

Humanities Center Newsletter

March 2002 vol 1 no 3

Trinity 126, 100, and hallway www.csuchico.edu/hfa/hc

Director's Corner

Many thanks to the colleagues who responded to my circular asking what they were **reading** and what films they were **watching**. Oddly, no one seems to be **reading** the same books although we are certainly **watching** the same films (Peter Hogue excepted). Perhaps the responses below will serve the purpose of bringing enthusiasts for a particular author or a particular subject together.

Access to Trinity 126

As I came to my office today I noticed that work on the card-swipe system for Trinity 126 had just begun. Apparently a few parts are still missing but we can expect the system to be working shortly. This will mean that all current faculty and staff who have an updated Wildcat card (the one with your picture on it) will be free to use the newly remodeled Humanities Center at their leisure. I will send word out via email when this is ready.

Susan Haack Lecture and Symposium

Please mark your calendar for the arrival of **Susan Haack, Cooper Senior Scholar in Arts and Sciences at the University of Miami**, on Monday, March 11. That evening at 7pm in PAC 144, she will deliver a lecture

"Not Till It's Over:

Reflections on the End of Science."

Based on a chapter from her forthcoming book, *Defending Science—Within Reason*, Haack takes issue with those who a) seek to politicize science (Sandra Harding, for example) and b) argue that science may be reaching a point of diminishing returns (see John Horgan's book on *The End of Science*). That same day she will hold a symposium from noon until 2pm for all interested faculty (and interested students as well) in Trinity 126. **Free copies of the book chapter are available to anyone who would care to attend either event.** Please contact me by phone or email. Haack is a marvelously lucid, amusing, and vigorous thinker—I highly recommend her to you.

Russell Jacoby Lecture and Symposium

We also have had the good luck to invite **Russell Jacoby, Professor in Residence at UCLA**, to campus just at the moment when the debate about public intellectuals is heating up. Some of you will be aware of the furor that Richard Posner's new book, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline*, has raised. Jacoby, whose book *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (currently reissued in a new

edition by Basic Books) launched the whole debate, will address the issue in his public lecture on Wednesday, May 1, at 7pm in PAC 144. For a preview of the treat we are in for, ask me for an electronic copy of Jacoby's scathing review of Posner titled "**Cornering the Market in Chutzpah**" (from the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, I believe—I've lost the Web-site address, alas). Jacoby will also conduct a symposium on the topic of public intellectuals in the Humanities Center on May 1, from noon until 2pm. While we will not be able to offer gratis copies of Jacoby's book as we did with Rorty's, we will have the books available for a discount at the A.S. Bookstore.

Thursday Afternoon Tertulias

Our Thursday afternoon's social hours, begun last semester, are percolating along. We had particularly frolicsome crowds on the last day of the fall semester and the first day of this one. We would especially like to invite HFA faculty and staff from Ayres, Taylor, and the PAC to stop by. It's a pleasant habit to get into.

We Have a Winner!

Congratulations to **George Thompson, reference librarian**, for solving last issue's double acrostic! The answer was: **Shaw, Getting Married: "The whole strength of England lies in the fact that the enormous majority of the English people are snobs."** George will be receiving a \$10 gift

certificate to the A.S. Bookstore—and so will you if your correct solution is drawn at random. **A hint:** You do not have to discover all the clues before you decipher the quote. Often one can find the answer with only a few clues by working back and forth between the quote and the clues (and not forgetting that the first words of the clues form the author's name and the title of the work. Further hints: The author to clue J is Shakespeare and the numbers after clues S and T refer to the number of letters in each word of the answer. Just email me your answers by March 22.

Humanities Center Library Continues to Grow

Those of you who have interviewed job candidates in Trinity 126 will notice that we have purchased a wide variety of reference works from the Oxford University Press holiday sale. We are also now receiving *The New York Review of Books*, *The London Review of Books*, and *The Boston Review*. We hope to receive the *Times Literary Supplement* shortly. Finally, I am pleased to thank the following individuals for their generous donations:

Authors Who Have Donated
Their Own Books

Maria R. Gonzalez, Foreign
Languages and Literatures
*Imagen de la prostituta en la
novella mexicana
contemporánea*

Anthony Graybosch, Philosophy
w/ Joel Rudinow
*Ethics and Values in the
Information Age*

Ron Hirschbein, Philosophy
*Voting Rites: The Devolution
of American Politics; What If
They Gave a Crisis and Nobody
Came?: Interpreting
International Crises; and
Newest Weapons/Oldest
Psychology: The Dialectics of
American Nuclear Strategy.*

Troy Jollimore, Philosophy
*Friendship and Agent-Relative
Morality*

James Karman, English
Botho Strauss, *Jeffers Akt I
und II* (with a translation of
Jim's life of Jeffers into
German)

Sarah Pike, Religious Studies
*Earthly Bodies, Magical
Selves: Contemporary Pagans
and the Search for Community*

Faculty Who Have Contributed
Books

Eugenio Frongia, Foreign
Languages and Literatures
Donald Kennedy, *Academic Duty*

Maria R. Gonzalez, Foreign
Languages and Literatures
Juan Villegas, editor, *Del
Escenario a la mesa de la
critica*; and Silvia
Pellarolo, *Sainete Criollo:
Democracia/Representación.
El Caso de Nemesio Trejo*

Troy Jollimore, Philosophy
Roger Shattuck, *Candor and
Perversion: Literature,
Education, and the Arts*; and
Solomon & Higgins, *A Short
History of Philosophy*

Roger Kaye, English
*The Riverside Shakespeare and
The Riverside Milton*

Jason Tannen, Art & Art
History
*Art Speak: A Guide to
Contemporary Ideas,
Movements, and Buzzwords*

Reading and Watching

Sara Cooper, Foreign Languages and Literatures
I am currently rereading Isabel Allende's *Casa de los espíritus*
(*House of the Spirits*), Allende's first huge seller and a subject
of much debate. In an upcoming conference presentation, I will be
arguing that in this book Allende was not merely imitating García
Márquez's style, but rather creates a complex narrative to
suggest the conflictive relationship between family and state. As
both systems (familial and social) teeter on the brink of radical
change, some cling desperately to a vision of the past, while
others scramble to adapt to the emerging order. My paper will
explore the connections between conformity, resistance, and
oppression in Allende's representation of family and social
systems.

Jill Swiencicki, English

I finished the novel *Davita's Harp* by Chaim Potok, and it was perfect to read it post 9/11—a story about a young girl, raised by Marxists in the time of Guernica, who's trying to find a philosophy she can use to order her life, moving from socialism, to Orthodox Judaism, to a kind of feminism by the end of the book.

After reading Jonathan Raban's essay in the latest *New Yorker*, I have ordered his memoir about traveling in the Middle East, Arabia.

Susan Green, History

I 've recently read Victor Villasenor's *Trece Sentidos* and Pat Buchanan's *The Death of the West*. Talk about the good, the bad, and the ugly. I have moved on to Michael Moore's new one, *Stupid White Men*, and can't put it down.

The last movie I saw was in the Bay Area, *Life or Debt*, a great movie on the impact of the IMF and World Bank on Jamaica.

Jeff Livingston, History

Albert Camus, *The Plague*

Scott L. Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*

Andrew Flescher, Religious Studies

The best book I've read in the last two years is Jonathan Glover's recent book, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*, which is chilling, if cautiously uplifting. Glover's main thesis is that ethics does not exist in a vacuum and consequently ought to be regarded as an empirical enterprise. Glover, in particular, relates ethics to human psychology, one facet of which is acknowledging what terrible things we are capable of doing to one another—hence his crisp chronicle of atrocities committed by groups against other groups witnessed in our most recent century. This is a sharp, concise, and engaging volume. The best film in the theatre I've recently seen is Robert Altman's *Gosford Park*.

Greg Tropea, Philosophy

With a few students as companions, I'm rereading *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, by Deleuze and Guattari, and Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. I'm also reading the strategic plans submitted this year by the various departments of city government here in Chico. What films? The documentary of CFA's presentation of petitions to the Board of Trustees in Long Beach.

Brooks Thorlaksson, Associate Dean

Just finished *A Beautiful Mind*. Well worth the time as it explores not only Nash's life (which is much more complicated

than the screen life) but also the history and politics of the time and the cultures of mathematics and mental illness.

Robert Stewart, Philosophy

I'm currently reading Craig DeLancey's *Passionate Engines: What Emotions Reveal about Mind and Artificial Intelligence*, new from Oxford University Press. Also, two philosophical science fiction novels, Robert Silverberg's *The World Inside* and Robert Heinlein's classic, *Stranger in a Strange Land*.

I've seen *Mulholland Drive*, *Lord of the Rings*, *A Beautiful Mind*, and *Vanilla Sky* in theatres; *Radio Days* on video. Lynch's film lived up to my hopes—it was encouraging to see many people talking about it immediately afterwards—and the others exceeded my (admittedly lower) expectations. At least a few good films are being shown in theatres these days, and there are always exceptional ones that we haven't seen available on video, some of these now accessible at the new alternative rental business downtown.

Peggy DuFon, English

Right now I am reading several books: *The Last Passage: Recovering a Death of Our Own* by Donald Heinz; *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing* by Christiane Northrup; *Pragmatics in Language Teaching* by Gabriele Kasper and Kenneth Rose; *The Neurobiology of Affect in Language* by John Schumann.

Recent notable films: *Tortilla Soup*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Anne of Avon Lee*, *Pay It Forward*.

Daniel Griggs, Foreign Languages and Literatures

Paradise Lost by Milton; *Memento*, *Fellowship of the Ring*, *Amelie* [over-rated].

Eugenio Frongia, Foreign Languages and Literatures

I am reading Jan Morris' *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere*. This is supposed to be the author's "last book." Anyone who knows something about Trieste's history will find this book revealing and intriguing.

Ken Rose, History

I have been reading Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions*, Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*, and Simone de Beauvoir's *America Day by Day*. Recent movies include *Amelie*, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, and an old film noir, *He Walked by Night*.

Lawrence Bryant, History

I am always reading but in about seven different keys:

Key 1) My basic just-to-get-through-the-week reading is randomly selected articles in *TLS*, *New Yorker*, *New York Review of Books*, and *The Nation*.

Key 2) Basic to remain quasi-current in history reading entails weekly overviews of book reviews in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, *Renaissance Quarterly*, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, and *American Historical Review*.

Key 3) Perusal of articles of interest in the journals of Key 2 along with articles of interest in *Journal of History of Ideas*, *Representations*, and *History and Theory*.

Key 4) In this key, I include professional reading. I have just finished William Bousma's *The Waning of the Renaissance*, a study better than a textbook but still a rather synoptic covering of the period 1540-1640. It is the best introduction available to the period and issues of the transformation of humanism from antique foundations to utilitarian/natural ones that opens the door to the mechanical philosophies of Descartes and Hobbes. I am disappointed that Bousma (who has been writing brilliantly on this period for over fifty years) doesn't make more use of the cultural historical studies of the last twenty-five years. Still, the book is a rewarding read (and a probable textbook in my Culture and Politics from Machiavelli to Locke course). Part of the problem of the book is its author situates his study between two of the finest intellectual and cultural histories written in the twentieth century: Huizinga's *Autumn of the Middle Ages* and Hazard's *La Crise de la Conscience Européenne*. From this perspective, Bousma's accomplishment is as bold as it is admirable. At the end of January, I just began another book that attempts to synthesize the issues of the "post-Renaissance" period (and am about four years late in finally getting to read), Dale K. Van Kley's *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791*.

Key 5) This key is reading that is directly connected to my research and writing. From several years of study, I am finishing an article on Phillipe de Comynnes as Courtier and have been working intensely with his *Mémoires* and biographies of him and his contemporaries as well as studies on Courts. Also, the *memoire mode/style* in French culture must be considered, and fortunately Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie has recently covered the issue in the study *Saint Simon and the Court of Louis XIV*. [This is a worthy read in itself]. Moreover, my reading for my book on a series of historical prints that appeared in 1570 is ongoing. I'll spare you that bibliography, but (as I am sure with many of you) such projects are regular parts of my reading. I keep trying

to convince myself that I am an academic because of the moral and intellectual pleasure that comes from reading and learning.

Key 6) This is the pure pleasure, "light" reading, and family and social duty key. I re-read Faulkner's *Light in August* last week to be able to talk about the novel with my son (who was reading it in his Southern Literature course). It is an overwhelming novel and stark depiction of humanity. I am limited in discussing it with my son because I do not want to confuse him or give him ideas that might not fit with his instructor's readings (I always had that problem with English teachers). I look back to the techniques of Flaubert in Faulkner, the epic tone, the local and the universal. I'd love a conversation on it. I have continued with my reading in my son's syllabus with Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a jolt from Faulkner's world to another South but a powerful study and one wonderfully rich for comparisons of visions, styles, and settings. Finally, I have been plugging away for nearly two years at Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and try to read at least a chapter a month. I am well into the seventh century and maybe half way through the work.

Key 7) If I were not on sabbatical, there would be the seventh key for my course readings. At least this one semester I can catch up on the other keys.

Well, there you are, my last month's reading. This little excursion is perhaps a caution that one should be careful of what one asks for. I shall exclude movies, since the recent ones that I have seen are not particularly worth discussion, except to be sociable.

Gail Beterbide, Theatre Arts

- 1) For those mystery genre aficionados, give M.C. Beaton a try. Quirky, Scottish, small-town characters are the menu du jour, led by the requisite over-worked and under-appreciated local constable, Hamish MacBeth.
- 2) *High Fidelity*: underrated John Cusack hits a high note with this effort. No plot surprises, only genuinely off-beat characters leading genuinely absurd lives.
- 3) *Gosford Park*: a murder mystery in which the murder is less of a mystery than a few of the subplots. Maggie Smith gets and deftly delivers all the great lines.

Robert O'Brien, English

I recently reread René Girard's *A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare*, an exploration of "mimetic rivalry"—individuals imitating others' desires, then coming into conflict with those they imitate—in plays from *The Two Gentleman of Verona* to *The Winter's Tale*. This inspired me to reread Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*, which I hadn't read since I was an undergraduate. Though I doubt that I understood the book then, my marginalia show that I thought I did—no question marks but many stars and exclamation points, often beside relatively uninteresting passages.

The best novel I read in the past few weeks was Paul Theroux's *The Family Arsenal*, a London-terrorism story, a descendent of James's *Princess Casamassima* and Conrad's *Secret Agent*. The best autobiography was the abridged version of Anthony Powell's memoirs. I can't decide if the best collection of criticism was Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile* or Martin Amis's *The War against Cliché*.

Peter Hogue, English

READING. Poets: Adam Zagajewsky, George Oppen's *New Collected Poems*, Anne Carson, Fernando Pessoa, and giving Lyn Hejinian's book-length *Border Comedy* a try. Non-fiction: John Berger, Susan Sontag, Zagajewsky's essays and prose meditations, the various versions of Pessoa's *Book of Disquiet*, and Mary Ann Caws' new anthology of surrealist writing. Fiction was the great passion of my literary youth, but I value poetry much more nowadays. So much the better, then, that Berger's best essays have the intensity of poetry, that Zagajewsky is a practicing poet regardless of whether or not he's writing in verse, and that Anne Carson is brilliant at eroding the arbitrary borders between the poetic and the essayistic.

FILMS. I've been buying DVDs the way I used to buy novels, and that's been providing me with more than a little consolation and pleasure in a time when there's very little in the movie theatres that I really look forward to. Jean-Luc Godard's *For Ever Mozart*, Agnes Varda's *The Gleaners and I*, Manoel de Oliveira's *Journey to the Beginning of the World*, and four films by Jacques Rivette—*Secret Defense*, *The Gang of Four*, *Hurlevent* (a modernized *Wuthering Heights*), and *Up/Down/Fragile*. Mostly French, all on DVD or VHS, and all by directors who are 70 or older.

Calendar

March 2002

- 5-21** *Get Your Own Blankety-Blank*, conceptual art by Tom Brockman, Trinity 100 (Saxe, x4642)
- 5-28** *Aesthetic Analysis*, an art/biology collaboration between Jason and Elaine Esteban, Trinity hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 7**
- Tertulia, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
 - Get Your Own Blankety-Blank* ice-cream formal reception, 5-7pm, Trinity 100 (Saxe, x4642)
 - University Film Series, 7:30pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 8**
- Symposium, James Karman, English and Humanities, 3-5pm, Trinity 126 (Pike, x6341)
 - Aesthetic Analysis* reception, 7-9pm, Trinity 100 and hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 11**
- Symposium, Susan Haack, "Defending Science—Within Reason," noon-2pm, Trinity 126 and 100 (Easton, x4284)
 - Lecture, Susan Haack, "Not Till It's Over: Reflections on the End of Science," 7pm, PAC 144; reception follows in Trinity 100 (Easton, x4284)
- 14**
- Tertulia, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
 - University Film Series, 7:30pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 15** Symposium, "Black Mothers and Sons," Tracy Butts, English, 3-5pm, Trinity 126 (Pike, x6341)
- 21**
- Tertulia, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
 - University Film Series, 7:30pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)

April 2002

- 2-25** *CDES Graphic Design/Photography Juried Show 2002*, student works, Trinity 100 and hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 3-4** The Yvonne Yarbrow-Bejarano Visit: lectures, seminars, receptions, Trinity 126, 100, and hallway (Cooper, x5161)

- 4
 - Tertulia, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
 - University Film Series, 7:30pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 11
 - Tertulia, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
 - University Film Series, 7:30pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 12
 - Symposium, Sheri Simons, Art and Art History, 3-5pm, Trinity 126 (Pike, x6341)
- 18
 - Tertulia, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
 - University Film Series, 7:30pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 23-25
 - Humor Colloquium, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, 3-5pm, Trinity 126, 100, and hallway (Cooper, x5161)
- 25
 - University Film Series, 7:30pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 26
 - Symposium, Terri Elliott, Philosophy, 3-5pm, Trinity 126 (Pike, x6341)
- 29-30
 - Cinco de Mayo exhibits and events, Trinity 100 (Cooper, x5161)
- 30
 - Marks on Place: American Landscapes*, water colors by Catherine Jennings, Trinity hallway (Saxe, x4642)

May 2002

- thru 3**
 - Cinco de Mayo exhibits and events, Trinity 100 (Cooper, x5161)
- thru 30**
 - Marks on Place: American Landscapes*, water colors by Catherine Jennings, Trinity hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 1
 - Symposium, Russell Jacoby, noon-2pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
 - Lecture, Russell Jacoby, 7pm, PAC 144 (Easton, x4284)
- 2
 - Tertulia, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
 - University Film Series, 7:30pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 3
 - Lecture, Mark Poster, 2pm, PAC 134 (Graybosch, x5111)
- 7-30
 - Book of a Polish Pilgrimage: Silesia 1999-2002*, photography by alum Joe Marsh, Trinity 100. Reception May 7, 5-7pm (Saxe, x4642)
- 8
 - Marks on Place: American Landscapes*, reception, 5-7pm, Trinity 100 (Saxe, x4642)
- 9
 - Tertulia, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)

