

# 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)

THE INSTITUTE is affiliated with the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS) and with the American Historical Association (AHA)

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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 its mailing list.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We survived the flood of 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire Centennial events, which included one of our own. On April 19 at the San Francisco Public Library, John and **Joanne Lafler** read accounts by Henry Anderson Lafler, John's father, of his adventures during the earthquake, including a description of his adventures in looting. They also read from his essay refuting General Funston's claims of saving San Francisco. **Malcolm Barker** focused his comments on the ruined City Hall, where the San Francisco Main Library now stands. Most startling of Malcolm's readings was an account of Harry Coleman, who climbed to the top of the City Hall dome in order to photograph the ruins. His trip took him four hours! This public program, one of those we try to present each year, was well attended. Thanks to the speakers for providing a public face for the Institute.

The Board of the Institute is once again offering small grants to members in support of their research and writing. The deadline for applications is September 15, 2006. More information can be found on page five of this NEWSLETTER.

Longtime members of the Institute may remember Willa Baum, the director of the Bancroft Library's Regional Oral History Office, who died in May. While never officially a member of the Institute, Willa was an early supporter of our organization, both with advice and financial contribution. We send our condolences to her family.

Other Institute activities will continue throughout the summer, including the various reading groups and Works-in-Progress. Enjoy the summer

*Ellen Huppert*

## WORK-IN-PROGRESS — Judith Albert, Frances Keller, and Joanna Menezes

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At the session hosted on March 26 by **Georgia Wright** and billed as “Biography, Autobiography and Memoir,” debate centered on the authorial presence in such works. Three Institute members, preparing to lead a round-table discussion on the three genres at the upcoming annual conference of the Western Association of Women Historians (WAWH), invited comments on their prepared statements.

"We fashion history from ourselves," **Judith Strong Albert** reminded an Institute audience trained to respect the line between collecting evidence and its interpretation. Citing her own biographical work, *Margaret Fuller and Her Circle*, wherein each separate portrait reveals something about the writer, she pointed out that what a reader learns about the author may be as important as the work itself. We choose our subjects and even gather facts, ostensibly objective, in the context of new times, new interests.

**Frances Keller**, lamenting tendencies toward analyses that sound "too tidy," believes that the writing process must include a full understanding of an author's own "personal life project," or "personal myth," and reached for the wonderfully resonant concept of "personal honor" as the gold standard in crucial matters like choosing either to use or to suppress material.

While **Joanna Menezes**, art historian and biographer of painters, described her own approach, in the absence of the kind of information usually found in libraries, as "looking at pictures and making up stories," she noted that this turned out to involve complex processes. A subject's state of mind may be inferred from a sequence of rough sketches, or from painting techniques such as a tendency to hide or expose any flaw. A "made up" detail is inconsequential, she felt, invoking Carl Jung's premise that all material, in any case, is filtered through a writer's own belief system.

A hectic exchange ensued, pitting art against accuracy, readability against reliability. **Joanne Lafler**, a biographer of individuals both personally known and historically known, wondered how

helpful it is to worry about the way writers see themselves in relation to their topic. All that a reader needs, **Tom Snyder** said, is an up-front warning that some degree of invention may be necessary. The way we were taught to write, or even paint, may stand in the way of our efforts to capture an elusive subject.

Intellectual frustration, fueled by Georgia's wine and caviar *amuse-bouches*, exploded in objections that the panelists' approach was too abstract. Focusing on some specific problem with which each author had wrestled in her chosen genre might prove more fruitful at the WAWH conference, a suggestion well taken by both the audience and the panelists, who felt they had just weathered a perfect storm. However, it will be back. As the general reading public turns from "pure" fiction toward biography, autobiography and memoir, historians still seeking them as primary tools for retelling the past become no less vulnerable than the literary establishment to brawls over fact passing as fiction, fiction as fact.

*Kathleen Casey*

After the lively discussion described above, Frances, Joanna and I adjourned to a coffee house on College Avenue. We were relieved that the group had been stimulated to add weight and meaning to what we had prepared. We also experienced a little friendly fire, criticism of our approach that led to the following suggestions for the Conference: don't beat your general topic to death; tell a damned good story, whether writing factual history, a biography or memoir; make it readable and, above all, powerful to read and to absorb.

Since many members of the group are deeply involved in writing creative non-fiction, domestic biographies, personal memoirs, and other imaginings, we learned a lot from the session. Our thanks!

*Judith Strong Albert*

## Anne Richardson – WORK-IN-PROGRESS

### “What is a Critical Edition?”

On Sunday, April 23, 2006, an Institute group gathered at the home of **Ellen Huppert** for **Anne Richardson's** Work-in-Progress. Anne is the editor, along with two others, of a new edition of William Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, first published in 1528.

Using this work as her exemplar, and diagramming her talk on a newsprint pad, Anne began her presentation discussing definitions of the various criteria used for the category, a "critical edition." Finding them wanting, she offered the working criterion she and her colleagues use: authenticity. Adapting the conservative lawgiver's definition of pornography, she said, "You can't always define 'critical edition,' but you know one when you see one!" She illustrated this with a typical table of contents for a critical edition: introduction, bibliographical descriptions, note on the text, text, variant apparatus, commentary, glossary and indices.

To illustrate the need for the thinking that goes into a critical edition, she presented the three competing versions available for the opening of Hamlet's first soliloquy: "O, that this too, too griev'd and sallied [sullied? solid?] flesh would melt, thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!" "Sallied" in the Second Quarto [modernized as "sullied"] may have been set from Shakespeare's own "foul sheets" or hand draft.

Here Anne digressed: what is the relationship between Tyndale and Shakespeare? The William Tyndale Society of Great Britain has a by-word, "No Tyndale, no Shakespeare!" Anne outlined the descent of the Geneva New Testament (1560)—the version of the Bible operative for Shakespeare—from Tyndale's 1526 New Testament. Tyndale and Shakespeare are also to be connected as sixteenth-century men, experiencing different phases of the English Reformation, for which Tyndale was the indispensable agent.

Tyndale's goal was to spread the knowledge of Christianity as widely as possible. Anne illustrated how the printed editions came in a range of sizes

and costs to suit every purse. The smaller volumes, octavos and sextodecimos, could be most easily concealed from the authorities. Printing practices were not uniform as to spellings, line endings and punctuation. Seeing that Tyndale left no manuscripts, printed first editions are the only source for a copy text. The editors chose the 1528 edition of the *Obedience* as their copy text, as the other editions—nine in the sixteenth century—offer unauthorized variant readings.

For their historical source for meanings and spellings the editors use the *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, for which the hallmark context citations are revised back to 1700. To follow the rules of this lexicographic source is to encounter some awkwardness. Tyndale uses interchangeably certain words—sprite / spirit; ensample / example—that the OED treats as separate, with separate etymologies; such pairs have to be treated as separate words in the variant apparatus.

Tyndale's book needs a full and sound commentary. He is erudite, but it is no longer possible to present, by way of annotation, untranslated passages of the Latin and Greek fathers, in which few modern readers are versed. As a modern example of a situation in which a critical edition would have been helpful, Anne adduced the decades during which the Modern Library Giant edition of Joyce's *Ulysses* vaguely troubled readers, having been set from a garbled piracy with hundreds of errors.

In the context of the *Obedience* editors' preservation of humor, Anne presented "the Bishop of Rochester's divininite [= (theology) + ninny?] [or just a typo for 'divinite?']", and reiterated the choice of seeing humor. She quoted the little poem of one of her teachers on the whole question of deciding what to see in a text, the punch line being, "And if we say he said it, he said it!"

This new edition of *The Obedience of a Christian Man* will be published by Catholic University of America Press in 2009.

*Nancy Zinn*

## CALIFORNIA ROUND TABLE

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In 1998, Malcolm Barker published the third volume of his "San Francisco Memoirs" trilogy—*Three Fearful Days: San Francisco Memoirs of the 1906 Earthquake & Fire*. At the time, he never imagined that he would be regarded as a major historian of the earthquake, let alone that he would be invited to be a consultant for television documentaries. On May 6, he spoke to the California Round Table about this fascinating, sometimes frustrating, turn of events.

One of his first gigs was as a commentator on the earthquake for KRON's "Decades of San Francisco" series in 1998. The Learning Channel also called upon him for their program on the earthquake. He began to realize that his work had become known world-wide when, in 2000, he was contacted from France by film-makers who were producing an earthquake documentary for French television. The film crew came to San Francisco to interview him and, unlike in some of his less happy experiences, they did not reduce his comments to sound bites in the finished product. He regards this as the best of the many television documentaries about the earthquake. There was no over-commenting; viewers were allowed to see and feel the experience for themselves.

Malcolm brings to all of his writing the sharp, skeptical eye of the newspaper reporter, which was his profession in England. Coming to California in 1961, he fell in love with San Francisco history as well as with the city itself. His first work of local history was *Bummer and Lazarus: San Francisco's Famous Dogs* (1984), in which he challenged the myth that the two stray dogs who roamed the city's streets in the 1860s had belonged to Emperor Norton. The meticulous research for this book was typical of his approach to other aspects of San Francisco history. His goal has always been to "get back to the earliest possible sources."

For the first two volumes of his memoirs trilogy, which cover the period of 1835-1899, he drew upon a variety of eyewitness accounts—letters, diaries and early published writings from a wide range of sources. Material was more bountiful for the period of the earthquake, but there were still challenges.

Soon after the event, an Earthquake History Committee, under the direction of UC Berkeley history professor Henry Morse Stephens, began assembling a huge collection of official documents, newspaper clippings, and other materials. But this collection (Malcolm calls it the Holy Grail) had mysteriously disappeared. Malcolm did, however, unearth a bonanza of information, including first-person accounts, in issues of the *Argonaut* newspaper from May 26, 1926 through September of 1927, material that he thinks was based on this now-lost source.

Commenting on the number of books and recent television documentaries marking the centennial of the 1906 earthquake and fire, Malcolm noted how impressed he has been that each one seemed to have its own slant, its particular take on the events. What makes his book different is that he allows men and women who lived through those tragic events to tell their own stories. It is this quality that has made his work so widely read and admired.

However unanticipated, Malcolm's celebrity had some welcome consequences. With a Canadian documentary film crew, he was able to explore the underpinnings—the base isolators—of the new City Hall, designed to protect the building against the next Big One. In addition to being a commentator and consultant for documentaries, he was also a lecturer at several events during the centennial celebrations, and he was honored as a "Library Laureate" at the most recent annual fund-raiser held at the San Francisco Library. Forced to admit that he is a foremost historian of the earthquake, he acknowledged: "If I don't have the information, I know where to find it."

*Joanne Lafler*

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## MINI-GRANT PROGRAM FOR 2006

The Institute's Board of Directors is pleased to announce the Mini-Grant Program for 2006. The purpose of this program is to further historical scholarship by Institute members in good standing through partial payment for support services and other expenses. Our goal is to make a difference by helping member-scholars successfully complete worthy, sound and original projects. Past mini-grants have been used to pay for duplicating, photocopying, translating services, travel and conference registration, but are not limited to these uses. However, grants are not made to supplement living expenses.

If you would like to apply, please write to the Mini-Grant Committee at the Institute's address or send an e-mail to [mariankassovic@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mariankassovic@sbcglobal.net). An application, along with a set of program guidelines, will be sent to you. The deadline for this year's application is September 15, 2006.

## TOUR OF THE J. PORTER SHAW LIBRARY

On Saturday morning May 13, Ellen and Peter Huppert, Joanne Lafler, Dolores Cordell, Malcolm Barker and Anne Homan enjoyed a tour of the J. Porter Shaw Library at Fort Mason given by reference librarian Steve Davenport. He guided us through the public area and the closed stacks. We all marveled at the large collection of books, maps and charts, periodicals, oral histories, photographs, marine architectural drawings and films stored in the upper floors of a transformed U.S. Army warehouse. Four of us bought a copy of an 1850 map of San Francisco. Steve encouraged personal questions throughout the tour. They have special collections on whaling and World War II. They have Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for all cities and towns along San Francisco Bay. Unfortunately, the space has become so crowded that they will not be able to accept any more large donations. The library is run by the National Park Service.

After the hour-and-a-half tour, we adjourned to food, the traditional part of every Institute event. In another of the old Army warehouses, we found a restaurant with delicious sandwiches and salads and two tables inside away from the brisk marine wind.

*Anne Homan*

## NEW MEMBER

The Institute is please to welcome **Joan Moon** as a new member. A Professor Emerita at Sacramento State University, Joan is a French historian whose main research focus has been the nineteenth century with emphasis on women's history and gender studies. She has published a number of articles and given numerous papers for such organizations as the Western Society for French History and the Council for French Historical Studies. Joan hopes that membership in the Institute will provide her with the opportunity to exchange ideas, and well as introduce her to new fields of study.

## IN MEMORIAM—BILL STROBRIDGE

A long-time Institute member and a friend to many of our members, Bill Strobridge died this last April. He served on the Board of Directors, as Institute President for two years, and helped to form our California Round Table.

Wounded in combat, Bill served the United States army in a variety of command and staff positions, ending his military career as chief historian for the Center of Military History in Washington, DC. After his retirement, he worked for Wells Fargo Bank's Historical Services, and volunteered with a variety of historical organizations. He began his volunteer work at his grandchildren's school after discovering that they thought he had fought in the Civil War.

His dry, New England wit will be missed by many of us who benefited from his help and support.

# GROUP REPORTS

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## BIOGRAPHY WRITERS

The Biography Writers met Sunday, May 28, at **Ann Harlow**'s home in Kensington. **Autumn Stanley** had been traveling and didn't join us. **Bonda Lewis**' biographical novel is progressing well. **Jeanne McDonnell** is in the middle of the final editing of her book about Juana Briones with her contracted publisher, University of Arizona Press. Congratulations Jeanne! **Ann Harlow** requested advice on submitting an article or query to the *Argonaut* regarding the early history of San Francisco's art museums. **Maria Sakovitch** brought us up-to-date on her research into the life of her grandfather, priest at the first Russian Orthodox church in the mainland United States. Scarce sources make for difficult and creative use of the imagination. **Joanne Lafler** recently discovered an *Oakland Tribune* web site containing some new information about Harry Lafler that has left her facing considerable rewriting, since it not only adds to, but sometimes conflicts with, what she had already written. **Ellen Huppert** is researching historical context materials for some undated abolitionist sermons given by her subject, Barton Taylor. **Ethel Herr** shared the latest version of the opening pages of her collaboration with her friend, Ellen Cohen, and announced that they have acquired some stellar endorsements, and the completed book is currently being reviewed by several publishers.

## HISTORY-PLAY READERS

As reported in the Spring NEWSLETTER, the group was about to complete their reading of August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Wilson depicts the Black experience in America through a cycle of ten plays, each of which is set in a different decade. The action for *Ma Rainey* takes place in a recording studio in Chicago in 1927. The play is a vivid portrait of Black American life in that era. Following this, we moved to *The Death of Bessie Smith* by Edward Albee, first presented in 1960. Bessie Smith, a protégée of Ma Rainey, was one of the most popular entertainers in the United States in

the 1920s and early 1930s; she died in 1937 in an automobile accident in Mississippi, the circumstances of which are the subject of Albee's play. There are conflicting accounts of how she died. In Albee's play, her lover stands in a white hospital begging to have her admitted. In all probability she died in an ambulance while en route to a black hospital after being treated on the road by a white doctor who had stopped to help.

A change of centuries and subject matter followed with the group turning to Tom Stoppard's first major play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, first produced in 1966. Stoppard retold the story of Hamlet in a wildly comic play, focusing on two of Shakespeare's most insignificant characters. The timing and tennis ball-like rapid dialogue are hilarious and engaging, especially the interaction with Hamlet himself. It was a delightful read.

The group has now begun reading Bertolt Brecht's *The Life of Edward the Second of England*, which Brecht wrote as a young man. Originally intended as an adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*, the play is largely an original work that premiered in 1924. We shall continue reading the Brecht play at our next meeting on June 29.

## READERS OF MEDIEVAL HISTORY

On March 11, at the home of **Lyn Reese, Lorrie O'Dell** discussed the Medieval Warm Period (MWP) and the Little Ice Age (LIA). Evidence for these climate changes has been drawn both from letters, chronicles, journals, government reports and statistical studies of grain prices and yields. Work has also been done on reading tree rings and glacier cores. The MWP is dated from about 900 to 1300 CE, and is defined by evidence that these were the warmest four centuries in 8000 years. There were bountiful harvests, virtually no May frosts, and even vineyards in England. Yet, beginning in the early fourteenth century with what is called the great famine, during which there were eight years of almost continuous rain, the temperatures slowly began to drop. The LIA was never a monolithic

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deep freeze; it was volatile, often with disastrous shifts in weather and major effects on crops and crop yields, reaching its 'low' point in the mid-sixteenth century and apparently not ending until the early nineteenth century.

**John Rusk** hosted the Readers of Medieval History on May 20. He discussed the events surrounding the late-thirteenth century and early-fourteenth century wars of Scottish Independence. It is a tale that starts with the accidental death of Alexander III of Scotland in 1286 and involves a strong king of England, Edward I; his weakling son, Edward II, an effete bisexual, totally unsuited to be king; William Wallace, a folk hero who improbably led a Scottish Army composed largely of infantry to a victory over the cream of English knighthood; a Scottish peer, Robert Bruce, who proved to be a brilliant guerilla fighter and the victor at Bannockburn and eventually, King Robert I of Scotland. It is a rich treasure trove of heroes and heroines, dastards and villains, a few shining moments and some instances of incredible cruelty that has been mined by poets, playwrights and novelists from the Scottish minstrel, Blind Harry, to Marlowe, Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, and in our time, Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*.

### MY INSTITUTE GRANT OF 2005

Last year I was grateful to receive a \$500 grant from the Institute to help with the editing of my history of Livermore. The book, with the working title of *Historical Livermore, California: An Encyclopedia*, is estimated at 560 pages and required more than \$500 for editing, so I was appreciative of the Institute's help with the costs. Jackie Pels, now a member of the Institute, is my excellent editor. I have been working on the project for five years. It required not only research in Livermore itself, but in a variety of places for old documents. I also interviewed many people as well as having access to oral histories saved by local history societies. In our recent talk for the Institute at the annual membership meeting in February, **Maria Sakovich** and I talked about the importance

of local history and where to find information. Earlier, I gave a Work-in-Progress at the home of **Autumn Stanley**. In September I will give a talk at the California Round Table. The book is progressing nicely. We recently finished choosing all the illustrations from the array of photographs, advertisements, programs and other ephemera that I had collected. Then I wrote the captions, a long process, since the production crew was very generous in choosing illustrations. Currently, David R. Johnson, the book designer for Hardscratch Press, is placing the illustrations in the text. I was pleased this past week to have received blurbs for the book from Kevin Starr, Mary Morganti (Director of Library and Archives for the California Historical Society) and Philip Manwell (Dean of Academic Services at our local community college, Las Positas). There is still much left to do—proofreading, indexing, cover design, printing, binding—but we hope to have the finished product in September. Again, thanks for the encouragement and the monetary help.

*Anne Homan*

### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

**Frances Richardson Keller** has been awarded a well-deserved honor: the Western Association of Women Historians has renamed its Sierra Prize, awarded for the best book by a WAWH member, the 'Frances Richardson Keller Prize.' Frances says, "when we instituted [the prize] 22 years ago, there were two goals: the first was to provide access and opportunity and just deserts to some of those participants and, second, to take the organization to the national level where opportunities are necessarily greater for women scholars. That it has done both is immensely gratifying."

**Bob Oaks** reports that he has just assumed the editorship of *Lotus Leaves*, a twice-yearly scholarly publication of the Society for Asian Art. Originally established to convince Avery Brundage to give his huge collection to the city of San Francisco, the Society now supports the museum in a variety of ways, such as sponsoring lectures and funding the

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three-and-a-half-year docent training program. As editor, Bob is looking for scholarly articles that would interest collectors, scholars, historians and others interested in Asian art. Articles should be around 1500 words. (They also pay an honorarium.) Anyone interested in submitting an article should contact Bob at [boboaks@pacbell.net](mailto:boboaks@pacbell.net).

**Ethel Herr** writes that "I have a gorgeous new cover for my biographical novel of Juliana von Stolberg." Her newest book, scheduled for release in July, is written as a dialogue between two opposite points of view. The book has received endorsements from Gordon Parks, Norman Lear and Elaina Richardson.

**Mike Griffith** has two pieces of news to report. He has just finished teaching a section of the United States History survey course at San Francisco State University. Also, he has been hired to set up an archive for Santa Clara County (he's already started two days a week). The goal is to have a repository for county government records that now are scattered, poorly housed, or unavailable.

In May, **Anne Homan** became a weekly columnist for her local newspaper, the *Independent*. She will be writing on local history.

On June 29, **Bert Gordon** will be presenting "The Chocolate Tourist: Traveling for Cacao, Cafés, and Candy from Columbus to the Contemporary Consumer," as a plenary paper at the International Conference on Food and Tourism, University of Central Lancashire in the United Kingdom. Bert is interested in hearing from any Institute members who might have suggestions for researching early chocolate history (use and commerce) in California to World War II.

Three Institute members will be attending the June conference of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars at Princeton University. As part of a panel on writing biographies, **Ellen Huppert** will present "Editing Family Papers" and **Joanne Lafler**, "Writing California History and Biography." **Georgia Wright** will discuss "Medieval Sculpture and Nuclear Science" on a separate panel.

At the May Conference of the Western Association of Women Historians (WAWH), **Karen Offen** was honored at a panel called "A Globetrotting Feminist Scholar: Karen Offen's Impact on French Feminist History, International Feminist History, and the Promotion of Women's History." Presenters included Marilyn Boxer on Karen's French History scholarship, **Lyn Reese** on Karen's work at the pre-collegiate level and the International Museum of Women, Joby Margadant on Karen's work organizing and promoting international feminist historians, and **Glenna Mathews**, who spoke movingly of Karen as an important mentor in her life.

**Ann Harlow** has been awarded a \$1500 grant from the Society for the Preservation of American Modernists. The grant is in support of her project on Anne Bremer and Albert Bender.

**Maria Sakovich's** latest exhibit at the Richmond Museum of History opened on May 7. Entitled *Siempre Aqui*, it documents Richmond's Californio and Mexican-American past and Latino present. The museum is located at Fourth and Nevin Streets in Richmond, and the exhibit will be on display until the end of July.

**Tony Silva** reports that on a three-week tour of Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, he was able to converse with a professor at Flinders University with whom he had exchanged labor history information by e-mail over many years.

**Malcolm Barker** is relieved that his participation in the 1906 earthquake and fire centennial celebrations is over. "Now I can relax and visit these exhibitions in my own sweet time!" He was impressed with the variety and quality of the documentaries on local television channels. His own book, *Three Fearful Days*, continues to sell, and "I'm glad I placed my new book project on hold to concentrate on this 1906 centennial. It's been fun!"



*The Face of Poetry.*

Portraits: Margaretta K. Mitchell

Editor: Zack Rogow

Foreword: Robert Hass

(University of California Press, 2005)

Includes a CD of Readings

I will begin this review with my initial response to this extraordinary book. When I picked it up, the book opened to Margaretta Mitchell's portrait of Gary Snyder, a man and poet I know. I nearly laughed aloud at the brilliance of the portrait: it illuminates Snyder, the slyness of his wit—always asking, "does this person get it?"—the countrified dress Snyder affects as part of his desire to remind us that we come from and will return to the earth, the intelligence of his countenance, his mouth—is he smiling, or deadly serious? Or both. Snyder writes in "The Bath," in which he is bathing his young son, "the soapy hand feeling / through and around the globes and curves of his body / I squat all naked too." Snyder takes us into his wife's body, into conception, and back to the bath with the boy, asking, "Is this our body?"

In Margaretta Mitchell's photograph the man who wrote those lines is revealed, wry, skeptic, always probing the reader, the listener, to think, respond, react. So too does Mitchell's portraiture. It is remarkable.

Inspired by the Lunch Poems Reading Series at the University of California, Berkeley, Mitchell decided to create "a graphic vocabulary for the accompanying poems." She prepared for each sitting carefully, bringing to it the experience of hearing and watching the poet read, "listening for messages of gesture and persona," her own reading of their work, all her observation put into creating an individual environment for each poet in her studio. She writes, "From then on, everything I did was intuitive. . . . A portrait, like a poem, is an event—a distillation of experience." Forty-six poets, with selections from their work, are portrayed.

Robert Haas, who worked with Margaretta and editor Zack Rogow to realize this project—'an

eight-year journey,' in Margaretta's words—writes in his foreword that the fact that "American higher education now provides a place where aspiring writers study poetry and poets make a living teaching it . . . is surely one of the reasons for the explosion of the publication of poetry in the last twenty years. . . . Margaretta Mitchell's art gives faces to the social facts and gives us a series of striking portraits of individual artists to set against the poems. Between the poems and the faces looking out from the photographs a new space grows up, born of the conversation between poetry and photography."

I'd not read all these poets. This book brings fresh thought, fresh insight, joy. Listen to Michael Harper, with his jazz riffs and images: "tie your left hand behind your back / then play the melody with one finger / On your right hand: put the melody on your heart." Maxine Hong Kingston playing between Chinese and English; Czeslaw Milosz writing, "Three times must the wheel of blindness turn, before I look without fear at the power sleeping in my own hand." I loved Li-Young Lee's insight into childhood, "Every wise child is sad. / Every prince is a member of the grass. / . . . Every solitary child rules the universe." Yes, they do. Fanny Howe, writing of a badly misbehaving angel "it preferred sugar-liquor to bread / and was Divine Mother's favorite / The mystery of preference / is never solved by acts."

Writing to express the experience of this book presents a challenge. It cannot be summarized: neither poetry nor portraiture can be summarized. Margaretta Mitchell imagined this book and brought it to fruition—her art brings us the opportunity of a vigorous new appreciation of the poets and poetry of our time. It is a gift. Check it out. ASAP.

*Francesca Miller*

# CALENDAR

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June 18	Work-in-Progress – Hildi Kang
July 16	Work-in-Progress
August 20	Work-in-Progress
September 10	Member Potluck with History Bee
September 15	Grant Application Deadline
September 16	California Round Table

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\\_stanley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:autumn_stanley@sbcglobal.net). The deadline for the next NEWSLETTER is **AUGUST 31st**.

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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)