THE DAILY CLIPS

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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Street of the Arts amazing, appreciated

One more time, I am in a state of amazement and appreciation and this time, as before, on the Street of the Arts (aka East Fifth Street) as I experienced on Feb. 9 at Dance 2008 at the East Carolina University/Loessin Playhouse at McGinnis Theater, just a few yards south of the Street of the Arts. The amazement: How can a group of local people — mostly students — organize their bodies and heads so as to present such a highly skilled and beautifully organized presentation? It calls for an instructional system per excellence, under management of John Shearin and Jeff Woodruff. The appreciation: That it takes place right here in Greenville, by people who walk around like you and me and then get up on that stage and do it for all our enjoyment.

VANN LATHAM
Greenville

Planned expansion of clinics worrisome

It is preposterous to learn that ECU is proposing for the expansion of medical clinics using third- and fourth-year medical students. These students do not have any experience in medicine.

To practice medicine, one should have thorough knowledge of pharmacology, anatomy and physiology, apart from other subjects and good experience in the field. We have already noticed that student drivers cause accidents on the road, causing passing vehicles to wreck and injuring passenger.

Why does ECU not learn those lessons?

We have medical doctors, physician assistants, doctors of Osteopathic Medicine and nurse practitioners in medicine to practice. ECU needs to pay and hire professionals in their respective fields with good experience rather than crying over needless shortages and hiring foreigners and students.

I urge my fellow citizens not to go to facilities where professionals are not practicing. I also ask ECU not to be greedy after money and scapegoat our students. Thank you and God bless our great nation, the USA.

KISHEN C. RAO
Winterville
It's described as a work in theater noir — a gritty story not intended for the eyes and ears of children.

But to find out anything else, you'll have to see the play. "Enemies," written by East Carolina University professor Joseph Horst, debuts at 8 p.m. Saturday in Room 244 of Mendenhall Student Center. The show runs at 8 p.m. every night through Tuesday, in addition to a 3 p.m. matinee Sunday, and is sponsored by the Magnolia Arts Center and ECU's Phi Sigma Pi honor fraternity.

Only those who see the show will know anything about the storyline — for now at least. Horst and everyone else involved in the production have kept mum due to several plot twists. The cast and crew signed nondisclosure agreements to keep any vital information under wraps.

"They understand the suspense is built by not giving it (the plot) away, so the audience is along for the ride," said producer Jane Sharp.

Horst, who compares his ending with that of "The Sixth Sense," was an officer with the ECU Police Department for eight years and has been a reserve officer for five years. He wrote the play for his thesis while getting a master's degree in English at the university in 2005. A story he read around that time — one that dealt with identity — helped influence his own writings, as did his police work.

In September 2005, some people with the theater and art departments at ECU held a table-reading of the play at Emerge Gallery. Soon after, Horst began sending the script to numerous theater companies throughout the U.S. and England. But the play will have its world premiere in the small ECU stage.

The Web site, www.enemies-the-play.com, has been updated regularly to give potential fans clues to what the play might involve. Sharp said the site started as a test, but then they added biographies of the characters and pictures. Most recently, they posted excerpts from one of the main characters' diary, written by the actress who plays her and approved by Horst and the director, Jerad W. Alexander.

Though they can't divulge too much about the story, Horst and Sharp do stress that this is a gritty story not meant for children or audiences sensitive to foul language. They even rated the play R for language, some violence and adult situations.

"Even young teens should have someone with them," Sharp said.

It is also partly intended to bring college-aged people to the theater, and unlike some other shows, this is a play for the guys.

Sharp stressed the importance of paying attention to the cast's actions as you watch. Sharp said there's a lot of symbolism behind the actors' movements on stage, and the story may seem a bit confusing until the end of the second act.

"Everything is explained in the very last scene of the play," Sharp said.

This, she and Horst said, is why they opted for a room that can only fit 120 people in Mendenhall instead of a bigger stage — to keep the setting more intimate.

"It gets the audience close enough to see the reactions and turns in the characters," Sharp said.

"Issues of identification) will really connect more with an intimate audience," Horst added.

Horst gave another little clue into the play, saying the situations involve the lives of police officers; problems he said are universal.

Contact Kristin Day at 829-9579 or kday@coxnc.com.
Study’s look at oceans is sobering

Researchers from UNC-CH and elsewhere find that human influences are pervasive and harmful.

BY WADE RAWLINS STAFF WRITER

Despite the oceans’ vast expanse across 70 percent of the Earth, their every reach is affected by human activities, a new study by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and others says.

The study, published today in the journal Science, says that over 40 percent of the world’s oceans are suffering from multiple human influences, including overfishing, pollution, climate change and commercial shipping traffic. And no part of the deep blue sea is entirely unaffected, the scientists found.

The team of scientists from the United States, Great Britain and Canada synthesized global data to see how 17 human functions threaten marine ecosystems such as coral reefs, sea grass beds and continental shelves.

“The big picture looks much worse than I imagine most people expected,” said lead scientist Ben Halpern at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

The mapping technique uses overlays similar to an online satellite map, which allows users to add layers of highways, schools and parks to find the most congested areas. For the scientist, the approach reveals ocean expanses where threats to marine ecosystems overlap.

The areas most affected, the study said, include the North Sea, South and East China seas, Caribbean, eastern seaboard of North America, Mediterranean, Red Sea, Persian Gulf, Bering Sea and several regions of the western Pacific.

The ecosystems most threatened are coral reefs, which house more than 25 percent of all marine life; sea grass beds that provide nurseries for young fish; and mangroves that grow in coastal habitats. Almost half of all coral reefs

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experience medium high to very high impact.

"There is still a perception that the oceans are the high seas and are so vast," said Elizabeth Selig, an author of the study and a doctoral student in UNC-CH’s curriculum in ecology in the College of Arts and Sciences. "This is really the first time we’ve been able to get a picture of what human activities are affecting which places."

The least affected were areas near the poles where ice limits human access, but the study did not measure ice melt. The scientists said projections of polar ice loss suggest that the impact on these regions will increase substantially.

David Garrison, biological oceanography director at the National Science Foundation, which supported the study, said in a statement that the research is "a critically needed synthesis of the impact of human activity on ocean ecosystems." Previous studies have focused on single activities or isolated ecosystems.

**A model for others**

He said the effort is likely to be a model for assessing these effects on a regional and local scale.

The study quantifies the extent of the problems that marine scientists have long known to be issues, said John Bruno, associate professor of marine sciences at UNC-CH and co-author of the study.

"But it’s not enough to just know something’s a problem," Bruno said. "If you want to do something about it, you have to know where the problems are and what’s causing them."

Bruno and Selig contributed information about rising ocean temperatures, which can damage the health of coral reefs. The readings were then used to quantify changes in ocean temperature and estimate the threat from global warming.

Bruno said the new map reveals for the first time the geographic extent and precise locations of ocean warming.

"It isn’t really warming up like a pot of water on a stove," Bruno said.

Instead, scientists see patches of the ocean with spikes in temperatures of a few degrees. But such temperature anomalies can cause coral disease outbreaks, previous studies by Bruno and Selig have said.

With the information, the research team can now begin to tackle the bigger problem of understanding and forecasting how ocean warming will affect marine ecosystems, he said.

Sean McKeon, president of the N.C. Fisheries Association, which represents commercial fishermen, dealers and processors, took issue with the study, saying most of the world’s oceans were not affected at all by humans.

"The oceans are so vast and deep and inaccessible to most vessels," McKeon said. "We fish in relatively small areas of the ocean."

**What is acceptable?**

McKeon said the question should be what levels of impacts were acceptable to provide seafood and other products from the ocean.

"We impact the land when we raise crops," McKeon said. "I don’t know anybody who would argue we get rid of farms. We impact forests when we use forest products."

Sera Harold, Southeast regional representative for the Marine Fish Conservation Network, which advocates healthy fisheries, said it was significant that the east coast of North America was one of the most threatened areas.

"We’re in a lot of denial," Harold said. "We don’t think about pollution and how it affects the ocean. Each of us pours fertilizer on our lawn or doesn’t tune their car and doesn’t realize the impact we’re having. Every once in a while, it’s nice to have somebody remind us we need to take better care of the ocean."

wade.rawlins@newsobserver.com

or (919) 829-4528
An earlier challenge to faith

UNC-CH professor examines the Transcendentalists of the 19th century

BY J. PETER ZANE
STAFF WRITER

Faith is under siege.
Through their best-selling books, Richard Dawkins ("The God Delusion"), Christopher Hitchens ("God is Not Great") and Sam Harris ("The End of Faith") are leading widespread efforts to challenge the historical, scriptural and psychological foundations of religious belief.

But, as Philip F. Gura reveals in "American Transcendentalism" (Hill and Wang, $27.50, 365 pages), this hardly the first time that faith has been tested. In his crisply written history, Gura, a professor of American literature and culture at UNC-Chapel Hill, focuses on the period 1830-50, when challenges to religious belief led to a flowering of American thought centered in and near Boston.

As he details the Transcendentalists' rich stew of ideas, Gura debunks myths that surround them. He reminds us the movement had many more leaders than writers Ralph Waldo Emerson ("Self-Reliance") and Henry David Thoreau ("Walden"); that community-minded reform efforts were integral to this movement famous for its celebration of the individual, and that European thinkers greatly influenced this quintessentially American phenomenon.

In a recent phone interview, Gura discussed his work, which is a finalist for the National Book Critics Award for

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Nonfiction, whose winners will be announced March 6.

Q: Transcendentalism is usually remembered as a philosophical movement epitomized by the largely secular writings of Emerson and Thoreau. Why is that wrong?
A: Transcendentalism began as a religious demonstration in the 1820s and '30s. Nearly all of its early lights were clergymen of the Unitarian school.

Q: What motivated them?
A: Unitarianism was seen as a religion of rationality, of intelligence and logic. And during this time there were profound intellectual challenges to faith.

Q: Such as?
A: Beginning in the late 18th century, European scholars began developing what's known as "higher criticism." That is, they began applying the historical and linguistic tools used to understand secular works to sacred texts. Through this approach, they identified some of the contradictions and inconsistencies in the Bible; they saw that it was written by particular people at particular times and a product of that culture. This approach undercut the belief that the Bible contained the absolute words of God.

Q: How did the Transcendentalists respond?
A: The Transcendentalists did not speak in a single voice or hold one set of views. But the Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing, for example, responded by saying that instead of being literally the word of God, the Bible contained it.

Q: Is it fair to say that they had the rug pulled out from under their feet and they were looking for a new footing for their faith?
A: What they were looking for was the centrality of the religious message. They were looking for that which transcends things. That's why this group was very open to sacred texts from other cultures. They wanted to find what was underneath it all.

Q: Didn't some see a distinction between religion and theology?
A: Yes, George Ripley, for example, described theology as a set of propositions "for and against which we may dispute" while religion was "a matter of the inward nature, the higher consciousness of man."

Q: That inward-gaze seems to define Transcendentalism.
A: Right. The idea is that religion is internal, that you don't base your faith on reading a book. The message of the Transcendentalists is that we are all holy, we are all divine. You have to discover that consciousness, which links you to the higher truth.

Q: Didn't they see the world as evidence of religious truth?
A: In "Nature," Emerson wrote that the "invariable mark" of wisdom was "to see the miraculous in the common." "Standing on the bare ground, — my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, — all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of universal being circulating through me; I am part or particle of God."

Q: I love a similar quote in your book from 19th-century writer Sampson Reed: "The very stones cry out and we would do well to listen to them." This mystical, inward looking bent is how Transcendentalism is remembered. Why is that picture incomplete?
A: While Emerson believed that people must improve themselves, other Transcendentalists believed people had an obligation to heal the world. So there was a great number of the movement's leaders, like Orestes Brownson and George Ripley, who worked closely with the poor and were involved in various reform plans — of the schools, prisons, almshouses, insane asylums and, of course, the fight against slavery.

Q: Your book has a great quote from early feminist Margaret Fuller explaining how these two aspects came from a single source: "Disgusted with the vulgarity of a commercial aristocracy they [the Transcendentalists] became radicals; disgusted with the materialistic working of 'rational' religion, they became mystics. ... They quarrel with all because it is not spiritual enough."

Q: If you believe there's a spark of divinity in every person, it's harder to just dismiss the poor and the downtrodden.
A: And the slaves. In fact, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 so outraged the people of New England that it became the great moral problem of the age, dominating thought and activity. After that a great variety of religious reforms takes a second seat to the abolitionist cause.

Q: Why have we largely forgotten social reform's centrality to the movement?
A: After the 1850s the notions of individuality and personal empowerment became much more part of the American story than the urge to reform. So that first part of the story seemed more useful. And the academy played a part, too. The reformers worked in the streets while Emerson and Thoreau devoted their energies to writing, which became part of the classroom curriculum.

Q: Your book stresses the influence of European thinkers, especially the German idealists such as Immanuel Kant and Johann Wolfgang Goethe, on the Transcendentalists. Yet, the movement seems quintessentially American, is it?
A: It's true... we don't talk about a European Transcendentalist group because the ideas took hold in different, largely secular ways there. In England, we see the Romantic movement — writers like Wordsworth and Coleridge — that forged an emotional and aesthetic response to modern life. On the continent there was the flourishing of more socialist, reformist movements. In the United States, these ideas took on a particular character because they arose in religious circles.
UNC has a diverse search pool

By Eric Ferreri
Staff Writer

Chapel Hill — The headhunter leading the search for the next UNC-Chapel Hill chancellor said Thursday the pool of candidates is the most impressive he's seen in a long time.

Bill Funk, who runs a Dallas-based executive search firm, has at least 250 university searches under his belt and is currently heading the search for the next University of California system president. He said the UNC-CH pool is the best he's seen in five years and credits the university's academic reputation and the state's historic financial support for higher education.

"They know the people of North Carolina respect and support the institution and know it's something they'd like to be a part of," he said.

Funk's comments offered a rare — if vague — glimpse into the search process. He did not identify candidates or specify how many are still under consideration. His comments came at the outset of a search committee meeting that quickly went into closed session.

The university seeks a successor for James Moeser, who steps down this summer. Moeser came to UNC-CH in 2000.

Funk said the pool is diverse, not only in its racial and gender makeup but also in the backgrounds of the candidates.

"We have a number of sitting university presidents, a lot of sitting provosts and deans, and we have individuals from major education associations and research think tanks," he said.

Funk did not say whether any of the contenders come from the corporate ranks.

Each time a new leader is selected at UNC-CH or at the university system level, there is much debate over whether the chosen person should have a link to the state or university.

Funk said Thursday he was surprised by the number of candidates with a relationship to UNC-CH.

"It is absolutely remarkable how many people in our pool were a student here, grew up here, lived here or were on the faculty here," he said.

He also mentioned well-regarded universities that recently announced coming leadership changes.

Dartmouth College's president is stepping down next year. And Gene Nichol, the former UNC-CH law school dean, abruptly resigned earlier this week from the presidency of the College of William and Mary.

Nichol was a finalist for the UNC-CH position in 2000 when Moeser was chosen for the post.

eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com
or (919) 956-2415