. So I’m having fun at MALS.

Which concentration are you pursuing? What motivated you to choose it? I am in general studies because I learn as I
go and this track allows me the most freedom with my choices. My decisions do not have to be set in stone but can evolve and that works very well for me.

Do you see the MALS degree as a stepping stone to a further degree program, or more as a personal goal to be achieved, to enhance your educational experiences?

I would like to continue in a further degree program, yes, absolutely. It is the second time my life has brought me to that juncture where I need to make a decision, so I’m taking this seriously. And now I feel much more ready so hopefully I can make it happen. I am willing to work hard but wish me luck!

Have you been particularly struck by any of the courses you have thus far taken? By any of the professors you have worked with?

Again, as I have said before, I am having a great time in the program. It is important because while I was completing my first degree it felt more like work and hardly something that I enjoyed. I think my positive attitude is an asset that helps me make the most of my learning experience. I could hardly name a course I was unhappy with. And I truly appreciate the encouragement and feedback I get from my professors.

Has being enrolled in the MALS program affected your day-to-day experiences?

How could it not have? It has been absolutely transformational. It has opened a whole new chapter as well as new vistas in my life and I feel very committed to do the best I can here. For me, being in grad school at Dartmouth in the MALS program is a chance that, if I look back, seemed very unlikely even just two years ago. So I do not take it for granted that I am here. I was 28 when I moved to the US – a new country for me. I started a new life and tried to fit in. I did lots of odd little jobs in Southern Vermont. I worked at farms, in a bakery, with a jewelry-maker, in a non-profit arts organization... And all these gave me a chance to interact with the local community. But it is here I found my true passion, which is learning and growing, always trying to grow by the experience.

How is being a student in the MALS program at Dartmouth different from being a student in Hungary?

When I came to MALS I had been out of school for a while and since then things have changed in Hungary, I’m sure. I went to ELTE for the most part of the nineties and the entire university system was gradually and constantly changing. This was in one way liberating but it could also be confusing. There was no campus in Budapest. One could easily spend hours simply on traveling between university buildings, libraries, a job and, in my case, the dormitory. And that was not only exhausting but also distracting. There was little time left for socializing, for instance, or finding time to consult professors, building meaningful contacts. There were hundreds of students in my department.

I am not saying that my example was the standard but I felt rather lost in ELTE’s vast system. So that gives me one more reason to enjoy and appreciate the relaxed and intimate atmosphere of Dartmouth. Everything works. The buildings are in walking distance from one another. And staff as well as professors and students are friendly and approachable. I cannot remember myself as a very communicative student in Budapest. If anything, I think I was painfully shy. Ask anyone now! I have evolved to be a real talker even to an extent that surprises me. I do hope, though, that what I have to say matters. Because having found my voice - and in another language than my own - is a big deal for me.

Do you plan on staying in the area after graduation? Or returning to Europe?

I think it is rather unlikely that I will stay around here after I graduate. Right now, I am making big plans. But it is honestly too early for me to know!

If there was one piece of advice you could pass along to incoming and current MALS students, what would it be?

Keep an open mind and be positive, creative and cooperative, too, if that makes sense. You can make the most out of your studies that way.

After undergraduate study at Renmin University of China, Wei Xiang worked as an information analyst at world-famous Xin Hua News Agency. His seriocomic background is the starting point to academic development. He is fascinated with methods of decision-making and business management. He believes that the MALS program would raise his academic horizon of globalization and cultural studies through the interdisciplinary framework. His extracurricular sports include badminton and jogging.

Nicole Yokum

Nicole Aleksandra Yokum loves Vermont. She lives next door to a goose named Peaches, two little girls named Emma and Mae, and on a street with lots of dog-walking old ladies. She runs a lot and plays Ani DiFranco very loud from her bedroom windows. She’s interested in studying Lapland, Sami joiking, creative writing, and the stars.

All pictures with the exception of Nicole Yokum’s were taken by Mei-Yen Su.
2006 MALS Graduation Photos

Photo taken by Lisa Chau ‘06.

Photo taken by MALMS Marshal Ian Isherwood ‘06.
Photo taken by Lisa Chau ‘06.

Photo taken by Lauren Clarke, MALS Executive Director.

Photo taken by Lisa Chau ‘06.
Photo taken by Lisa Chau '06.

Photo taken by Lauren Clarke, MALS Executive Director.
Dartmouth College President James Wright, Commencement Speaker and Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters recipient Elie Wiesel, Honorary Doctor of Arts recipient Joan Ganz Cooney.

Photo taken by Lauren Clarke, MALS Executive Director.

Photo taken by Lisa Chau ’06.
Like the affect of Miss Coss’ voice on her listeners, Patchett’s writing has a mesmerizing affect on the reader. One may not realize it as such until the ending grips the reader from having been lulled into the same tempo as the characters in the novel, living in the moment. In a conclusion that runs less than four pages the hostage situation comes to a rapid end, followed by a surprise finale. The marriage between two survivors may leave the reader surprised at how it happened, as they previously had not been romantically linked, but it won’t take long before getting the allegorical meaning of their union. Representing the collective love and passion that was caused to flourish amongst their group of people confined in one place at one time, the marriage also symbolizes an elongation of that moment in time that will linger through them.

Alumni Notes

Svetlana Olsanskaya MALS ’05 is currently a Senior Project Manager with COM-CON Market & Media Research in Moscow, Russia.

Joni B. Cole MALS ’95 has just published her third book, Toxic Feedback: Helping Writers Survive and Thrive (Univeristy Press of New England, July 2006). Through a mixture of instruction, anecdotes, and moral support, Joni detoxifies the feedback process with humor and without laying blame, inspiring both sides of the interaction to make the most of this essential resource. The book also features “best and worst” feedback stories from literary luminaries, including Julia Alvarez, Khaled Hosseini, Gregory Maguire, Grace Paley, and others. In a recent review, Library Journal “strongly recommended” Toxic Feedback for students and teachers. Joni is also the creator of This Day In The Life: Diaries From Women Across America (Three Rivers Press/Random House, 2005), a book (and part of a growing series) drawn from an extraordinary project in which five hundred women from all walks of life kept a “day diary” on a single day. In a starred review, Publisher’s Weekly noted, “There is not one piece in this compilation that is not captivating.” In addition to her work as a writer and editor, Joni teaches fiction-writing workshops and gives talks to writing groups and creative writing classes on the concepts in Toxic Feedback. She is currently at work on her third book in the “This Day in the Life” series, and a collection of essays. For more information about Joni’s books, visit www.toxicfeedback.com or www.thisdayinthelife.com. Joni lives in Hartford, Vermont, with her husband Stephen, a psychologist, and her daughters Esme, 9, and Thea, 7.

Brent Concilio MALS ’06 is the new Assistant Dean of Students and a member of the English Faculty at West Nottingham Academy in Colora, Maryland.

Nina Godiwalla MALS ’04 received an M.B.A. from Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania this summer. She has since accepted a position with Johnson and Johnson as an Assistant Product Manager in Philadelphia, working on their Splenda brand.

Rebecca Munsterer MALS ’05 won the Grand Prize through an Islands magazine contest and won a trip with friends to Tahiti.

Natalia Barantseva MALS ’01 joined the Grassroots Business Initiative as a monitoring and evaluation intern and will be graduating with an M.B.A. from the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University in May 2007.

Elizaveta Moussinova MALS ’02 graduated from Indiana University this August. She taught Russian and other courses there for three years. She has recently decided to go back to her previous professor, law, and will probably be going back to Russia at some point in the near future.

If you are interested in writing an article about a current or upcoming MALS event, a news piece, a book review, or a student/faculty/alumni profile piece, please blitz your ideas to Mals.Quarterly@dartmouth.edu.

The Quarterly also welcomes all original submissions of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and art work from current MALS students and Alumni.