

# THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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# NEWSLETTER

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Mailing Address:  
P. O. Box 5743  
Berkeley, CA 94705

[www.tihs.org](http://www.tihs.org)

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The *Newsletter* is sent to all Institute members, as well as colleges and university libraries and other interested scholars. The Institute appreciates all tax-deductible contributions made by non-members who wish to remain on our mailing list.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The sun was shining, the air was just a little warm, but the spot under the trees made for a relaxing and pleasant afternoon. This was the scene on July 11<sup>th</sup> at Redwood Regional Park in the Oakland hills, for the Institute's annual Bastille Day picnic. As usual, the food was abundant and the company congenial. The park has several nice walking trails and a few people took advantage of them. Most of us just sat and enjoyed the day. Joanne and John Lafler created a challenging and fun "History Bee" with questions covering the scope of human history (in about an hour and a half)! We hope to inhabit the same spot next year – plan to join us.

The other day I was rereading *Pentimento*, Lillian Hellman's collection of short stories. In her introduction, she explained the meaning of *pentimento*, and the definition made me think of the task of the historian, trying to find the past through the filter of the present. "Old paint on canvas, as it ages, sometimes becomes transparent. When that happens it is possible, in some pictures, to see the original lines: a tree will show through a woman's dress, a child makes way for a dog, a large boat is no longer on an open sea. That is called *pentimento* because the painter 'repented,' changed his mind. Perhaps it would be as well to say that the old conception, replaced by a later choice, is a way of seeing and then seeing again."

As ambassadors of history and historical writing, we need to advertise the Institute and attract new members so that we have a significant community to share our ideas and give us feedback. I hope that, in all your busy summer activities, you have been remembering that. Bring a friend, acquaintance, neighbor, colleague to our next meeting.

*Anne M. Homan*

## WORK-IN-PROGRESS – Jody Offer

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### *Researching Donaldina Cameron for a Movie*

On Sunday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, at **Edee Piness'** home in Mill Valley, **Jody Offer** presented an outline of her latest project, a screenplay entitled *Nine-Twenty*, the popular name given to the house where Donaldina Cameron and other diligent workers were dedicated to assisting young Chinese immigrants on arrival in San Francisco. Jody's focus is to probe the conditions of the young Chinese women suddenly thrown into a new society, an alien culture and new expectations.

Such were the conditions of 1908 for new arrivals that marriageable young women who had traveled from China, their passage having been paid by unknown entrepreneurs, were subject to buyers as property purchased. Caught between the demands of ancient traditions concerning marriage and a miserable future, the reluctant brides were typically forced into an astute scheme of marriage or worse, by their 'owners' who were Chinese bank rollers and tradesmen in flesh.

Jody distributed some pages from a first draft of the screenplay. The action begins as the camera follows a Chinese man, a long braid down his back, moving hastily down a ship's hallway. He beckons to a young and beautiful woman seated on a lower bunk bed aboard a newly arrived ship. Together the two make their way through the ship's stairways, down the gangplank and finally to a room where immigrants of every nationality wait in line to speak to the immigration authorities, men in solemn dark suits behind heavy oak tables, surveying the crowd and ready to address the newcomers and to make decisions of destiny for them.

In another scene, a vigorous discussion is held among a few Chinese merchants as to the future destination of the young woman. One contends that he had paid for her, another that he could use her well in a whore house. Aside from the others, a young Chinese man appears (with the serendipity allowed to a dramatist) to rescue a handkerchief fallen from the hand of the young woman. – and the principals are thereby in place for the rest of the play.

The old Chinese men continue to speculate on the future of the girl as a paid whore, while the young man begins to plan how to rescue her from this misfortune. The one hope for both the smitten young man and the girl is a house called 'Nine Twenty' that is staffed by earnest Presbyterians where new girls can be taken, making it possible for them to say 'no' to proposed paid marriages. Eight scenes in Jody's outline are then played out through the young woman's adventure, leading finally to her acceptance of marriage with the young man.

'Nine Twenty' house was established by Donaldina Cameron, the founder and angel of what became known as Cameron House. It was here that the 'Americanization' of girls such as the play's heroine went forward. Once under Donaldina's protection, young women were taught American ways of dealing with their environment, possibly fortuitously as wives in homes of their own choice or as servants in the homes of San Franciscans. However, often many young immigrant girls found that they preferred not to conform to American culture and went back to brothels or to their previous male supporters.

The discussion which followed Jody's presentation centered on the production's background and the sources she used. Helpful suggestions were made by those present. It was noted that adherence to the perspective of the period would be important in preserving the unity of the project whichever shape it may take. All were in agreement that Jody should continue this project and that they looked forward to a completed version of *Nine Twenty*.

Jody was also complimented – by those who had seen the production – on her recently produced comic satire, *Casino!*, a spoof of Oakland city politics, which local critics had called a huge success.

(Note: Cameron House recently celebrated its 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.)

*Alice Tobriner*

### *The Laboring Oar: What Can We Learn From a Half-Century of Labor Arbitration Cases*

On Sunday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, in the Berkeley home of **Sally and Dan Wages, Mike Griffith** presented a paper designed to make available knowledge of the Sam Kagel Collection at the Labor Archives and Research Center (LARC), San Francisco State University. A collection which will be open to researchers by 2006, it is comprised of about 933 boxes containing records of an estimated 9,000 arbitration cases handled by famed Bay Area arbitrator Sam Kagel from the late 1940s into the 1990s. The transcripts of the arbitration proceedings offer rich insights into both twentieth century labor-management relations and various aspects of socio-economic history on the Pacific Coast.

Acquired by LARC in 1995 and its archival organization funded by the National Historical Publications and Record Commission, Mike is the collection's archivist. He explained that characteristically a file contains a transcript of the arbitration proceedings, the briefs presented by labor and management, exhibits and sometimes photos, and the arbitral outcome. The arbitral procedure is a product of a contract between labor and management which includes the resolution of differences through arbitration in the event internal procedures have not resolved a dispute. The contract has identified the outside arbitrator acceptable to both parties and the payment for his services by both parties. A procedure initiated in the garment industry in the eastern United States in 1910, it came to be adopted especially widely in the San Francisco Bay area from the 1930s on.

Labor-management relations was a field Sam Kagel, a recent graduate in economics from the University of California, entered in 1932 as an employee of the Pacific Labor Bureau. A growth field during the New Deal years, Kagel, possessed of infectious good humor as well as a nimble mind, became well acquainted with major labor-management personalities and trends. Concluding after World War II that he needed a law degree, he was able to finance his studies at UC (1946-48) with the \$300 monthly retainer he received as the

arbitrator for the San Francisco branch of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the local women's garment industry. The ILGWU, in agreement with the industry, would retain Kagel as an arbitrator over the decades to come. They were but one of his many clients, none more famous than the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU) headed by Harry Bridges and the Pacific Maritime industry represented by Paul St. Sure which commenced in 1948. In 2003, Sam Kagel would be succeeded as arbitrator in the latter industry by his son John. However, Sam, now 95, is still arbitrating cases, among them ones for the National Football League and for the cannery industry, the latter having given him a three year extension in their 2003 contract.

Study of about 5,000 of the estimated 9,000 cases in the collection now behind him, Mike described some compelling human interest stories he has encountered and some interesting "finds" he has made, like lists of employees, diagrams of industrial plants, rules for waitresses. He prefaced these with a list of especially valuable content he has found: (1) a helpful review of certain Bay Area industries, not least the longshore and shipping industry; (2) the modernization of the newspaper industry without loss of worker jobs, the case involving the replacement of Linotype becoming the model for the US industry; (3) the 1970s-80s negotiations between hospitals and nurses; (4) professional sports cases, including NFL and baseball ones, several involving notable figures; (5) airlines cases; (6) United Farmer Workers cases, including the arbitration between the UFW and DiGiorgio; (7) BART arbitrations; (8) several school cases; (9) Pacific Coast paper and pulp mill cases involving job retention.

When Mike completes his archival work on this collection in about a year and a half, it will surely rank among the foremost in its field in the United States. No other repository has the collection of an individual who has worked over fifty years in the field and who has had such a singular influence in a region as Sam Kagel.

*Doris Linder*

# GROUP REPORTS

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## BIOGRAPHY WRITERS

At our most recent meeting, we discovered that many of us are dealing with the same problems, although our subjects are quite different. **Georgia Wright** and **Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada** face the challenge of absorbing a mass of detail into their narratives. Georgia has a photocopy of a lengthy, detailed inventory of the contents of the home of her diarist, Despréaux, made after his death in 1819. We encouraged her to sacrifice much of the detail and focus on significant items and what they reveal about the house and its owner. Elizabeth has copies of a number of letters written to and by her subject, Abigail Powers Fillmore, in the 1830s and 40s, when Millard Fillmore was a congressional representative from New York State and was becoming an important political leader. Although these primary documents are illuminating, we suggested that selectivity is important; the letters can be summarized and paraphrased rather than quoted at length.

**Ellen Huppert** and **Ann Harlow** are both tracing the parallel lives of their subjects. Ellen is examining the courtship of her maternal grandparents, which began as an exchange of letters between friends in 1903 that ripened into affection. In going back in time and presenting her subjects' lives up to the time of their correspondence, Ellen faces some of the same problems of organization that Ann is dealing with in writing about the early lives of Albert Bender and Anne Bremer. Ann has to make decisions about how and when to switch from Bender's narrative (family background and early life) to Bremer's, and there are no clear-cut "rules" for doing this.

**Joanne Lafler** also worried about detail: how much information to include in the section of her current chapter that deals with Harry Lafler's residence on Russian Hill from 1902-1904, the architects and writers he met there, and the influence of one particular man, Joseph Worcester. We discussed the "iceberg" phenomenon: the mass of information that enriches our understanding of our subjects but must remain beneath the surface of the stories we're

telling. **Bonda Lewis** expects to have new material to discuss at a later meeting. **Autumn Stanley** and **Jeanne McDonnell** were unable to attend, but the groups stays in touch by e-mail between meetings.

*Joanne Lafler*

## MEDIEVAL STUDY GROUP

On June 26th, at **Lyn Reese's** home, **Lorrie O'Dell** presented a discussion of Alison Weir's recent biography, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life*. While praising Weir for her inventive use of sources, Lorrie felt that the author's main problem in writing about this famous, almost mythic, queen was the need to place her life into the lives of her two husbands, Louis VII of France and Henry II of England, as well as the lives of her royal sons, Richard I and John I of England. Consequently, the book spends too much space following Eleanor as she follows the men in her life, from Paris to Jerusalem, from London to Aquitaine. Lorrie also stressed some aspects of this study that were oblique to the main story – the incredibly destructive effect of feudal 'duties' on the populace due to the many, many wars and battles, and the way royal marriages were arranged and how they often stood the test of time.

On August 28<sup>th</sup>, the group accepted the hospitality of **John Rusk** for a presentation by **Nancy Zinn** of her readings on the Inquisition. Nancy restricted her study on heresy in the Catholic church to the time prior to the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition in 1478. Noting that 'inquisition' as a procedure went back to Roman Law, eventually it was incorporated into canon law. The early church's response to heresy was low-key and focused mainly on beliefs such as Arianism and Palagianism. But with the codification of Roman Law and the growing political authority of the church, laws against heresy were added. By the 10<sup>th</sup> century, action against heretics was used to foster the ideal of a total Christian community. From the idea that heresy was simply religious dissent, heresy as treason became the new standard. Tribunals were established with Dominicans or Franciscans as

supposedly neutral judges. Procedure manuals for interrogations and trials were written, and clerics were given formal legal training. The most famous inquisitorial activities before 1478 were the crusades against the Cathari in Southern France in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*Lorrie O'Dell*

### HISTORY PLAY READERS

The play-reading group devoted several sessions to Maxwell Anderson's *Anne of a Thousand Days*. The play, produced on Broadway in 1948, focuses on the love affair between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. The King's desire to divorce Catherine, his first wife who had not produced a male heir, was heightened by his passion for Anne, who would consent to be his wife, but not his mistress.

The cause of Henry's breach with Rome was, technically, not a question of divorce but rather whether he had been properly married to Catherine, since his brother had been her first husband. Henry had received a dispensation for that marriage. Cardinal Wolsey was dismissed by the King when he failed to attain the desired annulment from the Pope. Henry then relied on Thomas Cranmer, who became Archbishop of Canterbury, to do his bidding. Legislation which completed the breach with Rome and established the supremacy of the State over the English Church was enacted by the Reformation Parliament. In 1533, Henry attained his annulment from an English ecclesiastical court and married Anne, who was then pregnant with a daughter, Elizabeth. Through the plotting of such ruthless figures as Thomas Cromwell, Anne, being unable to fulfill Henry's passion for a male heir, was accused of betrayal and adultery, and brought to trial. She was sentenced to death and executed on May 19, 1536. The following day Henry married his third wife, Jane Seymour.

The story of Henry and Anne has fired the imagination of many writers. *Anne of a Thousand Days*, while faithful to the general historical plot,

takes liberties. Characters are brought together when there is no historic evidence of any meeting; for example, at her trial, Henry questions Anne's alleged lover. The group will stay with the period for its next reading: *A Man for All Seasons*, Robert Bolt's play about Thomas More, who was executed in 1534 for refusing to assent to the Oath of Supremacy.

*Edee Piness*

### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

**Bogna Lorence-Kot** is teaching a pilot survey course this Fall at the California College of Arts & Crafts. The primary topic of the survey of world history course will be the history of families from prehistory to 1500. The second part of the course will follow in the Spring. Also, her article, "The Polish Women's Movement: 1910-1914," written with Adam Winiarz, was published this spring in *Women's Emancipation Movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: A European Perspective*.

**Frances Keller** has received a contract to publish her translation of Anna Cooper's *Slavery and the French Revolutionists*. She will write a new essay on the international implications of Cooper's work, especially concerning the repercussions of the Haitian revolution on laws concerning slavery in the American South. Cooper saw those laws becoming much harsher as news of the Haitian uprisings reached the southern colonies.

### NEW MEMBER

The Institute is pleased to welcome **Anthony Silva** to its roster of members. Tony has a Master's Degree in History from Sonoma State University, which he received in 1991 after a career with the Western Union Telegraph Company. He served as the president of the United Telegraph Workers (UTW), Local 34, and served on the UTW International Executive Board. He is now researching the history of the telegraph, as well as telegraph workers and their unions.

## BOOK REVIEW – Julie Anne Taddeo

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*Lytton Strachey and the Search for Modern Sexual Identity: The Last Eminent Victorian*,  
(New York, Harrington Park Press 2002)

A generation ago feminist critic Jane Marcus exposed the sexism of the “sons of Bloomsbury.” Now we have Julie Anne Taddeo questioning one of the hallmarks of the Bloomsbury Group itself – Lytton Strachey’s modernism. She sees Strachey as both “proponent and prisoner of Victorian ideology” -- an intriguing idea. He was therefore incapable of cutting through the Victorian handcuffs of respectability, imperialism, racism and, perhaps most importantly, the bonds of his own homosexuality.

The many-faceted Modernism of the beginning of the twentieth century -- in art, in literature, in science -- and its drastic departure from previous artistic characteristics have been much discussed. Modernism, in the poetry of Yeats, Pound, and Eliot, the paintings of Cezanne, Picasso and Braque, the science of Einstein, asserted that the true reality was not the apparent one but the inner truth beneath the surface. So also one should attempt to conform to one's true sexual nature. Supposedly, one of the central themes of Bloomsbury’s “modernism” is the freedom in sexual expression by its members, in stark contrast to Victorian prudishness. Sexual liaisons, whether homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual, are now seen as the core feature of the group’s modernist lifestyle. Julie Taddeo believes that Strachey, whom she questionably identifies as “the leader of the group,” (rather than *one* of the leaders) and his tortured sex life, provided the catalyst for this legacy of a significant new sexuality. She gives little credit to his originally shocking and best-selling, but now comparatively neglected, publications.

Her carefully researched conclusion is that Strachey’s own sexual experience was negligible. He was “all talk.” He was afraid of sexual reality. His pleasure, even excitement, seems to have been in the discussion of and unrequited longing for an idealistic “higher sodomy,” a version of Neoplatonic all-male “Greek Love.” The “lower sodomy” with working-class men, or “Oriental”

strangers alternately enticed and repulsed him; the reality of the female body repulsed him totally. Not only did Strachey fear sexual reality, he feared the opprobrium of his mother and the oppressive Victorian society that had spawned him.

Taddeo’s book is divided into four parts: Strachey’s dreamlike appreciation of Apostolic Cambridge life where he felt comfortably at home among his “Brothers”; second, his confused and unhappy attempts to experience the “lower sodomy” with, what Taddeo calls “Ploughboys, Postboys and Arabian Nights”; third, a firm repudiation of the theory expounded by Carolyn Heilbrun, of “Bloomsbury’s” androgyny. Taddeo’s evidence is Strachey’s sexist attitude towards women, his inability to sever the umbilical cord from his all-powerful mother, his frequent derogatory and unpleasant portrayals of women, and his flirtation with Virginia Stephen. Although he generally believed that women were inferior, for a moment he considered Virginia his intellectual equal and eventually he became jealous of her literary achievements. He expected, Taddeo writes, that even his feminist and suffragist sisters, all of whom made names for themselves, would cater to his needs before their own. Taddeo also criticizes Strachey’s relationship with Dora Carrington, who willingly gave up her artistic career in order to devote herself to his well-being. Finally, Modernism’s credo to create a *new* world view is seen as contrary to Lytton Strachey’s destructive, even malicious, biographies, and his inability to break free of the traditions he so vocally abhorred. It was safer to retreat into patriarchy and illness.

“How do we explain, then, women’s attraction to Strachey?” Julie Taddeo asks unhappily in her “Conclusion “ (p. 146). Alas, she provides no convincing answer. The contradictions in Strachey’s hopes, beliefs and the actuality of his life make them extremely difficult to analyze. Perhaps, contrary to the portrait here, he was witty, charming, and captivating to his many friends and readers. Nevertheless, one is grateful to Taddeo for alerting us to think about Strachey in new ways.

*Sue Groag Bell*

### *Playing with Fire: The United States and Cuba in the Twenty-First Century*

I taught a course this spring - the first I've taught in ten years. Integrated Studies students, a program for Regents' Scholars at UC Davis. Freshmen. The first to be housed in Russell Bryan Miller Hall. In January, with three days left to decide whether - and what - I would teach, standing in a theater lobby in Sacramento, I felt as if someone were uncomfortably close. I glanced behind, and there stood a huge pasteboard cutout of Robert S. McNamara advertising "The Fog of War." The United States and Cuba, I thought. A way to talk with these students, who were three years old when the Berlin Wall came down, about the Cold War. A war of choice: the Spanish-American War. War fever. Military occupation. I drafted a syllabus: "Playing with Fire" comes from a warning issued January 5 by the Bush administration's director of Hemispheric Affairs warning Fidel Castro to cool Cuban support of the Chavez government in Venezuela. When I was in graduate school the Cuban Revolution was iconographic. Images of Ché were everywhere. Thirty-five years later, the image of El Ché still is everywhere: on backpacks, pasted to my graduate student assistant's computer, on tee shirts. The romance of the Cuban Revolution has not fared as well: Post 9/11, in the dust of Afghanistan and Iraq, communist revolution has little resonance for students.

But Cuba itself--and Cuban-American relations--proved a vibrant topic. I chose a comprehensive, solid text. I googled Fidel Castro: 20.1 million hits. I ordered "The Motion Picture Camera Goes to War," T.R. and the Rough Riders, the Spanish-American war and anti-Spanish propaganda films from the Library of Congress website. When I showed the films to my students, the room fell quiet. "You can talk," I said. They burst into laughter. Silent movies were a new experience for them. The film "Thirteen Days" based on newly-released archival material from the Kennedy administration, offers an intelligent view of the Cuban Missile Crisis and provided a good vehicle for discussion of the delicate diplomacy surrounding the crisis. We watched excerpts from

"The Buena Vista Social Club," and the 1964 Soviet-Cuban hymn to the Revolution, "Yo Soy Cuba." I introduced music as a central site of U.S.-Cuban dialogue. The students took it from there, researching *son*, Cuban influence on Louis Armstrong and New Orleans jazz, jazz' influence on Cuba, right down to the contemporary discovery that Cuba has a Minister of Rap. The course had a solid historical arc.

At the same time, Cuba was everywhere in the press: the release of Alma Guillermoprieto's *Dancing with Cuba*; Guantánamo; *Los Balseiros* at Sundance; "Motorcycle Diaries" premiering at the Charlie Chaplin Theater in Havana. Castro's human rights record, and the Bush administration's harsh new travel restrictions were the subject of opposing *New York Times* Op-Ed pieces. Oliver Stone's *Conversations with Castro* appeared on the internet. Linearity of presentation went out the window. This proved an excellent decision: non-linear learning is a hallmark of this generation. Research-based topical mini-papers presented weekly in class demanded analytic skill. We spent time differentiating between reliable sources and less-reliable sources-- on a topic like Cuban-American relations, there're a lot of wacko websites as well as highly polemical books. Maps! For my California students, Cuba was not yet configured in the spatial imaginary. In April the NYT splashed a global map across the front page: "Wildfires: A World Made More Dangerous as Terrorism Spreads." Red paint marked nations from Mali to Uzbekistan. Guess what wasn't red? Cuba. Cuba was always red on the maps of my college years. I copied the terrorism map, secured a Cold War map at the library, and took them to class. Scary maps have a history, as do the politics of fear. Trusting my instincts as an historian to let the material tell the story, "Playing with Fire" did not focus on the Cuban Revolution: 1898, 1933, the Bay of Pigs and the Missile Crisis, Elián González and the Cuban factor in election 2000 seem as compelling topics as Fidel. Cuba is a seductive topic. I believe I got the politics right. The romance remains, peopled by citizens on both sides of the Florida Straits, filled with politics, music, and the lively memories of a young girl who once visited Havana.

# CALENDAR

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September 24-27	Hetch-Hetchy Weekend
October 23	Annual IHS Dinner Program
November 21	Work-in-Progress – Anne Homan
December 11	History Play Readers Program
February 25	Annual Membership Meeting

Members are encouraged to let us know all their news – a paper being given at a conference; a new job or position; the awarding of a grant or fellowship. Please send all material for the NEWSLETTER either by e-mail to [lorrie@galleyslaves.com](mailto:lorrie@galleyslaves.com) or to the Institute's postal address given below. Also, we welcome the opportunity to review members' newly published books. Contact Autumn Stanley at [autumn\\_dave@compuserve.com](mailto:autumn_dave@compuserve.com). The deadline for the next NEWSLETTER is **NOVEMBER 30th**.

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The Institute for Historical Study  
P. O. Box 5743  
Berkeley, CA 94705  
(510) 540-8415  
[www.tihs.org](http://www.tihs.org)

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