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**celtic studies**  

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**association newsletter**  

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Incorporated as a non-profit organization, the Celtic Studies Association of North America has members in the United States, Canada, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Europe, Australia and Japan. CSANA produces a semi-annual newsletter and bibliographies of Celtic Studies. The published bibliographies (1983-87 and 1985-87) may be ordered from the Secretary-Treasurer, Prof. Elissa R. Henken, Dept. of English, Park Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, USA (Email: ehenken@uga.edu).  

The electronic CSANA bibliography is available at: http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/celtic/csanabib.html or visit our Web site at: http://www.csub.edu/~cmacquarrie/csana/. The electronic bibliography is available at cost in printed form to members who request it.  

The privileges of membership in CSANA include the newsletter twice a year, access to the bibliography and the electronic discussion group CSANA-l (contact Prof. Joe Eska at eska@vt.edu to join), invitations to the annual meeting, for which the registration fees are nil or very low, the right to purchase the CSANA mailing list at cost, and an invaluable sense of fellowship with Celticists throughout North America and around the world.  

Membership in CSANA is open to anyone with a serious interest in Celtic Studies. Dues are payable at Bealtaine. New and renewing members should send checks in any of the accepted currencies to Elissa R. Henken at the above address. Checks in US dollars, payable to CSANA, must be drawn on a US bank or a US bank affiliate (international money orders cannot be accepted). Cheques in British Sterling must be made payable to Elissa R. Henken at current exchange rates. Payments are also accepted via PayPal.  

Associate Member (student, retiree, unemployed, institution) $15.00  
Sustaining Member (regular) $30.00  
Contributor $50.00  
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(Contributors, Patrons and Benefactors support the creation of the CSANA bibliography, help to defray expenses of the annual meeting, and allow CSANA to develop new projects. Please join at the highest level you can.)
From Africa to Iceland: A Visual Celtic Voyage.

This beautiful coffee-table book presents a collection of landscape paintings (chiefly watercolors, with a few oil paintings and the occasional pastel drawing) by the Welsh artist John Rogers. The paintings are linked by essays in which Rogers describes his adventures traveling and painting in Morocco, the Iberian peninsula, Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Ireland, Scotland and Iceland. The travelogues are interwoven with observations on the history of these places, with an emphasis on Celtic connections. Both the paintings and the essays are well-crafted and composed, vivid, lyrical, and somewhat romanticized. Roger himself admits, "I plead guilty to harbouring a romantic idea of Ireland" (139). The landscapes are seductive and glowing, with balanced composition and an instant emotional appeal; they show considerable technical mastery and hover on the border between fine art and sentimentality.

Each country depicted in the book assumes a distinct character, while the collection maintains a coherent overall look. The essays can be read straight through or dipped into a paragraph at a time. Rogers does not allow setbacks - from weather to noisy nights in Spain (62) to having his Landrover confiscated in Morocco (38-43) - to dampen his appreciation of both natural and cultural landscapes: by the next paragraph, he has recovered his cheer and moved on.

The fulcrum of the book is the painter's home turf, Pembrokeshire in Wales. Both the paintings and the essays clearly evidence the difference between knowing a place as a tourist - even a sensitive and observant tourist, who engages with the landscape and with local culture - and as a native. Rogers is equally aware of this difference. One gains a sense that, as with many artists and writers, the depth of his relationship with his own place is the foundation of his appreciation for and curiosity about others.

While Rogers seems in general to have done his homework on the natural and human history of the places he visits, there are a few claims which a scholar might question. Some of these concern linguistic issues, where Rogers may have picked up a misleading statement from the popular literature. For instance, Rogers mentions that Bronze-Age Celts in Ireland "had no word for art" (136). In fact we have no texts preserved from Bronze Age Ireland. Words with related meanings, such as Old Irish *cerd* 'craft, poetry', have intriguing etymologies (cf. e.g. Watkins 1995: 75-76) and tend to overlap with other concepts (cf. Buck 1949: 582-585).

Some dubious claims concern linguistic and cultural contacts between Celts and other groups. Rogers mentions, "Considering the early establishment of sea trading, both through the Mediterranean and along the Atlantic seaboard, it may not be surprising that there is a unique grammatical construction common to both Berbers and Celts" (31). This cites, indirectly, a thesis which has had various manifestations in the linguistic literature (e.g. Gensler 1993) but remains controversial (cf. Isaac 2007).

Rogers says that the language Gallego is "as old as" (58) Spanish and Portuguese, an ambiguous statement, but wisely relegates discussion of a putative Celtic residue in Gallego to "the province of ancient language specialists" (58).

Rogers' presentation of Viking history in many of the places he visits clearly reflects a Celtic perspective. In the chapter on Iceland, Rogers emphasizes the fact that the first settlers
there were "the Celtic hermits on their sea-road search for the Christian white martyrdom in exile" (176) and credits "the Viking blood in my veins" (166) with his emotional response to "this vast primeval landscape" (168). Rogers insists that "the presence of the 'little people' both here [Iceland] and in Scandinavia does indicate a greater Irish Influence" (177). While Celtic influence on the supernatural landscape of Iceland is likely, the relationships are complicated and the influences probably mutual.

The chapter on Iceland emphasizes the rugged, remote north, the wildness of the landscape and the ferocity of the winds. The prose here exemplifies the vivid, lyrical descriptions found in the essays: "Austerity; wildly various weather forming strange atmospherics; mountains which appear only to vanish moments later, and rock-strewn earth venting great clouds of steam; multicoloured craters; lakes of glacial water like turquoise milk; snow-topped mountains and volcanoes; splintering glaciers grinding mountains into valleys of black sand; deserts and golden grassland sprinkled with coloured leaves and mosses in an empty tangible silence, combine to create a profound spiritual impact" (175-176). Rogers reports painting in Þingvellir, the parliament plains in the widening gap between the European and North American tectonic plates, while the rain blurred his colors and his easel collapsed in the wind. "Continuing by abandoning one technical restraint after another, eventually concentrating on what the soggy paper and running colours would allow, the elemental nature of the subject made this approach possible and some of these pieces were successful" (168-172). This account is striking since control is a salient feature of the landscape paintings in the book.

As a person who once lost two pairs of glasses to the Icelandic wind (in the same place, a week apart), I can testify that Rogers is not exaggerating his account of its ferocity. As with the other weather conditions, which Rogers describes throughout the book, the anecdotes allow the reader a glimpse of the chaos and difficulty belied by the polished, serene surfaces of the finished product.

The texture of the oil painting "Red crater" (169) reminds me of the Icelandic painter Jóhannes Kjarval, whom Rogers does not name (though he does mention Ásgrímur Jónsson (168)). The asymmetry and textural contrasts make this painting stand out in the collection.

Most of the landscapes painted in Iceland - the country which I know best of those featured in the book - are easily recognizable as specific places, e.g. Herðabreið (173), Vatnajökull (178-179). Some are postcard-like framings of iconic sites, others less so. The background of "Girl with ponies" (176) becomes a semi-abstract evocation of grey weather. I presume something similar holds for the paintings of places less familiar to me.

Throughout the book, Rogers' paintings show harmonious integration of man-made and natural landscape features. His interest in local architecture is evident in the essays (e.g. 51, 67, 109, 175) as well as the paintings. The actual human figures, where included, seem somewhat more schematic and blocky.

At the end of the chapter on Ireland, between an anecdote about passing a pub on the road but failing to find it when he returned on foot in dark and rain and a paragraph about how in the Irish landscape "there is little to separate the present from the past" (142), Rogers opens the curtain to provide a more direct description of his painting philosophy: "In our comprehension of this shimmering chaos, the world around us is conditioned by the limitations of our faculties and senses. ...My painting technique is based on the belief that all good painting is basically abstract: marks and colours reveal gestures that express the empirical experience before me, which may include design and conscious manipulation of data, but that accepts the infinitely
intricate nature of all that exists in the knowledge that good painting always reaches further than academic theory” (142).

Alistair Crawford (190) quotes these statements in an appreciative essay on Rogers' work which appears as an epilogue in the book (180-198). Crawford emphasizes that the realistic appearance of Rogers' paintings is deceptive; their composition is too technically perfect to represent unadulterated reality (182). The subtle idealization with the illusion of realism is part of the attraction of these paintings. Crawford points out that Rogers is unusual among contemporary landscape painters in that most of his works are completed in situ (185-189). Rogers' paintings are inspired more by his experience of nature than dialogue with the academic discourse of art (197), which places him "somewhere outside the current establishment's concerns" (197).

While this collection borders on a sentimental view of the Celtic landscape (broadly construed), the paintings are executed with great skill, precise attention to detail and a personal vision. Both the images and the essays have an intelligent sincerity which saves them from being kitsch and allows one to appreciate the emotional and aesthetic appeal of the art and of the nature it depicts.

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**Knock: The Virgin’s Apparition in Nineteenth-Century Ireland**
Eugene Hynes, Cork University Press, 2008, 368 pages

A controversial phenomenon in 19th, 20th, and 21st century Ireland is the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mother at Knock on August 21, 1879. Eugene Hynes launches into the preface of his book with a dramatic introductory statement referring to this phenomenon:

The Virgin Mary had come to Ireland. That was what respected newspapers Reported very early in 1880. On August 21, 1879, in a poor rural village in the Western county of Mayo, over a dozen people saw a bright silvery-white light outside the gable of the local Catholic church and within the light the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and a third figure they identified as St John the Evangelist. Some of the seers saw an altar, a lamb and a cross. Angels’ wings surrounded the altar.(xiii)

After this event, crowds of pilgrims visited the site for a few years, but the popularity of the shrine waned until the 1930’s. Finally, the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979 established Knock “as one of the world’s premier Marian shrines” (xiii). Although many devotional accounts of the 1879 event have been promulgated, Hynes observes that not many social scientists have studied the phenomenon. In his book, Hynes announces his intent to “examine the timing, location and content of the apparition by reference to the cultural, economic and socio-political context in which it occurred” (xiii). He argues that the apparition “embodied in microcosm many of the central conflicts and struggles within the Irish Catholic church and especially among its local members of the time” (xiv). Hynes brings unique intellectual qualities to his task: the perspective of an insider and the perspective of an outsider. As an insider, he was born in 1948 as the son of
a farmer in East Galway and was raised “in an atmosphere of Catholic faith that went beyond belief to unquestioned certitude” (xv). While a boy, he traveled with his family several times to Knock, which was fifty miles away. As an outsider, he began to examine Irish Catholicism from the standpoint of a social scientist during graduate study in sociology at an American university. In particular, he was challenged by Emmet Larkin’s article, “The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875,” the thesis of which he later criticized. As he studied Irish Catholicism from a social science perspective, he realized that he had to take on the phenomenon of Knock: “The more I tried to make sense of Catholicism in nineteenth-century Ireland, the more it became clear to me that I had to understand Knock as a social scientist as well as an insider. Like Everest, Knock was just there, and if I could not explain what had happened; I did not understand the people or their religion or society” (xvi).

Although social scientists, Hynes notes, cannot ascertain whether celestial beings manifest themselves on earth, these scholars have a task: “…to explain the social circumstances and social processes that make claims to seeing apparitions or having other encounters with the supernatural more or less likely and more or less credible” (xvii). He warns readers not to expect in his book confirmation or disconfirmation of the reality of the Virgin’s apparition: “Those who open my book to see if the Virgin ‘really’ visited Knock will be disappointed since I do not address that question, and anybody who thinks I have discredited the supernatural nature of the apparition understands neither religious faith nor science” (xvii). In his work, Hynes has found political scientist James C. Scott’s notions about “the weapons of the weak” very helpful in analyzing “landlord/tenant and Catholic priest/laity relationships” (xviii). Hynes reminds his readers of the down-to-earth Ethiopian saying quoted by Scott in the latter’s book: “When the great lord passes, the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts” (xviii).

In the first chapter, “What Daniel Campbell Remembered,” Hynes notes his reliance on the memoirs of Daniel Campbell, a laborer in England who had grown up in Knock from the 1820’s to the1840’s, for a description of the “religious landscape of Knock in the pre-famine era” (1). In the next four chapters, Hynes attempts to draw “a coherent picture of local religious life” to offer a context for the 1879 event. In Chapter 2, “Local Worlds,” he studies such features as “fairies, holy well devotions, and house-stations” (10). In Chapter 3, “The Role and Power of the Priest,” Hynes studies the people’s notions of “the non-canonical supernatural powers of the priest” (10). In Chapter 4, “Threats and Balances,” Hynes examines happenings that were perhaps singularly connected with Knock such as “a ‘chain-prayer’ response to a cholera outbreak, electoral conflict with the ascendancy class, a ‘strike’ against priests, and conflict with proselytizers” (10). In Chapter 5, “The People Make a Saint,” Hynes reflects on the fame of Archbishop John MacHale, a champion of Irish causes whose popularity was in question during the period of the apparition. In Chapter 6, “Population and Religious Continuity,” Hynes discusses the “low mortality in the famine decade of the 1840s in Knock” and presents his objections to “the devotional revolution paradigm” (10). In Chapter 7, “Religion in Pre-Apparition Knock,” Hynes delineates religious life in Knock from the 1840’s to the apparition in 1879, revealing “‘new’ practices and considerable continuity with the pre-famine era” (10). In Chapter 8, “Authority Structures Shaken,” Hynes studies the local situation at the time of the apparition, noting “pervasive challenges to the taken-for-granted authority structure”—structures such as the “authority of priest and bishop,” “the authority of the landlord” during the Land War, and family cohesion in the most important “family of seers,” the Beirnes (10). In Chapter 9, “The Social Construction of the Apparition,” Hynes discusses the apparition of 1879 and the ways in which it “was understood and reported” (10). In Chapter 10, “Our Lady and the Clergy,” Hynes
attempts “to construct an interpretation of the Knock apparition that addresses questions “concerning the witnesses” (10). In Chapter 11, “Conclusion,” Hynes again takes the “devotional revolution thesis” (viii) and presents some concluding thoughts.

Hynes’s criticism of the devotional revolution thesis is key to his perspective on the 1879 apparition. The devotional revolution thesis is attributed to Emmet Larkin in a 1972 article in American Historical Review entitled “The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875.” In Hynes’s words, Larkin observes that during this period there were changes “accompanied by the development of a plethora of new Rome-promoted and endorsed devotions and sodalities, and by a host of other changes. The practice of Catholicism moved from the home or outdoor sites like holy wells, to parish churches where mass and other ceremonies were celebrated with ever more elaborate ritual and ceremonies” (99). Hynes points out that for Larkin the devotional revolution was initiated by the church hierarchy: “The revolution was brought about by an increasingly united body of bishops under the direction of Archbishop Cullen of Dublin, who gradually disciplined the lower clergy” (99). In response to this thesis, Hynes reiterates what he had written in an earlier article: “To understand the degree and nature of the success of preaching from the top, we have to understand the audience at the bottom” (99). In his concluding chapter, Hynes declares that those researchers in favor of the devotional revolution thesis have not been able to “suggest answers to such fundamental questions as ‘why Knock rather than someplace else?’ and ‘why 1879?’” (260). Instead, Hynes argues to the effect “that the apparition was in response to a crisis in clerical authority, a crisis in which Knock was at the epicenter. Threats to constituted authority in realms ranging from the challenges to the landlords to the family situation of the Beirnes [some of whom were witnesses to the apparition] exacerbated the situation and compounded this crisis” (258). Hynes observes that two contemporary Knock-area priests, Fathers Cavanagh and Bourke, “successfully monopolized” media portrayal of the apparition (265). What the press neglected to indicate, however, according to Hynes, “was the traditional idiom of Virgin appearances as commentary on the role of priests” (265). Neglected also in the media, according to Hynes, “were the overt challenges to the priests around the time of the apparition. They did not mention, for example, the demonstration against Fr Cavanagh in June, or the damaging of Fr Bourke’s crops and fences or the way he had been vilified in the pages of the Connaught Telegraph in June and July” (266). At this time a movement against landlords was taking shape. Hynes throughout his book attempts to illumine the context in which the Virgin’s 1879 apparition in Knock occurs.

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and Fordham University
The 32nd Annual University of California Celtic Studies Conference, sponsored by the UCLA Celtic Colloquium and the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, will take place March 4-7, 2010, on the UCLA campus (Royce 314).

Invited guests include Kim McCone (NUI Maynooth) and Katharine Simms (Trinity College). For more information, please contact Karen Burgess at kburgess@ucla.edu or Joseph Nagy at jfnagy@humnet.ucla.edu.

The Celtic Studies Association of North America (CSANA) embraces all aspects of Celtic Studies and provides an academic and scholarly forum unavailable in any other discipline. The 2010 CSANA Annual Meeting convenes at the University of Notre Dame to discuss papers related to the conference theme: ‘Saints, Sinners and Scribes in the Celtic World.’ We invite proposals from faculty and graduate students in particular for individual 20 minute papers that address the conference theme or any aspect of the languages, literature, history, folklore, music, art and archaeology of ancient, medieval and modern Celtic cultures. Potential presenters should send a 200-250 word abstract suitable for reproduction, plus a brief biographical sketch (one-half page max., not a full CV) before 1 February 2010 to: csana2010@gmail.com

Keynote speakers:
Professor Catherine McKenna (Harvard University)
Professor Máirín Nic Eoin (St Patrick's College, Drumcondra)
Professor Edgar Slotkin (University of Cincinnati)
Professor Dan M. Wiley (Southern Illinois University Carbondale)

2010 Seminar Text: The Dream of the Emperor Macsen / Breudwyt Maxen Wledic
Seminar Leader: Joseph Nagy (UCLA)

Graduate Award: Graduate students are encouraged to present at the conference and the 2010 CSANA Graduate Prize will be awarded to the best graduate paper presented at the conference (membership required). For further information on joining the Celtic Studies Association of North America, see http://www.csub.edu/~cmacquarrie/csana/

Schedule and further details: http://www.nd.edu/~irishstu/CSANA.html

Registration fee: $35 (faculty), $20 (graduate students), Optional banquet $40
You may register online at: http://cce.nd.edu/attend.shtml
Conference Organizer: Brian Ó Conchubhair,  
Dept. of Irish Language & Literature, 412 Flanner Hall, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556, USA  
Tel: 1-574-631-1721, Fax: 574-631-3620

CSANA president Frederick Suppe is organizing two sessions of papers for the annual International Congress on Medieval Studies which will convene in Kalamazoo, Michigan during May 13-16, 2010. The general organizing themes for the two sessions are: “New Work by Young Celtic Studies Scholars” and “Sex, Gender, and Marriage in Celtic Texts and Cultures.” Because Celtic Studies is inherently such a broad interdisciplinary enterprise, these themes are deliberately cast in broad terms to accommodate presentations on a wide range of specific topics.

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR: The 2010 International Congress on Medieval Studies  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
May 13-16, 2010

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Kalamazoo, Michigan  
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The 2011 Celts in the Americas Conference  
Saint Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia  
CALL FOR PAPERS

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR: The Celts in the Americas conference will be held 29 June – 2 July, 2011 at Saint Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, hosted by the Celtic Studies Department of St FX and the Centre for Cape Breton Studies at Cape Breton University. The Celts in the Americas conference will offer a unique opportunity to share scholarship about the history, culture, and literature of Celtic-speaking peoples in North and South America. We invite submissions for 20 minute talks which discuss various aspects of the experiences and literatures of the communities speaking Breton, Cornish, Irish Gaelic, Manx Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic, or Welsh in the Americas, including:

- The history of the migrations of Celtic-speaking communities
- Examinations of Celtic literatures and folklore of the Americas
- Social movements and organisations formed by and for Celtic immigrant communities
- Developments in the folklife of Celtic immigrant communities
- Issues of linguistic and cultural maintenance and sustainability for Celtic immigrant communities
- Assessments of the history or current state of the field of Celtic Studies in the Americas
- New sources of information about Celtic-speaking peoples
- Preservation of and access to archival cultural resources, esp. digitization projects
The final day of the conference will be devoted to examining the interactions between Celtic peoples and non-Celtic peoples in the Americas, with a special emphasis on indigenous peoples and peoples of African descent. Suggested topics include:

- The development of the idea of Other and racialism
- Indigenous peoples, Imperial frontiers, and cultural invasion
- Mutual reflections of Others in literature (Celtic, indigenous, and Afro-centric)
- Mutual cultural, folkloric, and linguistic influences and exchanges
- Mutual influences in movements for civil, cultural, and linguistic rights

Presentations may be offered in English, French, or any of the Celtic languages; a short summary abstract in both English and French will be required before the conference for dissemination to conference attendees. A selection of papers from the conference is expected to be published. Please submit your name, institutional affiliation, paper title, and abstract (between 150 and 300 words) by 5 December 2010 via email to: mnewton@stfx.ca

Further details about the conference will be made available on the St FX Celtic Department website: http://www.stfx.ca/academic/celtic-studies/

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The 29th Annual Harvard Celtic Colloquium was held on October 9-11, 2009, following the Celtic Department’s annual John Kelleher lecture, which was delivered this year by Prof. Patrick Sims-Williams (Aberystwyth University) on “how our understanding of early Irish literature has progressed” (a talk which ultimately focused on the tale Tochmar Befchola).

The schedule was as full as it has ever been (three days, thirty-seven presentations), but the sessions always ran on time. All the Celtic languages but Manx were represented. The speakers were well-chosen (the organizers did their job well) – it was never boring. We had an unusually distinguished contingent of scholars from Brittany (Hervé Le Bihan, Gwendal Denez, and Yann Bevant, all professors from Rennes, as well as Dr Éva Guilloré who is doing a postdoc at Harvard this year) along with important scholars and interesting graduate students from the British Isles and around the world (including Prof. Anders Ahlqvist who came all the way from Australia).

Popular topics this year (mentioned by three or more speakers) were Peig Sayers, Breton folksongs, and the Middle Welsh prose tales. Prof. Gearóid Denvir (NUI Galway) gave a spectacular talk on the “The Oral Poetry of Learaí Phádraic Learaí Ó Finneadhá”, which will be on everybody’s list of highlights, along with Dr Ben Bruch on the Cornish englyn, Dr Sheila Kidd on nineteenth-century Scottish Gaelic dialogue, Prof: Philip O’Leary on the early work of Cathal Ó Sándair, Dr Alaw Mai Jones on “the medieval feast and the imagery of food and drink in fifteenth-century Wales”, Maire Johnson on motifs from Biblical apocrypha in the lives of Irish saints, and the paper by Aaron Alzola Romero and Eduardo Sanchez-Moreno on “How Iron-Age Iberians became Indo-Europeanized during the Franco Regime” (not that these were the only good papers – far from it – but they give an idea of the range).

Harvard graduate students made a good showing, and Tina Chance (who spoke on “Ethnicity, Geography, and the Passage of Dominion in the Mabinogi and Brut y Brenhinedd”) has given everyone a reason to look forward to her dissertation.

The full program, with the presenters’ abstracts, can still be viewed online at http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~hcc/29hcc/program29.html.
The Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium, after a recent burst of publication, are nearly up to date. Vol. 24/25 (2004/05) is now available from Harvard University Press (see their website, http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/CC0024.html), and the remaining volumes, including the one for this year’s colloquium, should appear within two years. This would not have been possible without the hard work of our managing editor, Dr Dorothy Africa. Now that PHCC is (nearly) back on the cutting edge of Celtic Studies research, this year’s presenters are reminded to send their papers to phcc@fas.harvard.edu by the end of the calendar year (Dec. 31, 2009) to be considered for publication.

Congratulations to the organizers – Erin Boon, Kassandra Conley, Margaret Harrison, and Elizabeth Moore – and department administrator Margo Granfors for a great event.

Matthieu Boyd
Harvard University

Books for Review

If you are interested in reviewing any of the following books, or if you have another title in mind for review and would like me to contact the publisher for a review copy, please contact the newsletter editor at cmacquarrie@csub.edu. Reviews for the next newsletter should be received by September 15.


