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7-12-2013

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Recommended Citation

University Relations, "Buchanan Travels to Madagascar and Mauritius with Imagine Fund" (2013). *Campus News Archive*. 196.

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Buchanan Travels to Madagascar and Mauritius with Imagine Fund

Summary: Sarah Buchanan will travel to Madagascar and Mauritius with support from the University of Minnesota's Imagine Fund Awards.

(July 12, 2013)-Sarah Buchanan, associate professor of French, is the recipient of a 2013 all-University Imagine Fund Award. The award will help fund Buchanan's on-going project "Quand la magie rencontre l'image: Destin et lutte dans Quand les étoiles rencontrent la mer" or "When Magic Meets the Image: Destiny and Struggle in When the Stars Meet the Sea." Buchanan will do first-hand research on the island of Madagascar and present her findings at the prestigious Le Congrès International d'Études francophones (CIEF) Conference on the island of Mauritius June 9-17.

Buchanan's project centers on the francophone film *When the Stars Meet the Sea*, written and directed by Madagascan Raymond Rajaonarivelo. The film tells the story of Kapila, a boy born with a limp and the ability to see through the eyes of birds. He was also born on a lunar eclipse: a terrible sign. According to the beliefs of Kapila's native Merina group, he must be killed, or he will grow up to kill his parents.

Magic, images, and the very act of seeing—particularly the ways in which the film constructs images of Kapila—are important motifs throughout the film as well as fruitful paths for Buchanan to investigate. Destiny is another important theme in the film. In an attempt to avoid his murderous fate, Kapila embarks on a journey across Madagascar to navigate his destiny. This adventure is an experience Buchanan hopes to trace, as she intends to interact with the Merina and to interview Rajaonarivelo himself.

"I'm exploring the intersection between words and magic in an African context through my work," says Buchanan. "There are many questions that drive my research in this particular instance: how the filmmaker represents magic, how the director plays with the idea of image, who sees what in what context, how magic relies on vision, how magic and image are in tension circling around destiny."

After visiting Madagascar, Buchanan will stop briefly on the island of Reunion, a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage site. She will then travel to Mauritius to present her research on the film at the CIEF Conference in Mauritius. CIEF is the premiere association in Francophone studies.

This project is supported by generous funding from the University of Minnesota's Imagine Fund Awards and University of Minnesota, Morris's Faculty Research Enhancement Fund.

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