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2017 SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS

Art, Ethics, and Civic Life:
A Pilgrimage in Healing

Matera | Caserta | Paestum
Italy





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OUR HISTORY

Every summer for almost three decades, Professor Judy Raggi Moore (Director, Italian Studies, Emory College of Arts and Sciences) has led a group of undergraduate students on an academic journey and cultural immersion in Italy. In 2000, she invited her colleague, Dr. Ruth Parker (Professor of Medicine, Emory University School of Medicine), to develop a course that would become an integral part of this program. This course, *Medicine and Compassion*, uses art and architecture, literature and landscape, cuisine and culture, and cross-disciplinary discussions to encourage a deeper understanding of compassion and healing.

In 2010, Drs. Parker and Raggi Moore began to invite visiting faculty from various disciplines to join their traveling “classroom” for a concluding week-long Symposium in southern Italy. Engaging the wisdom of these scholars and professionals from Emory and across the nation, over the past six years, they have built a strong and truly interdisciplinary Symposium.

This year Drs. Raggi Moore and Parker welcomed six distinguished guests. Amongst these were: Dr. Wright Caughman, Emory’s Executive Vice President of Health Affairs, Emeritus, Professor, School of Medicine and Rollins School of Public Health, Emory Woodruff Health Sciences Center and Dr. Paul Cantey, keynote speaker for this year, Emory School of Medicine Medical Officer for Onchocerciasis Elimination, World Health Organization / Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Participants and students explored the role civility in medicine and compassion, as well as the major themes of the course (death, dying and suffering; beauty, balance, and harmony; communication and compassion) through the lens of courtesy and respect.



We are pleased to offer these proceedings from our 2017 Symposium and we invite those interested to contact us regarding future symposia.

2017 SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS OVERVIEW

Art, Ethics, and Civic Life: A Pilgrimage in Healing

Matera | Caserta | Paestum
Italy

June 9th—June 15, 2017



Matera | Days 1-3

Crypt of the Original Sin, Castel del Monte, Sassi di Matera, La Gravina

death, dying, and suffering

Caserta | Day 4-5

Gardens of Caserta, Tenuta Vannulo, Agriturismo Spinaruccoli

beauty, balance and harmony

Paestum | Days 6-7

Temples and Museum of Paestum

communication and compassion

HOSTS



Ruth Parker, MD
Professor of Medicine,
Pediatrics, Public Health
Emory School of Medicine



Judy Raggi Moore, PhD
Professor of Pedagogy
Director, Italian Studies
Program, Emory College of
Arts & Sciences

VISITING FACULTY



**Angela Amar, PhD,
RN, FAAN**
Dean, Univ. of
Nevada Las Vegas
(UNLV) School of
Nursing



**Sarah Candler, MD,
MPH**
Asst Prof, Michael E.
DeBakey VA Medical
Center and Baylor
College of Medicine



**Paul Cantey, MD,
MPH**
Medical Officer for
Onchocerciasis
Elimination, WHO/
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Neglected Tropical
Diseases



Wright Caughman, MD
Exec VP of Health
Affairs, Emeritus, Prof,
Emory School of
Medicine, Emory
Woodruff Health
Sciences Center

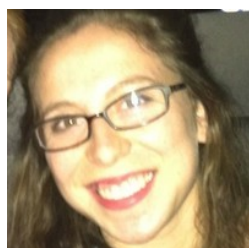


Sidney Law, MD
House Staff
Emory School of
Medicine



**Steffen Lösel, ThD,
MDiv**
Assoc Professor,
Candler School of
Theology

MEDICAL SCHOOL CANDIDATES



Kate Penziner
Class of 2018
Emory School of Medicine



Rachael Postlethwait
Class of 2018
University of South Florida,
Morsani College of
Medicine

MATERA | DAY 1

We kicked off the Symposium in Matera with a large, multicourse dinner replete with local and regional specialties revolving on and off our plates. Our six faculty guests sat with their assigned student groups, quickly learning more about each other as everyone tasted delicious local dishes. As the meal came to a close, the head chef and owner of the restaurant dazzled the room with his internationally famous vegetable chopping abilities – blindfolded! That night we went to bed full and content, anticipating the learning and growth we would experience during the Symposium.



Crypt of the Original Sin

On our first morning together, the visiting faculty quickly learned that the pace of Dr. Raggi Moore slows down for no one! We hustled to our first destination: The Crypt of the Original Sin. Also known as the Sistine Chapel of rupestrian art, this natural cave is home to colorful, 8th century frescoes undiscovered until the 1960s. Before entering the space, we contemplated the importance of intersections: where hot meets cold, where light meets shade, where life meets death. It is in those points of transition that we experience "wind", not only physically, but metaphysically. Points of transition are moments of change, and wind comes to symbolize the unpredictability, discomfort, and at times anguish of being in the liminal space between the two "knowns. Do we chose to be buffeted by these winds of change, or do we stand tall and strong, and like the palm tree, bend to the wind, but never break.



As the Italian heat bore down on us, we silently entered the Crypt, recognizing that moment of transition between the warm and the cool, and took our seats inside the rock cave church.

Sounds of 9th century Christian chants emerged as spotlights illuminated frescoes adorning the walls surrounding us – our senses filled by the legacy of early Christian monks who had fled persecution and found in this desolate land warm hospitality and a new home.



Castel del Monte

A geometric marvel, Castel del Monte raises many questions, leaving most without answers. Emperor Frederick II, a medieval forerunner of a modern humanist, designed this architectural representation of formal perfection by blending Western, Eastern, and ancient traditions. Dr. Sidney Law, a former student of architecture and now an internal medicine resident, guided small groups of faculty and students through the mathematical explanations of the architecture and conundrums that the space held. It is said that the mathematician Fibonacci is just one of the scholars who collaborated in the creation of the landmark. The castle once served as an early cistern, however, public health experts in our group noted the strangely stagnant water in what should have been mobile channels carved into the walls. Modern sculptures of disarticulated bodies filled the spaces where original art had been pillaged over time, forging a link between past and present, earthly and metaphysical.





Presentations

In preparation for our guests, the students crafted group presentations each covering one of the central themes from the course thus far: Beauty, Balance, and Harmony; Death, Dying, and Suffering; or Communication and Compassion.

The students led their assigned faculty guest on the same journey they had experienced over the previous four weeks. Through the lens of their theme, students discussed sites, contextualizing them in significant historical moments, and integrated literature and artworks in their presentations in order to familiarize faculty with the interdisciplinary nature of the course.





The Sassi of Matera

The Sassi of Matera are an amazing ecosystem to study as they have been uninterruptedly inhabited since the Paleolithic era. The Sassi, and its associated Park of the Rupestrian Churches, are a natural labyrinth of houses, churches, and monasteries built into the natural caves of the rocky hillside of Matera proper. This ancient and culturally significant site has extraordinary historic integrity and consists of hundreds of dwellings, shops, and workshops cut into the landscape itself. Human habitation at its best here, established a productive equilibrium from which there is much to learn today. Sadly, since the onset of the industrial revolution through the 1940s, human governance disrupted the equilibrium causing poverty, illness, marginalization, alienation, and infinite sorrow.

During this visit, Dr. Raggi Moore imposed perhaps the most difficult requirement of the whole program — silence. As we listened to her lecture, punctuated with pauses of silence, the voice of the space emerged. It is arguably impossible to truly walk the life path of others, even with the best of intentions, but after hours of discomfort, climbing and descending through the Sassi, the forced silence elicited questions from within each of us. What is the sound of sorrow? Is sorrow silent? Do we purposely create noise so as not to hear the suffering of others? Would we recognize sorrow if we heard it? How would we react? How would we respond? What role does the *bene comune* play in our responses as individuals and as a society?

Christ Stopped at Eboli

As we emerged from the Sassi into the Civita, once again noting the nuances of ascending, we come to understand Carlo Levi's novel, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, in a deeper manner. Levi's text reads like a private journal, weaving in and out of plots surrounding his political exile in the region. Students and faculty alike reflected on the transformation that Levi underwent in his care for the local people and how his art reflects this.



In her final formal lecture to the class, Dr. Ruth Parker led a discussion on the text in the Palazzo Lanfranchi museum. The space chosen for this discussion was intentional; in the adjacent room hung Carlo Levi's photographic studies and subsequent mural, *Lucania '61*, a tribute to the peasants of the region of Matera. Students and faculty contemplated the organization of his composition, as well as the various artistic styles he incorporated in telling the emotional stories of the people he had grown to love and respect.



LA GRAVINA | DAY 4

Our early morning trek to The Gravina, the ravine carved by centuries of river torrents, closed our journey in Matera. Stopping on a ridge, we looked back on the city built from caves as Sarah Candler and Paul Cantey read excerpts from *Christ Stopped at Eboli*. We sat in silence contemplating the past, present, and future of this region full of beauty, pain, and possibility.

Death was in the house: I loved these peasants and I was sad and humiliated by my powerlessness against it...I listened to the silence of the night and I felt as if I had all of a sudden penetrated the very heart of the universe.

- Carlo Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*



ROYAL PALACE OF CASERTA | DAY 4



The Royal Palace of Caserta, built for Charles VII of Naples and his progeny, is one of the largest palaces in the world. Architect Luigi Vanvitelli, in keeping with the thoroughly baroque civic model, designed the palace as royal residence as well as military, administrative, cultural, and educational center for the court. Vanvitelli's park design, with its formal vistas running to the horizon, was inspired by the gardens of Versailles.



Here we welcomed the arrival of our final Symposium guest, Steffen Löesel, ThD, MDiv, of the Candler School of Theology, in the gardens of Caserta. Dr. Löesel's talk, *Civility, Clemency, and Revolution: Punishment Politics in 18th-Century Naples*, provided a strong historical context in which to frame important philosophical discussions regarding power, governing, and the state.

From Machiavelli to Mozart, Dr. Löesel used history and the arts to identify how the opinion on clemency changed and prompted a debate among the students around some rousing questions: Is it possible to be a philosopher and a ruler at the same time? Can one seek truth, beauty, and goodness and be a successful politician?



Tenuta Vannulo

Our visit to this ecological farm in the Campania region near Paestum highlighted the important role that local farming and industry play in the Italian community. A place committed to small-scale production could only survive in a modern market with the support of devoted, local patrons and a high-quality product.

We tasted the fresh *mozzarella di bufala*, made from the milk of buffalos who decide when they want to be milked, between their electric massagers, classical music, and showers. The high-quality cheese, yogurts, and gelatos produced are testaments to the ways in which modern farming technology can be seamlessly combined with traditional practices.

Our tour guide invited us to “walk to admire the buffaloes, with smells and noises that are integrated with the modernity of the stables. View the wisdom of craftsmanship.” Much to everyone’s delight the walk ended with a much-appreciated mozzarella tasting.



Agriturismo Spinaruccoli



The owners of Agriturismo Spinaruccoli, welcomed the group with a tour of their vegetable gardens. We watched the hospitable cooks prepare our lunch (pizza!) from freshly picked ingredients while continuing our discussion on the appropriateness and benefits of eating according to the seasons, not forcing Nature but respecting it.

Dr. Wright Caughman then led the group in a discussion about the role of compassion in modern health care. How do we reconcile the economic realities of health care with the philosophical ideals? In small groups, students and their faculty members contemplated what the ideal health care system would look like. In order to do this, they also worked to define important terms such as compassion and the common good.



One group questioned what it is that the health care system truly values, while another group grappled with developing a strong working definition of the term civility and its role in health care.

PAESTUM | DAY 6

Founded by the Greeks, under the name Poseidonia, around 600 BC this southern coastal city has changed ruling hands several times. After occupation by the Lucanians, the Romans gave the city its current name, Paestum. The city was abandoned in the Early Middle Ages but fortunately it was left mostly undisturbed over the centuries. Due to the excellent site preservation, it now contains a national museum and is a noted cultural stop for those enjoying the nearby coastal resorts.



Visit to the Temples and Museum of Paestum

Paestum's archaeological park contains massive Doric temples. Two of them, built 100 years apart, sparked discussion among the student groups about how and why the temples seemed to convey differing messages. The earlier temple has an odd number of columns on the short ends, which some argued created a strong sense of boundary; there was no clear entrance and kept the inside of the temple more secluded. Students reacted more positively toward the newer temple: for them, the proportions felt more pleasing. The different responses inspired by the varied architecture prompted discussion about what was necessary to create a sense of balance of harmony: could a space be harmonious with unbalanced elements? Could a space be harmonious only in the context of its surrounding?

Inside the Museum of Paestum, Dr. Raggi Moore introduced the most significant piece we would see: the Tomb of the Diver, contextualizing it within Plato's **The Symposium**. On the inside lid of a tomb, a fresco depicts a confident diver piercing the air between his perch and the water below. Dr. Parker shared a letter she had written to this Diver, pushing us to ask and answer important questions: who was meant to see this figure? How does he represent the liminal space that exists between transitions? How do we face the uncertainty of what comes next? The responses would become the final reflections that students would formulate as their academic journey of the summer neared its end.



Final Presentations

As a send-off to the faculty, and the culmination of the Symposium, the students prepared final presentations. Working with their assigned faculty member, the students were to use the themes they had introduced at the beginning of the Symposium and weave in the content, questions, and reflections that had developed over the previous week.

The groups each considered a different theme: Death, Dying, and Suffering; Beauty, Balance and Harmony; and Communication and Compassion. As these examples show below, the presentations included interactive discussion with the audience:

- Students created a thought experiment for the audience to experience: in the setting of an illness (malaria), there is only enough medicine to treat one patient. Between a mother of two, a young boy, and the doctor, who would you treat? The hypothetical scenario pushed the audience to contemplate the realities of health care distribution, broad ethical dilemmas, and the optimal method of making community decisions.
- Students read a collaborative piece that explored their own journey in understanding the meaning of beauty, balance, and harmony. They voiced their individual opinions, expressed the ways in which the group had come to consensus, and where they continued to have diverging views. The choral reading allowed the audience to experience how the students thought and felt throughout their journey.

For more information about the TRACE experience, please visit conversationsinitaly.com for digital scholarship and traceyoursteps@wordpress.com for a student-centered blog.