Tracy Hoffman  
*In Search of Madame Bradley: African-American Women of the Oklahoma Territory*  
(English / Arts and Sciences)

After being abroad for seventeen years, Washington Irving returned to America in 1832 and proved himself as a patriotic son by joining a buffalo hunt through the Oklahoma Territory and writing about his experiences in "A Tour on the Prairies" (1835). The African-American female he includes at the conclusion of the book is the focus of my study. Irving does not name her, though she is the only African-American in the book and the only woman that he describes in detail, but in his account, fellow traveler Henry Levitt Ellsworth provides a name: Madame Bradley. She was an African-American woman, married to an Anglo man, making money by cooking for those leaving and returning from Fort Gibson. I presented a paper in May 2007 at an Atlantic Studies conference, and I mentioned Bradley in my paper. My colleagues there encouraged me to investigate her further. And so I intend to find out more about Madame Bradley and other women like her.

I would like to spend five days in Muskogee, which is near Fort Gibson, to visit historic sites, museums, and libraries to develop some theories about who this woman might have been. I have communicated with librarians at the University of Oklahoma in Norman about collections that they have, and I would like to spend another week looking over their archives, such as: the Roberta Robey Collection, which contains documents about slaves in Oklahoma; the Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, which includes letters about slavery in Oklahoma; and the Historic Oklahoma Collection, which provides numerous opportunities for research.