

HUMANITIES CENTER

AT CALIFORNIA STATE
UNIVERSITY, CHICO

NEWSLETTER

September 2002
Trinity 126, 100, and hallway



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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

by Laird Easton, History

On behalf of the board of the Humanities Center, I would like to welcome everyone back to campus and invite them to participate in the various HC activities we have lined up for this year.

Before I describe the themes we have chosen to explore this year, let me just remind all HFA faculty and staff that the Humanities Center (Trinity 126) is now accessible by using one's Wildcat card in the card swipe system. To activate your card, you will need to fill out a short application that your department secretary has available.

1) The Two Cultures Revisited: Science and the Humanities

Two polar groups: at one pole we have the literary intellectuals, who incidentally while no one was looking took to referring to themselves as "intellectuals" as though there were no others Literary intellectuals at one pole—at the other scientists, and as the most representative, physical scientists. Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension—sometimes (particularly among the young) hostility and dislike, but most of all lack of understanding.

So wrote C. P. Snow in his famous and controversial Rede Lecture of 1959, published as *The Two Cultures*. Has the situation changed at all in the last forty-three years? I think so—the gap of mutual incomprehension and distrust has only grown in the intervening years. This became especially evident during in the aftermath of the famous "Sokal hoax"

six years ago.* Since then there have been a spate of books on the so-called Science Wars, pitting those scholars who view the natural sciences as primarily a cultural enterprise—a social construction every bit as subject to political and social agendas as any other human activity—against those who argue that the natural sciences must represent something more than a politically or socially convenient fiction. The former tend to be informed by European critical theory and are often found in "Science Studies" departments. Some have scientific training; frequently they have none. Among the defenders of a more traditional conception of science are many prominent scientists, appalled at what they view as a distorted caricature of what they do. Yet if scientists become alarmed at what they see as aggressive poaching on their terrain by scholars in the humanities, it goes the other way as well. Many humanists (and some scientists as well) express alarm at what appears to be a desire on the part of some evolutionary biologists—Edward Wilson's best-selling *Consilience* is perhaps the most famous recent example—to explain human culture by reducing it to biological models. Indeed, with the publication of James Carroll's *Evolution and Literary Theory*, the very citadel of social constructionism and critical theory—literary studies—has come under attack.

* Alan Sokal, a mathematical physicist at New York University, submitted an article to the "critical theory" journal *Social Text*, which purported to be a social constructionist "debunking" of physics. As the title—"Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity"—Sokal deployed the jargon of so-called critical theory. Although the article was pure hokum, the journal's editors, prominent scholars in the humanities, published it without review and, as became clear when the hoax was exposed, without comprehension.

It will be one of the goals of the Humanities Center to explore these issues in greater depth and with greater subtlety.

To that end we are preparing a reader with two sections. The first will contain readings on the impact of evolutionary biology on scholarship in the humanities. We will schedule a reading group to discuss these sometime in the fall, close to the visit of Presidential Scholar Edward Larson who will be lecturing on evolution and religion in America in October. The second group of readings will focus on the Science Wars proper and we will choose a date in the early spring to discuss these.

We are also looking for other outside speakers in this area to invite to campus. The readers will be made available to any and all faculty and staff who would be interested in participating in these discussions.

As we cannot hope to exhaust this rich subject in one year, we are planning to extend the theme for the following academic year as well, concentrating then on the ways in which science and scientists have been treated in fiction and in the theater. In cooperation with the Department of Theatre Arts, we are in the preliminary stage of planning the production of a play with science as its subject. More on this later

2) Eros and Culture

The degree and kind of a man's sexuality reaches into the topmost summit of his spirit

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Certainly no one can accuse the humanities of having neglected the study of sexuality and of gender in recent decades. There have been any number of conferences and colloquia on gender, sexual discrimination and harassment, cross dressing and homosexuality since my arrival on campus about ten years ago, most of them beholden to the paradigm that claims sexual desire to be socially constructed.

We do not wish to repeat any of this or indeed to tackle subjects better left to other campus institutions such as the Center for Multicultural and Gender Studies. Rather we aim to explore some issues hitherto relatively neglected in all of these prior events (inevitably there will be some overlap). For example, we would like to examine the interplay between sexual desire and cultural production, particularly in literature and the arts. Again we are assembling selected readings on this issue as well. These readers will once again be made available to all HFA faculty and staff interested in participating in the discussions we have planned on the general theme Eros and Culture. Our first seminar will be scheduled for the spring. The University Art Gallery will also

be producing an exhibition, *Deep*, exploring eroticism in the visual arts in conjunction with this theme. In addition we hope to invite at least one distinguished scholar to campus to speak on eros and culture.

Presidential Scholar Edward Larson

The Humanities Center is proud to be the principal sponsor of the well known historian and legal scholar Edward J. Larson as a Presidential Scholar this October. He will be our principal guest speaker for the Science and the Humanities theme. Larson, Richard B. Russell Professor of History and the Law at the University of Georgia, won the 1998 Pulitzer Prize in History for his fascinating study of the Scopes Trial entitled *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial in America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (Harvard). More recently he published *Evolution's Workshop: God and Science in the Galapagos*, an excerpt of which was published last spring by *The Atlantic Monthly*. With a doctorate in the history of science from Wisconsin and a law degree from Harvard, Professor Larson has established himself as one of the country's foremost experts on the intersections between science, religion, and the law, discussing these matters frequently in the major print and broadcast media. On Wednesday, October 23, he will give a public talk in Laxson Auditorium at 7pm entitled: "Creationism and Evolution: A History of Controversy in the Classroom." The following day he will conduct a symposium on the same topic, based on *Summer for the Gods*, in the Humanities Center from noon until 2pm. At 7pm that evening he will speak again in PAC 134: "What's So Special About the Galapagos?" The following morning he will conduct a symposium on this issue from 10am until noon in the Humanities Center. Depending on our budget, the Humanities Center will endeavor to make a limited number of gratis copies of *Summer for the Gods* available for interested HFA faculty.

Other Programs and Events

Sara Cooper, Jason Tannen, and Sarah Pike have already booked a full schedule of **faculty symposia** for this coming year. As you know, these are held on one Friday per month beginning at 3pm in the Humanities Center. Presentations are informal and there is plenty of time for questions and answers over refreshments. This has proved to be a wonderful way to discover what research agendas your colleagues through out the HFA are pursuing.

An even more informal way to meet faculty and staff is the **Thursday tertulias**, which begin in the Humanities Center at 4pm and commonly last until 5:30. Once again refreshments are available. To help pay for this, we have initiated the **Tertulia Club** where a tax-deductible

contribution of \$20 gives members free access to a year's worth of food and drink at the tertulias. Our thanks go to the "founding members": Brooks Thorlaksson, Laird Easton, Thomasin Saxe, Richard Parker, Sandra Wright, Ernst Schöen-René, Joel Zimbelman, and Robert Tinkler.

As she does every year, Thomasin Saxe, director of the **Humanities Center Art Gallery**, has lined up an exciting series of exhibitions for the year in Trinity 100 and the hallway (newly carpeted, I hope you note).

Despite the University's budget problems, the highly successful **Humanities Center-sponsored University Film Series** under the helm of Peter Hogue still lives on. These are screened at 8pm Ayres 106 on Thursdays.

For information on all the above events as well as for interviews with guest speakers, and other articles of interest, stayed tuned to this **Humanities Center Newsletter**, published three times a year.

Puzzle Contest

If you turn to the last page of this issue, you will find our second double acrostic puzzle. Solve it and submit it to me by October 18 and it will be entered into the drawing for a **ten dollar gift certificate from the A.S. Bookstore**. If this is not incentive enough, then think of the prestige of being a puzzle winner! 🎯

INTERVIEW

by Laird Easton, *History*

DEAN SARAH BLACKSTONE

Sarah Blackstone grew up in Laramie, Wyoming where her father taught structural geology for 46 years. She received her B.A. with honors in theatre from the University of Wyoming, her M.A. in technical theatre from Kansas State University, and her Ph.D. in theatre history from Northwestern University in 1983. She has taught at the University of Central Arkansas, the University of Washington, and Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, where she served as chair of theatre for 4fouryears. She has published two books: *Buckskins, Bullets and Business: A History of Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (Greenwood, 1986) and *The Business of Being Buffalo Bill: Selected Letters of William F. Cody, 1879-1917* (Praeger, 1988). Blackstone is a member of the advisory board for the Museum of Repertoire Americana in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, just completed a three-year term as vice president for the American Theatre and Drama Society, and is an editorial board member for *Theatre*

Annual. She is a past president of the Theatre History Forum of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education. In 1993, Sarah was named an Outstanding Alumni of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Wyoming, and in 1996 she was named a Faculty Woman of Distinction at Southern Illinois University.

You had a good deal of administrative experience before you became acting dean last year. Still, there must have been some things that surprised you. What was the most surprising intellectual challenge in being dean?

As acting dean, my most surprising challenge was learning to manage the complexity of the college. It is one thing to sit on a Chair's Council and hear the tales of accomplishment and woe from other chairs; it is another thing altogether to have to balance the needs and dreams of all the departments, and sometimes the faculty within a department, and make decisions that are fair and equitable. This task was further complicated by my relative lack of knowledge about certain of the disciplines and specialties in the college. I have been doing quite a lot of summer reading so that I can better understand and represent parts of the college that are outside my discipline and general areas of interest.

During economic downturns, faculty in the humanities often fear—or are told by the administration they should fear—losing majors to more “practical” disciplines. They then feel compelled to make their subjects “relevant” in some practical way. What’s your view on this?

Over the years I have had to talk to hundreds of concerned parents about their child's wish to become a performer. Invariably their worry was that theatre was not a “practical” choice and their child would starve in a garret. I struggled to find a polite and reassuring answer to their concerns, knowing that the profession is difficult and even the most talented often fail to achieve fame and fortune. Ultimately I came to understand that every discipline has several strands—the practical skills required to succeed, the base-line knowledge required to understand, and the advanced cognitive skills needed to advance beyond craft to the art of the profession. We teach each of these strands in every major. In the end, we don't need to make our subjects relevant in a practical way. They already are. What we do need to do is make sure our students (and their parents and the public) understand the more practical skills that are associated with our disciplines, and the very real applications (professions, jobs, social contributions) that those practical skills have. Many theatre students end up in careers far removed from the theatre, but the skills they learned, the knowledge they mastered, and the ability to think and reason they acquired in their major, stand them in good

stead throughout their lives. It is not a bad thing to offer practical and relevant skills to our students, and it is not a bad thing to be sure they understand you are doing so. But that cannot be the focus or purpose of our teaching.

How would you like to see the Humanities Center develop over the next several years?

The Humanities Center must continue to serve as a faculty development center for the college and for the university. The opportunity to discuss important ideas and trends in our disciplines and create a type of intellectual synergy that leads to new ways of thinking and new directions for research are rare in our busy lives. The Humanities Center, both as a geographical location and as an operating entity, should provide both structured and open opportunities for intellectual discussion and renewal.

One of your avocations is bird watching. What useful skills/values does birding provide to a dean?

Birding has taught me that if I shut up and listen, new ways of understanding and appreciating the world will be revealed to me.

What is the one play/musical you would still like to direct?

I hope to have the chance to direct more than one before I stop rising to artistic challenges. The play at the top of my list is *MacBeth*. I love melodrama as a dramatic form (not a reflection of a historic period) and the Scottish play is the best melodrama I know. (Actually, if I'm honest I'd really rather play the role of MacBeth than direct the play.) Two other projects I'd love to undertake are Tom Stoppard's *Hapgood* (who but Stoppard would use a play about spies to explain quantum physics?), and a mid-nineteenth century melodrama called *My Partner*. The last is set on Mt. Shasta and deals with the '49ers. I was scheduled to direct this at Chico State last spring, but the call to public service came and I had to give up the project. ☹

CALENDAR

September 2002

- thru 26** *Images of Amami Islands*, photographs by Makoto Koshima, Trinity 100 and hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 18** "New Asian Art Museum in San Francisco," public lecture by Jo Anne Erickson, 7-8pm, reception to follow, Humanities Center Gallery
- 19** *Tertulia*, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 19** **University Film Series, *Voyage to the Beginning of the World*** (by Manoel de Oliveira, 1997, Portuguese and French with English subtitles; with Marcello Mastroianni), 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 26** *Tertulia*, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 26** **University Film Series, *Identification of a Woman*** (by Michelangelo Antonioni, 1982, Italian with English subtitles; with Tomas Milan, Christine Boisson, and Daniela Silverio), 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 27** **HC Symposium, "Mystery and Memory,"** Jason Tannen, Art and Art History, 3-5pm, Trinity 126 (Cooper, x5161)
- 30 thru**
- Oct 11** **German Days**, annual celebration of German culture, Trinity hallway (Goulding, x5166)

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- 3** *Tertulia*, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
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- 10** **University Film Series**, 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 11** **HC Symposium, "Three Women and the Men Who Loved to Hate Them,"** Don Miller, Foreign Languages and Literatures, 3-5pm, Trinity 126 (Cooper, x5161)
- 15-31** **Other Alignments: Stonehenge to Sutro**, paintings by Peter Jodaitis, Trinity 100 and hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 17** *Tertulia*, 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 17** **Other Alignments: Stonehenge to Sutro reception**, with artist Peter Jodaitis, 5-7pm, Trinity 100 and hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 17** **University Film Series**, 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)

- 23 **Edward Larson's First Presidential Scholar Lecture, "Creationism and Evolution: A History of Controversy in the Classroom,** 7pm, Laxson Auditorium (Easton, x4284). Reception to follow, Trinity 100 (Saxe, x4642)
- 24 **Edward Larson Follow-up Symposium,** noon-2pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 24 **Tertulia,** 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 24 **University Film Series,** 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 24 **Edward Larson's Second Presidential Scholar Lecture, "What's So Special about the Galapagos?"** 7pm, PAC 134 (Easton, x4284)
- 25 **Edward Larson Follow-up Symposium,** 10am-noon, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 31 **Tertulia,** 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 31 **University Film Series,** 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)

November 2002

- 1 **Day of the Dead,** annual celebration, Trinity 100 and hallway(Gonzalez, x5276)
- 5-21 **Native Artists exhibition,** curated by Daraxa Mattice, Trinity 100 (Saxe, x4642)
- 5-28 **Transition and Transformation,** paper/textiles by Cal Ling, Trinity hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 7 **Tertulia,** 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 7 **University Film Series,** 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 8 **HC Symposium, "Meeting the Other in Cyberspace: Online Interfaith Dialogue,"** Kate McCarthy, Religious Studies, 3-5pm, Trinity 126 (Cooper, x5161)
- 8 **Transition and Transformation reception,** with artist Cal Ling, 6-8pm, Trinity 100 and hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 14 **Tertulia,** 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 14 **University Film Series,** 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 21 **Tertulia,** 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 21 **University Film Series,** 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)

December 2002

- 3-19 **kolorbar.com,** conceptual art by Pat Collentine and Sue Larsen, Trinity 100 and hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 5 **Tertulia,** 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 5 **kolorbar.com reception,** with artists Sue Larsen and Pat Collentine, 5-7pm, Trinity 100 and hallway (Saxe, x4642)
- 5 **University Film Series,** 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 6 **HC Symposium, "Reading 18th Century Readers Reading Samuel Richardson's Clarissa,"** Lois Bueler, English, 3-5pm, Trinity 126 (Cooper, x5161)
- 14 **Tertulia,** 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 14 **University Film Series,** 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)
- 21 **Tertulia,** 4-5:30pm, Trinity 126 (Easton, x4284)
- 21 **University Film Series, 8pm, Ayres 106 (Saxe, x4642)**

HUMANITIES CENTER BOARD

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Laird Easton (History)

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Sara Cooper (Spanish), Marcel Daguerre (Philosophy), Tony Graybosch (Philosophy), Troy Jollimore (Philosophy), Jeff Livingston (History), Magda Mueller (German), Sarah Pike (on sabbatical fall, Religious Studies), Michael Schwartz (English), Jason Tannen (University Art Gallery),

Ex-officio

Sarah Blackstone (dean)
 Don Heinz (Religious Studies)
 Thomasin Saxe (director of special projects)
 Brooks Thorlaksson (associate dean)

Humanities Center Acrostic

Small, freshwater fish

— — — — —

"Lay not that flattering ___ to your soul." Shakespeare, Hamlet

— — — — —

Became an adult, matured (5,2)

— — — — —

Nephew of King Arthur, knight of the Round Table

— — — — —

To choose, to pick out

— — — — —

To refuse to accept, to discard

— — — — —

An industrial city of west-central Russia

— — — — —

A vessel of the Middle East

— — — — —

Anglo-Indian word for mountain pass, steps down to a river

— — — — —

That which is morally bad or wicked

— — — — —

The ringing or sounding of bells

To laugh noisily, to guffaw

"Where the ____ meet!"

Slang description of a small article of clothing

"A __ is a man who does not bow to any authorities." Turgenev

A mirage (4,7)

A construction, an edifice

"Let us cross over the river and __" Stonewall Jackson (4,5,3,5)

A prime California vacation spot (4,6)

Winner of Wimbledon

"I like to see it __ the Miles, and lick the Valleys up" Dickinson

Term of affection (British slang)

— — —

Uncommon, exquisite, rare

— — — — — — — — —

"_ _ _"yet all shall be forgot." Henry V (3,3,6)

— — — — — — — — — —

An aromatic seed pod (7,4)

— — — — — — — — —

Condition of financial security or independence (4,6, slang)

— — — — — — — — —

