

## WHO WROTE THIS BOOK, ANYWAY?

by Zelda Stern

"Autobiographies are always subjective," observes Soledad Fox, assistant professor of Spanish and comparative literature at Williams. "You can never trust them, especially when they're political." Yet upon setting out to research the life and memoir of Constancia de la Mora, one of the most intriguing figures of the Spanish Civil War, Fox had little notion of what

surprises lay in store.

A wealthy Spanish aristocrat, de la Mora renounced her life of privilege to become spokesperson for the democratically elected Republican government that General Francisco Franco had ousted. When Spain's civil war forced her to flee to Mexico, she continued to seek international support for the Spanish Republican cause. De la Mora's

chief weapon in that campaign—and the starting point for Fox's research—was her life story.

Written in English and published in the U.S. in 1939, de la Mora's memoir, *In Place of Splendor*, is an account of her conversion from socialite to fighter for democracy. A best-seller, the book won her the backing of prominent figures such as Eleanor Roosevelt and

"IN THE RECOVERY OF SPAIN'S HISTORY, ONE OF THE LARGEST GAPS NEEDING TO BE FILLED IS THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE WAR "

Ernest Hemingway. Despite this, the U.S. government refused to lift its embargo of arms to Spain. De la Mora died in 1950 without realizing her dream of overthrowing Franco.

In 2004, a Fulbright grant enabled Fox to research de la Mora's past. As a scholar of autobiography and exile, Fox consulted American and Spanish archives and interviewed nearly 100 people in Spain, Mexico, the U.S., France and Russia. Unexpectedly, her work led her to both FBI and Comintern files and to the finding that, like many supporters of the Spanish Republic, de la Mora



John Dolan

was an active communist, a fact unmentioned in her memoir for fear of alienating American readers.

Then Fox made an even more startling discovery: the writer of *In Place of Splendor* was not Constanca de la Mora but Ruth McKenney, author of *My Sister Eileen* and herself a Communist sympathizer, who ghosted the “autobiography” to help sway American opinion. The colloquial language of the memoir had led Fox to speculate that de la Mora had help, “but the fact that she didn’t write it at all and carried on for the rest of her life as if she had came as a complete surprise to me.”

After the intriguing revelation of McKenney’s role— “I’m a literary scholar working on a memoir and I find the ‘author’ didn’t write it!”—Fox soon came to terms with her findings, publishing them in her own book, *Constancia de la Mora in War and Exile* (Sussex Academic Press, February 2007).

“Ultimately, it doesn’t matter,” says Fox. “She bet everything on defending the Spanish Republic. She gave up everything she had. She spent the rest of her life in exile. Her book was one more attempt to build support to resist Franco.”

“De la Mora was not the writer,” concludes Fox, “yet she was not a fraud.” ■



Michael Morgenstern

## IN THE NEWS

A sampling of appearances by Williams professors outside the College’s local news area, compiled by the Office of Public Affairs. For a complete list, visit [www.williams.edu/admin/news/inthenews/php](http://www.williams.edu/admin/news/inthenews/php).

In her “Lessons” column on the *New York Times* Education page on March 21, Susan Engel, psychology lecturer and director of education programs, described the balance of inclusion and exclusion among a group of second graders. “Even without a reason,” she reported, “children of this age are naturally drawn to creating groups that exclude.”

In his March 1 essay about Confucianism in an era when marriage is in decline, Sam Crane, professor of political science, wrote in the *China Daily*, “What matters for Confucian morality is sincere enactment of one’s personal duties to close social relations. If those most intimate bonds are not ratified by a formal recognition of marriage, so be it. It is more important to actually perform duty every day than to worry about official acknowledgement of a certain relationship.”

A moment to remember? As *USA Today* reported, a rare arithmetical sequence has come and gone. The time was 02:03:04 a.m. and the date: 05.06.07—which amounted to a **one-two-three-four-five-six moment**. “There are numerical patterns in nature all around us,” said Edward Burger, professor of mathematics. “Some are more significant and some are more beautiful than others. And this one is a silly one.”

In a *Wall Street Journal* article concerning fears that Americans are not saving enough for retirement, David Love, economics professor, observed, “More Americans than I would have expected are doing OK.” The Feb. 20 article points out Love’s view that the savings embedded in home ownership are to be seen as key retirement assets.

Marc Lynch, professor of political science, told *U.S. News & World Report* for an April 16 article, “We don’t listen to the terms in which Muslims are carrying on their debates. Or we listen through American filters.”



John Dolan

## TAKEN BY TOLKIEN

by Zelda Stern

A book read in childhood or adolescence can cast a spell that lasts a lifetime. On separate continents and at different times, Wayne Hammond and Christina Scull read the words of Oxford philologist and fantasist John Ronald Reuel Tolkien and each was changed forever.

Hammond, assistant librarian of Williams' Chapin Library of Rare Books since 1976, first read *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* as a teenager growing up in Cleveland, Ohio. His fascination with the saga of Middle-earth led him to collect books by and about Tolkien, then to write about him. Fellowship—and a ring—followed: As a member of the Tolkien Society he met Christina Scull, an Englishwoman whose own Tolkien collection and scholarship (stimulated by a transformative encounter with *The Lord of the Rings* when she was 13) rivaled his own. They married in 1994. A year later, Scull took early retirement from her job as librarian of Sir John Soane's Museum in London and moved to Williamstown. Aided by their combined personal library of 15,000 volumes, the husband-wife team has been producing Tolkien publications ever since.

With Hammond writing evenings and weekends and Scull

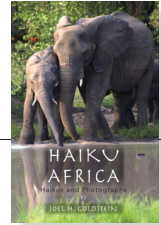
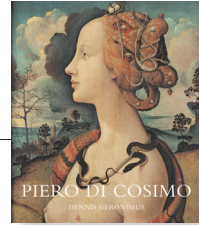
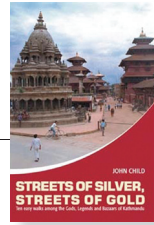
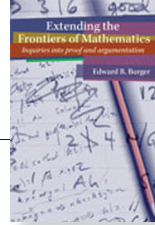
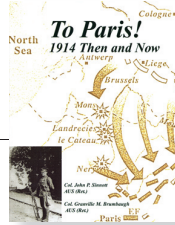
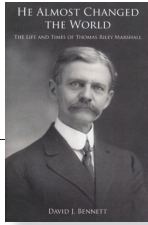
"THE THIRD OR FOURTH TIME I READ *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*, I MADE MYSELF READ IT ALOUD TO SLOW MYSELF DOWN. I WAS READING TOO FAST. I DIDN'T WANT IT TO END."  
—CHRISTINA SCULL

working on their books full time, they have edited a 50th-anniversary edition of *The Lord of the Rings* as well as *Roverandom* and *Farmer Giles of Ham* (two of Tolkien's children's tales); created new, expanded indices for *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* and *The Lord of the Rings*; and authored *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator*, *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion* and the recently published, 2,300-page *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide*, a two-volume work consisting of a lovingly detailed chronology of the author's life and an encyclopedia of entries on the people, places and events that influenced his work as well as descriptions and discussions of his writings.

What is it about Tolkien's writing that speaks so strongly to Hammond and Scull? She cites his "beautifully clear English" and "a world that is completely imagined." She still hears "the archetypal resonances of his stories" and values their complexity. (They are not, she points out, "happily-ever-after; there is grief and loss.") Of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien's masterpiece, Hammond says simply, "It's a compelling story, well told, by one of the masters of the English language."

None of which explains why, of the millions of Tolkien admirers who share these sentiments, Scull and Hammond are among the select few who have spent years chronicling and annotating his genius. Perhaps the answer lies with their talents, temperaments and training. "You can't be a good librarian unless you're happy bringing things together and putting them in coherent order so that others can make use of them," says Hammond. "You have to enjoy that kind of work, enjoy being in libraries and digging in archives. You can't worry about being in or out of the sunshine."

And so, exercising their own considerable powers, Scull and Hammond pursue their quest to shed ever more light on the wizard and wizardry that continue to hold them spellbound. ■



## MORE FROM THE BOOKSHELF

**He Almost Changed the World: The Life and Times of Thomas Riley Marshall.** By David J. Bennett '79. AuthorHouse, 2007. The biography of Woodrow Wilson's vice president, who, when Wilson became disabled while in office, found himself at the center of one of the great constitutional crises in American history.

**To Paris! 1914 Then and Now.** By Granville M. Brumbaugh '50, et al. Snake Nation Press, 2006. Maps and photographs of Europe during the first week of World War I and today build the basis for the authors' contention that one military action could have shortened the war and prevented future 20th century atrocities.

**Extending the Frontiers of Mathematics: Inquiries into proof and argumentation.** By Edward B. Burger, professor of mathematics. Key College Publishing, 2007. A textbook that helps students through the progression of mathematical discovery from assertions to proofs to theorems.

**Streets of Silver, Streets of Gold: Ten easy walks among the Gods, Legends and Bazaars of Kathmandu.** By John Child '77. Himal Association Books, 2006. A comprehensive walking tour tells the story of Nepal's high culture through history, myths and legends.

**Protecting the poor: A microinsurance compendium.** Edited by Craig Churchill '86. ILO Publications, 2006. An overview of the

many aspects of microinsurance, including product design, marketing, premium collection and governance.

**Effective Teaching Strategies that Accommodate Diverse Learners.** By Michael Coyne '89, et al. Prentice Hall, 2006. A book examining the teaching, instruction and curricula required to meet the needs of diverse learners who challenge traditional curriculum and instructional programs.

**Gender and Justice in Multicultural Liberal States.** By Monique Deveaux, assistant professor of political science. Oxford University Press, 2006. Explores the difficulties multicultural liberal nations face when confronted with competing political commitments to cultural rights and sexual equality.

**Sexual Justice/Cultural Justice.** Edited by Monique Deveaux, assistant professor of political science, et al. Routledge, 2007. Essays that delve into the relationship between cultural and sexual justice within multicultural societies.

**Piero di Cosimo: Visions Beautiful and Strange.** By Dennis Geronimus '95. Yale University Press, 2006. A biography of the 15th century Florentine artist, including details of his works.

**Investing in College: A Guide for the Perplexed.** By Malcolm Getz '67. Harvard University Press, 2007. A concise overview of research into the long-term returns of

college education in different careers as well strategies for choosing the right college.

**Gotta Do Homework!** By Richard Goldhammer '82. Scholastic Inc., 2006. A study guide offering tips to help middle school students identify their individual strengths and weaknesses as learners.

**Haiku Africa.** By Joel H. Goldstein '62. iUniverse, 2006. A collection of haikus and photographs from a South African safari.

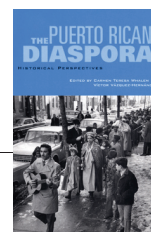
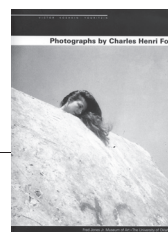
**Held at a Distance: My Rediscovery of Ethiopia.** By Rebecca Haile '86. Academy Chicago Publishers, 2007. A memoir chronicling Haile's return to her homeland of Ethiopia after 25 years of exile spent in the United States.

**The Wayward Muse.** By Elizabeth Hickey '93. Atria, 2007. A historical novel imagining the life of Jane Burden, muse to Dante Gabriel Rossetti and other Pre-Raphaelites.

**Good Shipmates: The Restoration of the Liberty Ship John W. Brown, Volume Two: 1995-2006.** By Ernest F. Imhoff '59. The Glencannon Press, 2006. A chronicle of the effort to restore the World War II ship *S.S. John W. Brown* told in illustrations, oral histories of crew members and background facts about the American merchant marine.

**Photographs by Charles Henri Ford.** By Victor Koshkin-Youritzin '64. Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, 2006. The catalog that accompanied the author's 2006 curated

# LIFE OF THE MIND



exhibition of Ford's work in the University of Oklahoma's Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art.

**The Partition of Korea after World War II: A Global History.** By Jongsoo (James) Lee '91. Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. A book that seeks to understand the division of Korea in 1945 and suggests possible alternative outcomes to partition.

**Protecting Information: From Classical Error Correction to Quantum Cryptography.** By Susan Loebb, associate professor of mathematics, and William K. Wootters, Barclay Jermain Professor of Natural Philosophy. Cambridge University Press, 2006. An introduction to error correction and cryptography that provides a context in which ideas from mathematics and physics meet.

**Why Race Matters in South Africa.** By Michael MacDonald, professor of political science. Harvard University Press, 2006. An account of how the transition to democracy in South Africa enfranchised blacks politically but without raising most of them from poverty.

**The Civil War Ballroom Band Book.** Compiled by Bill Matthiesen '70 and Liz Stell '79. Berkshire Film and Video, 2006. A collection of Civil-War era sheet music with over 70 songs.

**The Backwash Squeeze & Other Improbable Feats: A Newcomer's Journey into the World of Bridge.** By Edward McPherson '99. Harper Collins, 2007. The story behind the time-honored card game, told through the author's travels around the country to learn to play and introduce a new generation to the game of bridge.

**The Chicago Guide to Writing about Multivariate Analysis.** By Jane E. Miller '81. University of Chicago Press, 2005. Explains how to present results of multivariate models without getting bogged down in statistical jargon and technical details.

**The Tourmaline.** By Paul Park, lecturer in English. Tor Books, 2006. The second installment in the "Princess of Romania" young adult series continues the fantasy story of Miranda Popescu, whose life is interrupted by the discovery that she is a princess in another time and place.

**A Long Day's Dying: Critical Moments in the Darfur Genocide.** By Eric Reeves '72. The Key Publishing House Inc., 2007. Unsparring account and critical assessment of the Darfur genocide and the international community's inability to commit itself.

**Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain.** Co-edited by Mark Reinhardt, professor of political science, and Holly Edwards, lecturer in Islamic art, et al. University of Chicago Press, 2007. Essays that accompanied the Williams College Museum of Art exhibition of

the same name and detail the contradictions between photographs that are beautiful and yet depict intense human suffering.

**Contracts and Negotiating for the Businessperson (You and Your Lawyer).** Peter Siviglia '61. Carolina Academic Press, 2006. A book focused on the role and responsibility of the client in preparing a successful contract through a team effort with one's attorney.

**Torque.** By D.E. Steward '60. Kings Estate Press, 2006. A collection of previously published poems brought together in a single volume.

**The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives.** Edited by Carmen T. Whalen, associate professor of history and chair of Latina/o studies program, et al. Temple University Press, 2005. A collection of essays and narratives that depict the Puerto Rican experience in the United States.

## ON CD

**September Songs: Music for Film.** By Greg Pliska '84. Self-produced, 2006. A compilation of original music for film, theater and dance projects with Pliska on piano accompanied by the Gowanus Radio Orchestra.

**Funnel Cloud.** By Hem, featuring arrangements by Greg Pliska '84. Netzwerk/Waveland, 2006. The indie-folk band's sixth album on which Pliska conducts his ensemble, the Gowanus Radio Orchestra.

