Playing for Time Raises Profound Issues

“I wasn’t very excited about the idea of directing a play by Arthur Miller. He has such a strong male viewpoint. Then I read Playing for Time and Fania Fenelon’s autobiography on which it was based. He stayed very true to her vision. He really wrote looking through her eyes.”

The female perspective isn’t the only reason director E. Teresa Choate selected this play. This true story of a group of women musicians who attempted to survive Auschwitz by playing for their Nazi captors raises ethical issues crucial for all human beings.

How far can you go in your effort to physically survive and still be an ethical human being? How far can you go and still be a human being? Which survival decisions create human monsters?

Miller doesn’t offer easy answers to these questions, but he does frame the issues by presenting the decisions made by women under the most dire circumstances.

Austrian violinist Alma Rose, niece of composer Gustav Mahler, was a dedicated professional, committed to the highest

Brewster Place Comes to Union

On March 3, Gloria Naylor, author of the best-selling novel The Women of Brewster Place, will be at Kean. In 1989 The Women of Brewster Place was made into a television miniseries starring Oprah Winfrey and was nominated for two Emmy awards.

In addition to being a successful novelist, Naylor has won Guggenheim and National Endowment of the Arts fellowships, has adapted her work for the stage, and has formed her own independent entertainment production company.

She has been a Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Pennsylvania and was named Senior Fellow of the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University.

Hosted by the Gateway Institute and sponsored by the English Department’s Contemporary Writer’s Series, the author will meet informally with students and faculty at 4:30 p.m. in the English Department. At 7:00 p.m., Ms. Naylor will speak in Wilkins Theatre. Her talk is open and free to the public and will conclude with a book signing.

Lecture: The Goddess as Wife and Mother

Dr. Nilima Chitgopekar, Professor of History at Jesus and Mary College, Reader at Delhi University and author of the just-published Encountering Sivaism: The Deity, the Milieu, the Entourage, will give a talk at Kean on March 30 at 12:30 in UC-337.

Professor Chitgopekar’s talk, entitled The Goddess as Wife, the Goddess as Mother: A Study of Parvati and Gender Politics, will cover the many manifestations of the female goddess, Parvati, consort of Shiva. Parvati, also known as the goddess of cosmic energy, Shakti, has been celebrated in Hindu religion as the goddess of love, sexuality, desire, nuptial bliss and tender motherhood, as well as of unbridled passion and energy.

What have been the implications of such an icon of feminine identity for the Indian woman? What are the repressive sexual impulses of a patriarchal society which worships energy in a goddess, but condemns it in a woman?

Published widely in her field, Dr. Chitgopekar was one of seventeen international scholars selected to participate in a USIS funded Fellowship Program at Boston University in 1994. Dr. Chitgopekar also has a passion for poetry and has published several poems in anthologies and journals.
Dr. Nira Gupta-Casale: Projections

On behalf of Women’s Studies, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our readers. As you may be aware, Phyllis Kafka, our long-standing Director, and one of the foremothers of this important program, retired this January. Phyllis and her Co-Director, Celine Krauss, have left us an impressive legacy of accomplishments, key of which is a tradition of compelling programs for our annual Women’s History Month in March.

This year’s program looks strong as well, and it is in keeping with Kean University’s overall commitment to establishing meaningful forums for the discussion and exploration of women’s issues. The events range from a celebration of women’s survival and talents in the production of Arthur Miller’s Playing for Time, to an evening with the acclaimed author, Gloria Naylor, whose novels deal with issues of gender, race, and class.

There are discussions on women’s health and body issues, and programs that help women to understand and come to terms with physical abuse. Café con Leche provides our campus community with an opportunity to display their creative talents and share experiences, and a lecture by an Indian historian, Dr. Nilima Chitgopekar, explores how cultural myths constructed male/female icons.

That gender is an important topic then is undebatable—witness the fact that at least three other major academic forums on campus next month focus on questions of gender—the President’s Symposium on Gender is on March 24; the Latin American Studies Lecture Series focuses on women this year and has an important lecture in March; and the month-long conference, Jewish Visions, ends its March program with a discussion of “Gendered Humor in Jewish Cinema.”

What is debatable is the active role our students play in these debates. While the Women’s Studies Program provides institutionalized space for the ongoing discussion of gender issues, and has the faculty that would implement the courses, Kean students have not availed themselves of the opportunity to engage in this crucial study.

One of our key goals for the upcoming year is to assess this problem and constitute changes in the program that would facilitate student involvement, both in Women’s Studies’ programs and curriculum. This is a daunting task, but with the active support and commitment of our members, I am confident that it can be done.

Already, in the short time that I have been Interim Director, the Programming Committee, with special thanks to Robyn Rajs (in reserving rooms at this late date), has coordinated an impressive program for Women’s History Month; the Newsletter has been published in a timely manner, and the Sylvia Strauss Memorial Scholarship Contest has been conducted and judged, thanks to the efforts of Irene Gnarra and her support team of judges and readers. There is still more to be done, and we welcome your participation.

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Dr. Phyllis Kakfa: Reflections

Nearly thirty years ago a small band of female faculty and staff at Newark State College gathered at the invitation of historian Sylvia Strauss. I had the honor of being a member of what became one of the earliest Women’s Studies Programs in higher education in the country.

Fueled by second-wave enthusiasm, the program at Kean, like many others, initially flourished. As is so often the case, initial enthusiasm proved difficult to sustain in the face of other stresses and concerns.

In 1992, Dean Edward Weil, School of Liberal Arts, was charged with the daunting task of reorganizing and restructuring the Program. With his guidance and unfailing support, I worked toward this end until my recent retirement. Under my leadership, the Women’s Studies Program became an accepted, respected part of this institution.

The Program became broadly diverse, attracting both men and women from all backgrounds and disciplines, a rare characteristic for a Women’s Studies Program. It is also now a truly interdisciplinary program. We have a student club, and the campus routinely celebrates Women’s History Month.

The time has come for me to pass the mission on: for a new generation to build up, out, and away from this solid foundation. Specifically now for Dr. Nira Gupta-Casale, with her energetic young promise, fresh ideas, and commitment to feminism to chart the future.

I leave not only the keys to my office, but my enduring passion for a great cause: improving the lives of ALL women (and therefore men) everywhere. I take this passion with me into retirement, and will express it through writing and publishing as long as I live.

I pass this legacy on to all who participate in Women’s Studies knowing that it will be in good hands.

Women’s Studies Program

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FOCUS ON COURSES IN THE CURRICULUM: HIST*4840

The Spring 1999 semester marks the inauguration of Women in History (HIST* 4840), a course that will survey “the social and political systems of major societies/civilizations in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas from the dawning of the first societies on earth to the present-day through the lens of women.” The course has been designed by Doctor Stephanie Beswick who received her degree in African History from Michigan State University.

Professor Beswick will draw on her extensive field experience in the Sudan where she collected data on the victimization and enslavement of Dinka women to guide students in discussions of topics ranging from prostitution in the Middle Ages to the struggle for women’s rights in the US to female infanticide.

According to Dr. Beswick, the course will be not only a comprehensive history of women, but a view of world events through the eyes of women. Students will select from a variety of readings, discuss videos shown in class, write short “informed opinion” papers, and prepare a lengthy take-home final examination.

Guest speakers, such as Dr. Donna Guy of the University of Arizona who will speak on prostitutes in Argentina, will offer a variety of additional perspectives. (Faculty teaching other courses in the Collateral are invited to submit descriptions of their courses.)

A Student’s View
By Alice K. Forsyth

What gets me excited about learning? What does it mean to get the most from my educational experience? These are questions I ask myself every semester when it is time to register for classes.

I look for a challenge. I look for course work that is topical and stimulating. I look for courses that will enrich my intellectual development, and give me something relevant that I can apply to my experience as a student, and as a woman.

Kean’s Collateral Program In Women’s Studies gives me an opportunity to combine my interest in Sociology with course work relating to Women’s Studies. My only wish is that more Women’s Studies courses would be offered. Judging by the sizes of my Women’s Studies courses this semester, I would say there are many interested students, both men and women, who would like to explore course work from a Women’s Studies perspective.

I first became involved with the program last February when I entered, and won, the Kean University Sylvia Strauss Memorial Women’s Studies Scholarship Competition. The annual competition provided an opportunity to write a full-scale research (Continued on page 6)

Theresa DiNoia Wins WS Scholarship Contest

Theresa DiNoia will receive a $500 scholarship for her winning entry in the Sylvia Strauss Memorial Scholarship in Women’s Studies Contest, and Judith McCarron and Tracy Reilly will receive certificates of honorable mention. They will be honored at an awards program on March 25.

The winners are all non-traditional students. A part-time library assistant at Kean, Theresa DiNoia is a junior majoring in elementary education and English. In her essay on Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey, “Isabella Thorpe: A Victim of Eighteenth-Century Society,” she explores the heroine’s manipulative behavior and, citing a contemporary study on social mores, she shows that uneducated women in provincial England were forced to marry wealthy men to assure a financially stable future, in fiction as in life.

A political science major, Judith McCarron illustrates the responsibilities of twentieth-century women from large immigrant families in her intimate portrait, “Julia Gayga Smith: A Woman for All Seasons.” Marked principally by living conditions in the United States during the wars and Depression, Smith is humble and conservative, like many women of her generation. A collage of profiles delineate (Continued on page 5)
Performances of the Kean Theatre Series production of Arthur Miller’s *Playing for Time* will be held on **February 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, & 27** at 8 p.m. and on **February 21 & 28** at 2 p.m. in the Wilkins Theatre. Contact Wilkins Box Office for tickets/info.

On Tuesday, **February 23** at 2:00 p.m. in J-100, Dr. Claire Brindis, University of California, San Francisco will talk on *Adolescent Pregnancy Amongst Latinas* as part of the Latino/Latin American Issues Lecture Series.

On Monday, **March 1** at 8:00 p.m. in Wilkins Theatre, Lenora Thom will be guest conductor of the Kean Chamber Symphony.

On Tuesday, **March 2** at 12:30 p.m. in UC-228, Evaleaon Hill, Professor of Women’s Studies at Montclair State University, will speak on *Women’s Bodies: Truth, Myths, and Lies*. Please call HRCC at x2082 to reserve seats.

Also on **March 2**, at 6:30 p.m. in the UC-Little Theatre, Cuban-born artist Maria Elena Gonzalez will discuss her work.

On Wednesday, **March 3** at 7:00 p.m., best-selling author Gloria Naylor will speak in Wilkins Theatre.

On Monday, **March 15** at 11:00 a.m. in UC-337, Dr. Juneau Gary will present a workshop on *The Challenge of Change: Physical, Psychological and Social Issues Affecting Women*.

On Wednesday, **March 17**, Dr. Josh Palgi will present on *Women’s Health Issues of the 90s* at 12:30 p.m. in UC-337.

Also on **March 17**, *Cinematic Representation of Working Women*, a film screening and discussion will be held from 6:00-8:30 p.m. in UC-228. For details, contact Dr. Dean Casale at x2212.

On Monday, **March 22** at 5:00 p.m. in UC-228, Dr. Maj Hessel and Dr. Mette Ostergaard, of the UN Population Fund, will discuss *Women and AIDS in Latin America and Africa*. The talk is sponsored by the Latin American Studies Program.

**March 22-25** is Sexual Assault Awareness Week. The events of the week, planned by the Human Relations and Counseling Center, are designed to raise awareness of the realities of sexual violence, and to explore ways to work toward its elimination.

On Tuesday, **March 23** from 2:00-3:30 p.m. in the UC pre-function lobby, members of the Kean community are invited to make a T-shirt (supplies provided) paying tribute to survivors of sexual abuse. These shirts, as well as others made in previous years, will be on display in the University Center Atrium during the week. For information contact Robyn Rajs at x2082.

The third Presidential Symposium focused on Dimensions of Diversity will be held throughout the day on Wednesday, **March 24**. The subject of this year’s symposium is Gender. Mary Hartman, Director of the Rutger’s Institute for Women’s Leadership, will give the keynote address on the *Complexity of Gender* at 10:00 a.m. in the University Center Little Theatre.

On **March 24**, a light dinner at 5 p.m. will begin Kean’s annual *Take Back the Night* celebration at 6 in the Little Theatre.

On **March 25**, a Breakfast Lecture will be held at 9:30 in UC-228 to wrap-up the events of Sexual Assault Awareness Week. *Cafe Con Leche*, the Kean Women’s Studies Program’s annual celebration of the community’s diversity of talents, will be held at 2:00 p.m. in UC-228 on **March 25**. Those wishing to participate should contact Myriam Quinones, x2890. The WS Scholarship Awards will be presented at the beginning of this event.

On Tuesday, **March 30**, Leila Josefowicz, acclaimed violinist, will perform in Wilkins Theatre at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available at the Wilkins Theatre Box Office (students-$7.00 and faculty/staff-$10.00).

Dr. Nilima Chitgopekar, poet and scholar of Indian religions, will lecture on *The Goddess as Wife, the Goddess as Mother: A Study of Parvati and Gender Politics* on Tuesday, **March 30** at 12:30 p.m. in UC-337A&B.

On Wednesday, **April 14** at 11:00 a.m in the Library’s Ethnic Studies Center, Dr. Antoineett Ellis-Williams, New Jersey City University, will speak on *Black and Woman: The Legitimacy of Teaching Black Womanhood*.

Also on **April 14**, at 3:30 p.m. in W-313, Dr. Nira Gupta-Casale will speak on *Theorizing the Post-Colonial: Class and Gender Stereotypes in Diasporic Feminist Literature*.

On Thursday, **April 15**, the Latino/Latin American Issues Lecture Series will conclude with a lecture on *Women’s History in Latin America*, by Dr. Donna Guy, University of Arizona. The talk will be at 9:30 a.m. in UC-337A&B.
Lenora Thom Conducts at Kean

“Women have made great strides as “team players” in orchestras, but there is still an issue regarding the authority commanded by conductors.” Lenora Thom, conductor of the Kean Chamber Symphony, a group that performs every semester for GE 1200 students, speaks from experience.

Boris Goldovsky, opera coach with the Metropolitan Opera, encouraged Thom in 1983 to make the move from vocal coach to conductor. By 1986 she had her own chamber orchestra in Riverdale, and was assistant conductor to Roger Nierenberg of the Stamford Symphony.

Two summers at the prestigious Pierre Monteux School, where she was in the top ranked group of students, and numerous master classes sponsored by the American Symphony Orchestra League led Ms. Thom to a position at William Paterson College and leadership of the New Jersey Choral Society.

Thom observes that throughout this ten year period of professional growth and development, fewer than 10% of her conductor colleagues were women. Thom attributes this in part to the fact that, while fellow musicians hire members of the orchestra, boards of directors, usually male business people, hire conductors. “Women in positions of power are still viewed as something of a risk.”

Ms. Thom is quick to note that she early on decided to deal with fears of not being taken seriously by simply being serious. “I think it’s important for students to believe that determination, hard work and personal integrity count in ANY field.”

While admission to concerts sponsored by General Education is usually restricted to students in GE 1200, Dr. O’Day, in honor of Women’s History Month, has agreed to set aside 50 tickets for those interested in hearing Ms. Thom conduct. The tickets for the Monday, March 1, 8 p.m. concert will be available in the Women’s Studies Office, J303, on a first come, first served basis.

NJ Women on the Web

While researching New Jersey women in politics, I discovered that few scholars had focused their attention on our actual forebears, the mothers and grandmothers who had shaped our local communities.

In 1984, a group of New Jersey historians set out to remedy this omission. The Women’s Project of New Jersey was initiated to “increase awareness of the role of women in the history and culture of the state.” These efforts resulted in the 1990 publication of a compendium of biographies, Past and Promise, Lives of New Jersey Women.

In 1998, recognizing the potential of the Internet, not only for disseminating information, but for collecting and sharing new knowledge and resources, the group set up a task force to construct, maintain, and promote the utilization of a website on New Jersey Women’s History.

The task force quickly realized that they could not simply rely on the contents of Past and Promise. Extensive new research would be necessary to make the website a useful, comprehensive, engaging resource.

Over the past year, scholars from Rutgers, College of New Jersey, New Jersey City University, Drew, and Kean have collaborated in this exciting project. My responsibility is all material on the twentieth century. Interested websurfers can visit the site, still under construction, at http://scc01.rutgers.edu/NJwomenshistory.

The task force will hold workshops around the state to encourage faculty and students to use the site, to contribute to

Scholarships

(Continued from page 3)

her concern for molding a family who respect their European Heritage.

Tracy Reilly, the third place winner, is Head Teacher in a preschool program. A part-time junior majoring in English with the writing option, she plans to write and illustrate children’s books.

She highlights social problems for women in Buchi Emecheta’s The Joys of Motherhood and Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye in her essay, “Motherhood in the Twentieth Century: The Bluest Joy.” While culture-specific, these problems belong to the same paradigm in feminist studies.

Professors Rosa Lee, Tony Scelba, Martin Siegel, Melodie Toby, Barbara Tomlinson, and Marilyn White joined me in choosing the winners. —IRENE GNARRA

Playing for Time

(Continued from page 1)

musical standards. Finding herself in Auschwitz in spite of her illustrious heritage, her determination shifted to assuming responsibility for her orchestra, some of whom didn’t actually play very well.

Enthusiastic Nazi Maria Mandel, commandant of the female camp, was also a lover of music and determined that music should accompany all the camp’s activities, even hangings. Both of these women were “leaders.” What were the differences and why do they matter?

This production, one of the largest and most complex ever staged at Kean, features 40 actors, most of them women, playing 70 roles. Clever staging will feature a second “real” orchestra actually playing the music of the orchestra in the cast.
Call for papers: The editors of The Journal of Women’s History are soliciting essays for a special 2001 issue on age as a category of analysis in women’s history. They are seeking manuscripts on any part of the world in any historical period that deal with age cohorts of women, generational interactions, or women’s life cycles. They are particularly focused on conceptualizing what it means to take age into account in analyzing women’s lives. The deadline for submissions is August 1, 1999. Four copies of each one-sided, double-spaced manuscript are required. (Submit manuscripts, of less than 10,000 words, to the Department of History, The Ohio State University, 230 W. 17th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210-1367.) (Faculty are urged to submit calls for papers in other fields for publication in this Newsletter. It is instructive for all women to see the issues of scholarly concern in a variety of disciplines.)

Alumna Gives Showcase to Program: Anyone visiting the Women’s Studies Program office in J-303 will have noticed the glass showcase in the hall for display of items of interest to women’s studies. The showcase was a generous gift to the Program from Mary Novak Kinelski, a psychology major from the class of ’95.

Photography Competition Focused on Gender: Students, faculty and staff are encouraged to submit photographs dealing with gender for display during the President’s Symposium. The deadline for entries, which must be 5x7, 8x10 or 11x14 and mounted on black or white mat board, is 5:00 p.m. Friday, February 26. Entry forms and details can be obtained in UC-219. Several $175.00 prizes will be awarded. The photographs will be on display from March 15-31 in the UC pre-function lobby.

In Brief . . .

Projections
(Continued from page 2)

Our former Director, Phyllis Kafka, worked unstintingly to ensure the success of this Program. I thank her on behalf of Women’s Studies, and on my own behalf, I thank her for her good wishes. The founding directors of this program have left another legacy, and that is the spirit of sisterhood, friendship, and productive camaraderie. Join with me in continuing that tradition.

Student’s View
(Continued from page 3)

While I have enjoyed a range of classes from Women’s Psychology to Gender Issues in the Family and Society, I would love to see a general Women’s Studies course that offered a good introduction to the field and its theoretical foundations.

As a charter member of the original Women’s Studies Club, I have met with several interested and interesting young women from diverse ethnic backgrounds and with a variety of concerns and vantage points on issues related to women.

The potential exists for an expanded Women’s Studies Program at Kean, and I, for one, would love to take advantage of new and exciting course work.

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