

HISTORY AT BERKELEY

A Dialog in Three Parts



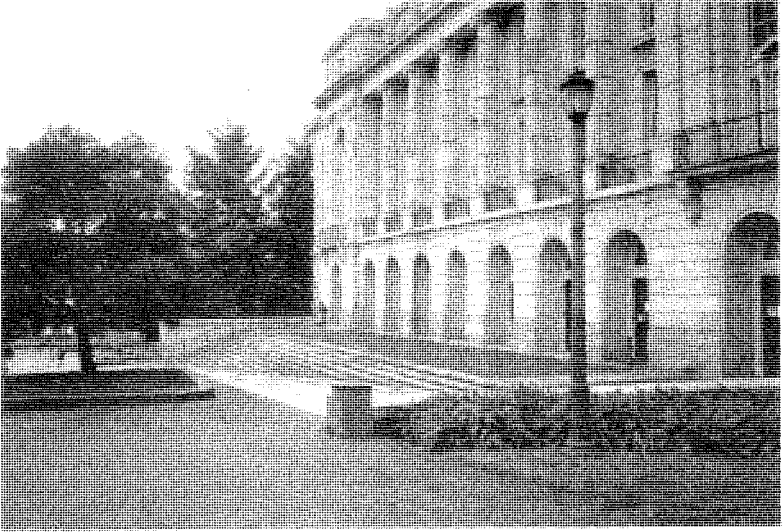
Gene A. Brucker
Henry F. May
David A. Hollinger

Chapters in the History of the University of California
Number Seven
Carroll Brentano, Sheldon Rothblatt, Editors

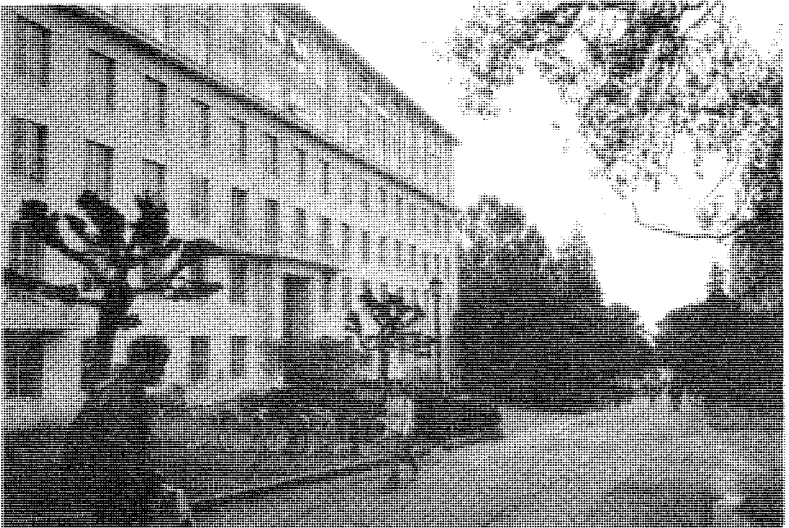
Have Blue for 6 hrs

HISTORY AT BERKELEY

FACADES



*Department of History Office, 30 Wheeler Hall
(In 1938-39 with 17 members)*



*Department of History Office, 3229 Dwinelle Hall
(In 1960-61 with 50 members)*

HISTORY AT BERKELEY:

A Dialog in Three Parts

Gene A. Brucker
Henry F. May
David A. Hollinger



Chapters in the History of the
University of California
Number Seven

Center for Studies in Higher Education and
Institute of Governmental Studies
University of California, Berkeley
1998

©1998 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-In-Publication Data

Brucker, Gene A.

History at Berkeley : a dialog in three parts / by Gene A. Brucker, Henry May, and David Hollinger.

p. cm. -- (Chapters in the history of the University of California ; number 7)

ISBN 0-87772-377-X

1. History--Study and teaching

(Secondary)--California--Berkeley. I. May, Henry Farnham, 1915- . II. Hollinger, David A. III. Title. IV. Series.

D16.5.B47B78 1997

907'.1'179467--dc21

97-49679

CIP

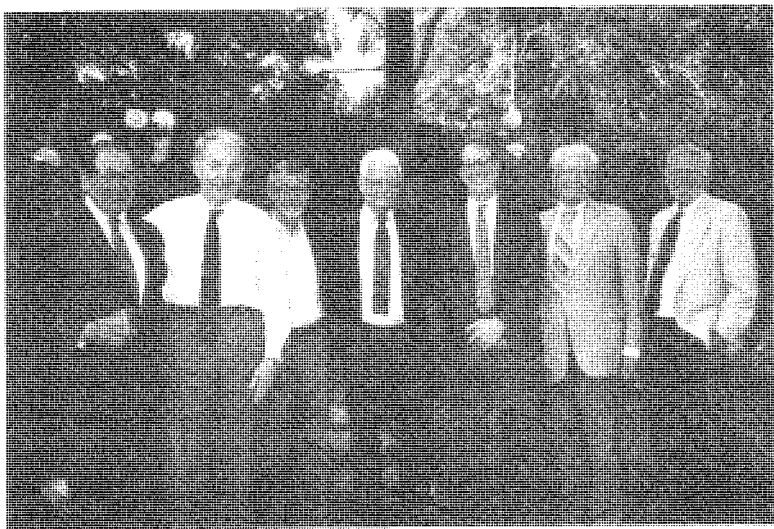


Figure 1: Seven chairmen of the department: Carl Schorske, Robert Middlekauff, Gene Brucker, William Bouwsma, Sheldon Rothblatt, Nicolas Riasanovsky, Robert Brentano, 1992.

In honor of the 125th anniversary of the founding of the University of California, the Center for Studies in Higher Education at Berkeley, in cooperation with the Institute of Governmental Studies, takes pleasure in publishing a series of "chapters" in the history of the University. These are designed to illuminate particular problems and periods in the history of U.C., especially its oldest and original campus at Berkeley, and to identify special turning points or features in the "long century" of the University's evolution. Histories are stories meant to be read and enjoyed in their own right, but the editors cannot conceal the hope that readers of these chapters will notice facts and ideas pertinent to the decade that closes our own century and millennium.

*Carroll Brentano and
Sheldon Rothblatt, editors*

Carroll W. Brentano is an architectural historian and coordinator of the University History Project, Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley. Sheldon Rothblatt is professor of history and former director of the Center for studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley.



Figure 2: Clio, the muse of History. From “The Preface” of *An Universal History from the Earliest Accounts to the Present Time*, London: C. Bathurst et al., 1779, vol. 1, p. a.

“History is, without all doubt, the most instructive, as well as entertaining, part of literature. . . . By these records it is that we live, as it were, in the very age when the world was created; we behold how it was governed in its infant state; how overwhelmed by a deluge of water, and again peopled; how kings and kingdoms have risen, flourished, and declined, and by what means they brought upon themselves their final destruction. From these and other like events, every judicious reader may form unerring rules for the conduct of life, both in a public and private capacity.”

FOREWORD

This is the seventh in the series begun five years ago: "Chapters in the History of the University of California." We gratefully acknowledge the support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and of the Brenner Foundation for this project.

Your editor is the holder of an M.A. from Berkeley's history department; your co-editor of this series of Chapters is the holder of three degrees from it; and our close colleague in the Oral History Office who oversaw the collection of oral histories on which much of the Hollinger material is based, was an undergraduate history major. Some readers will share with us the nostalgia of having "been there," but all should learn something about the nature of faculty associations in general, and in particular a special view of Cal's tumultuous decades.

This collection began with the choice of Gene A. Brucker, very distinguished historian of the Italian Renaissance, as the annual Faculty Lecturer in 1995. Whether the faculty committee that chose him was surprised by his choice of topic we don't know—presumably they expected something on fourteenth-century Florence. But it was "History at Berkeley." In the spring of the next year, the University History Project of the Center for Studies in Higher Education organized an afternoon's reprise of the Brucker talk entitled "Play It Again Sam." Many current and emeritus members of the department had things to say, prepared or off-the-cuff, and one, Henry May, graciously agreed to have his remarks published here. The third contributor, David Hollinger, asked a question that didn't get answered at the gathering, and so, like a good historian, did the research to find out for himself and presents his results here.

Each of these three essays has a different image of the history department; or are they only three views of the same image? And is this a true image? Readers might imagine themselves 50 years from now doing intensive research on an institutional history (if such a thing did still exist) of this very history department. What would they accept of the record here?

When David Hollinger handed over his first draft of what was initially to be an introduction, he, or his spell-checker, called it a

“Forward”—the watchword, we trust, for today’s “history at Berkeley.”

Carroll Brentano

CONTENTS

History at Berkeley	1
<i>Gene A. Brucker</i>	
Comments	23
<i>Henry F. May</i>	
Afterword	35
<i>David A. Hollinger</i>	
Appendix: Members of the Berkeley History Department, 1950-1969	52

ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover	Symbol for the Faculty, 1907 <i>Blue and Gold</i>	
Frontispiece	Department of History Office in 1938-39, 30 Wheeler Hall	ii
	Department of History Office in 1960-61, 3229 Dwinelle Hall	
Figure 1	Seven chairmen of the department: Carl Schorske, Robert Middlekauff, Gene Brucker, William Bouwsma, Sheldon Rothblatt, Nicolas Riasanovsky, Robert Brentano, 1992 (<i>Photo by David Keightley</i>)	vi
Figure 2	Clio, the muse of History	viii
Figure 3	Gene Brucker (<i>Photo by Marion Brucker</i>)	xiv
Figure 4	"Peace Now." Marching in San Francisco, 1969, historians Gerard Caspary, Peter Ascoli, Richard Herr, Robert Brentano, Kathleen Casey, Thomas Bisson, and Carroll Brentano (<i>Photographer unknown</i>)	12
Figure 5	Henry F. May (<i>Photo by Jane Scherr</i>)	22
Figure 6	The department's annual softball game, circa 1970. Gene Brucker batting, Randolph Starn catching. (<i>Photo courtesy of the Brucker family</i>)	27
Figure 7	Sheldon and Barbara Rothblatt, Jeanne-Marie Barnes, Ellen Hahn, Thomas Barnes, Roger Hahn, 1981. (<i>Photo courtesy of the Rothblatt family</i>)	27

Figure 8	David Hollinger (<i>Photo by Alberto Cristofari</i>)	34
Figure 9	Herbert E. Bolton (<i>Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library</i>)	46
Figure 10	George Guttridge (<i>Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library</i>)	46
Figure 11	Raymond J. Sontag (<i>Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library</i>)	46
Figure 12	Carl Bridenbaugh (<i>Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library</i>)	46
Figure 13	Delmer Brown (<i>Photo courtesy of the Brown family</i>)	47
Figure 14	Kenneth M. Stampp (<i>Photo courtesy of the Stampp family</i>)	47
Figure 15	Thomas Kuhn and his wife Jehane with William Bouwsma on a visit to Berkeley in the 1980s. (<i>Photo courtesy of the Bouwsma family</i>)	47



Figure 3: Gene Brucker

HISTORY AT BERKELEY

Gene A. Brucker

This presentation is described as a “Faculty Research Lecture,” and its traditional objective has been to present to a lay audience some portion of the scholarly work of the speaker and his or her discipline. I shall depart from that format in my discussion of “History at Berkeley.” I propose to describe briefly the changes in the ways that history has been taught and written on this campus since the 1940s. When I came to Berkeley in 1954, I entered a department that had changed very little—in its organization, its curriculum, its methods of teaching and its conception of its subject—since its establishment in the late nineteenth century. Forty years later, the teaching and writing, indeed the conception of history, has been radically transformed. In tracing that revolution and in attempting to explain its causes and its consequences, I have had recourse to my own experience, to my admittedly flawed and selective memory. I have also benefited from the recollections of colleagues who have taught history at Berkeley since the 1940s. I have spent little time in exploring the written records of the department and the University. Rather than focus on personalities, I want to describe a process, and to identify the forces and the impulses—both internal and external—that transformed this academic community of modest achievements and reputation to one that is generally recognized as being of world-class stature.

I will begin with some comments on origins. Though writing about the past is a very ancient activity, going back to the Greeks, to Herodotus and Thucydides, history as an academic discipline is a quite recent phenomenon. It was not a part of the curriculum of medieval universities that concentrated on such professional subjects as law, medicine, and theology. Renaissance humanists did value history as a means of instructing students about moral values, and, in the academies established by these scholars, the history of antiquity, of Greece and Rome, was an important part of

that curriculum. But modern history (that is, the history of the West since the fall of the Roman Empire) was not taught in European universities until the nineteenth century. It was first established as an academic discipline, taught by professional scholars, in Germany, where Leopold von Ranke and his colleagues at the University of Berlin developed methods and techniques of historical research that became the standard for both Europe and America. This development was linked to the growth of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe, as political leaders realized the value of history in promoting national sentiment. And so the study of history, and specifically, the history of each national community, became an integral part of the educational process, from primary schools to the university.

In the United States, the development of history as an academic discipline was also a slow and fitful process. The oldest eastern colleges—Harvard, Yale, Princeton—were founded to provide training for a Protestant clergy, and the curricula in those schools emphasized theology and classical languages. Greek and Roman history was studied as part of that humanist tradition, but modern history was not a high priority. Though some history courses had been offered sporadically in those institutions since the seventeenth century, they were usually taught by men who specialized in other fields: in classical and modern literature, in law, in theology. Not until the 1850s were separate departments of history first established, not in the venerable eastern colleges, but in the state universities of North Carolina and Michigan. Of the 145 authors identified in the *Dictionary of American Biography* as publishing historical works between 1800 and 1860, 34 were clergymen, 32 were lawyers, and only nine were teachers. None of the most renowned American historians of the nineteenth century—Parkman, Bancroft, Prescott, Motley—held academic positions in universities. As late as 1884, there were only 20 full-time professors of history in American colleges and universities, and just 30 graduate students were pursuing advanced degrees in the discipline. In a pattern that was quite typical for public universities founded after the Civil War, my *alma mater*, the University of Illinois, appointed its first professor of history (a

Harvard Ph.D. named Everts Green) in 1894. And for a decade, Green was the sole historian on the faculty before the administration authorized the appointment of a colleague.

At Berkeley, history was recognized as an integral part of a "liberal education," but the discipline did not rank high in the galaxy of the liberal arts. The classics remained the core of the humanities curriculum; a knowledge of Latin and Greek was a prerequisite for a B.A. degree until 1915. After classics, the most prestigious department in the humanities was philosophy, under the leadership of George Howison. The most prominent historian in the early decades of the twentieth century was Henry Morse Stephens, who came to Berkeley from Cornell in 1902. Stephens was a prolific author if not a scholar of great depth and sophistication. He was a close friend of the University president, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, and he played an important role in the acquisition of Hubert Bancroft's splendid library on western American history. An interesting glimpse of the history department in those years is provided by the reminiscences of Jacob Bowman, who was hired by Wheeler in 1906 to teach medieval history, though his research specialty was seventeenth-century England. The history faculty then comprised eight members under Stephens' headship, six of whom taught courses in European history and two in the history of the Americas. Bowman's description of the academic environment focuses largely upon social relationships, on the regular departmental meetings chaired by Stephens, and upon the friendships and enmities within that small community. Bowman says little about teaching, except to note that the department had granted only one Ph.D. degree, and nothing about scholarship, which was clearly not a high priority. The intellectual quality of the history faculty was perhaps unfairly described by a classical scholar, Arthur Ryder, who upon seeing Henry Morse Stephens and his colleagues in the Faculty Club, commented: "There goes a fake giant surrounded by real pygmies." But academic standards in the history department, and more generally in the university, did rise over the years, with stiffer scholarly requirements for appointment to the faculty and promotion.

History at Berkeley

During the 1930s, the decade of the Great Depression, the history department experienced only marginal growth. Its regular faculty in 1935 numbered just 13; the department chair was the distinguished historian of the Americas, Herbert Bolton. Eight faculty members were Europeanists; three were specialists in Latin America, and three taught the history of the United States. No course on the history of Asia or Africa appeared in the University catalogue. My colleague, Henry May, was an undergraduate at Berkeley in the 1930s, and he has written a thoughtful and candid account of his experiences in his autobiography, *Coming to Terms*. For both faculty and students, he writes, Berkeley was an attractive and not very demanding institution of teaching and learning. Lecture courses were the primary method of instruction, with professors of varying competence and eloquence purveying predigested packets of information to their passive clientele and periodically examining their ability to retain that knowledge for at least the duration of the course. The system, Henry May observed, “put a premium on feats of memory [by the students], on dramatic power and a kind of paternal geniality [by the instructors].” My own undergraduate experience at the University of Illinois in the early 1940s fits this description of Berkeley quite well. All of my courses were lecture courses, with the large surveys broken down into sections taught by graduate students, whose knowledge and pedagogical skills ranged from adequate to deplorable. With few exceptions, the historians at Illinois were distinguished for neither scholarly achievements nor for intellectual stimulation. They tended to assign books that they had read as graduate students, and few were interested in keeping up with recent work in their fields. I recall my astonishment some years later, as a student at Oxford University, when I attended a lecture by a young British historian of Napoleonic France, who brandished a new book on Napoleon that he had just brought back from a research trip to Paris, and whose contents he summarized with great excitement and panache.

It is possible that I have presented a too-negative account of history education at Berkeley in those prewar years. In conversations with people who were undergraduates in the 1930s, I have been impressed by references to dynamic teachers whose lectures

they attended, and who inspired them to pursue their interests in the discipline, often a life-long quest. Students in the graduate program speak of the intellectual excitement that they experienced in their seminars and in conversations with their peers. My colleague, Woodrow Borah, who came to Berkeley from UCLA as a graduate student in 1936, admits that within the department, there existed a wide range of scholarly and pedagogical skills, from superior to incompetent. His own historical interests were nourished by his contacts with faculty and students in other departments: geography, anthropology, and Spanish. Among the scholars in those disciplines he encountered an approach to the past that emphasized material factors and circumstances: geography, climate, food supply, demography—a perspective that was being developed simultaneously in France in those years by the founders of the so-called *Annales School*: Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, and Fernand Braudel. But even in the history department, where traditional methods and themes still were dominant (politics, institutions, “great men”), a very different kind of historian joined the faculty in 1939. His name was Ernst Kantorowicz. He was a distinguished medievalist who lost his professorship at the University of Frankfurt because he was a Jew, and who left Germany for England before accepting an appointment at Berkeley. Kantorowicz was an historian of European medieval culture, focusing specifically on the ideology and symbolism of kingship. His background, his education, his subject matter, and his teaching style were unusual for Berkeley, and he soon attracted an enthusiastic coterie of graduate students. His colleagues’ reservations concerning his background, his ethnicity, and his scholarly interests, may have been revealed by the fact that he served six years as a lecturer (1939-45) before he was promoted to a professorship. Kantorowicz refused to sign the loyalty oath in 1950, and after his appointment was terminated by the regents, he accepted a position at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.

When I came to Berkeley in 1954, the University was—in its structure and its ethos—one with which I was quite familiar. Departments representing disciplines were the key units of academic organization, and their size roughly coincided with their

reputation and their status on the campus. Like every segment of the University, the history department had expanded since the war, to accommodate the influx of GIs and the growing number of California students seeking a university degree. From 15 regular faculty in 1941, the department had grown to 25 in 1954. But the organization of instruction had changed very little since my undergraduate years: introductory courses in western civilization and the history of the Americas for beginning students; survey courses embracing vast swatches of time in ancient, medieval, early modern, and modern European history, and the history of Latin America and the Orient; a few courses on national history: the United States, England, France; and for graduate students, the research seminar invented by German scholars in the nineteenth century and imported to this country by American students who studied at Berlin or Heidelberg.

Beyond this formal structure, which was outlined in the University catalog, was a more complex world of departmental relations, and of problems and tensions, that I discovered only gradually during my early years at Berkeley. Like the University as a whole, the department in the 1950s was in a state of flux, in a period of expanding enrollments and faculty, and of changing demands and expectations. Power in the history department still resided in the hands of a small cadre of senior professors (I called them *baroni*) who sought to preserve their influence in the department and to protect their turf against their rivals by (among other stratagems) forging patron-client bonds with younger faculty. These men, who had entered the department in the prewar years, and had lived comfortably in that rather isolated academic milieu, were temperamentally hostile to innovation. They had generally supported the regents' efforts to impose a loyalty oath upon the faculty in the early 1950s, and they remained wary of newly recruited faculty who might infect the department with radical ideas. In opposition to these *baroni*, there formed a group of faculty whom I will call the "young Turks," who sought to break the monopoly of the old guard, and specifically to bring into the department young, talented scholars who would raise its academic standards and enable it to compete with major eastern universities.

The conflict was over power and status, over the department's future, and over the kind of history that would be taught at Berkeley. The *baroni* favored traditional kinds of history, focusing on politics, diplomacy, institutions, and elites. They were not sympathetic to social and cultural history that was then attracting adherents among young scholars in this country and abroad. The battles waged over specific academic appointments were fierce, and after several skirmishes and one titanic battle, the old regime was vanquished and the young Turks emerged triumphant. In their struggle, they had the strong support of the University administration, and notably Chancellor Clark Kerr and Dean Lincoln Constance, who shared their vision of a Berkeley history department of superior quality.

The victory of the young Turks was marked by the selection of energetic department chairs and by a spate of new appointments that dramatically transformed the character of the department. In just one area, European history, between 1957 and 1963, these new appointments were made: William Bouwsma in early modern cultural history, Thomas Kuhn in the history of science, David Landes in economic history, Carl Schorske in cultural history, Richard Herr in Spanish history, Hans Rosenberg in European social history, and Nicholas Riasanovsky and Martin Malia in Russian history. This influx of talent had an immediate and positive impact: introducing new areas of study and new methodologies and creating an atmosphere of intellectual excitement that affected both faculty and students. These new appointments were scholars of distinction, abreast of recent work and new trends in their fields and committed to high standards of teaching and writing history. Their influence was felt in lecture halls and seminar rooms, in departmental meetings, and in the quality of intellectual discourse within the department. I remember specifically my luncheon discussions with Hans Rosenberg, who was the product of a German education, which, prior to the Nazi era, may have been the most rigorous system of learning ever developed in the West. It seemed to me that Hans had read everything ever published on European history; his knowledge was encyclopedic, and his critical acumen was extraordinary. I learned much from

History at Berkeley

Hans and from his other colleagues who came to Berkeley, some to stay and others to leave.

Supplementing these high-profile additions to the history faculty was a cluster of appointments of young assistant professors, most of whom were ultimately promoted to tenure, and who became the core of the department. The sustained high quality of these appointments attests to the careful and thorough searches for the most promising candidates, to the hundreds of hours spent in reading and evaluating their scholarly publications, and to the department's enhanced ability to attract talent. In my conversations with colleagues who came to Berkeley in those heady years, certain themes predominate. They were impressed by the departmental environment, which seemed freer and less hierarchical than the schools where they had received their graduate training. They were immediately given departmental committee assignments and responsibilities that, while time and energy consuming, gave them a sense of belonging to an academic community and not just being marginal figures. They shared their ideas, their research projects, and their writing with their colleagues, and these exchanges broadened their intellectual horizons. They were given the opportunity to develop new scholarly interests and to devise new courses. In my second year at Berkeley, I was asked to teach a proseminar for undergraduates, one of the first courses of this type that was offered, and which became a fixture of our major program. A year later, I was invited to participate in an interdisciplinary course on Renaissance and Baroque Italian culture, with my colleagues Joseph Kerman of the music department and James Ackerman of art history, and later Arnolfo Ferruolo of the Italian department. These were exciting pedagogical adventures from which I learned a great deal.

The picture that I have painted of the history department after the revolution of the young Turks may seem altogether too positive, too harmonious, and too unreal. There was a darker side to the history of this community, as there is of any human society. I would describe the department, then as now, as being like a mildly dysfunctional extended family. There were, inevitably, tensions and rivalries between different branches of the clan and

between individuals. There were cases of disinheritance, or professional disappointments, of colleagues who felt that their work was not properly appreciated by their peers. There was, and is, disagreement over the relative value of the principles of hierarchy, on the one hand, and of equality and democracy on the other. This is a story that could be told, and perhaps should be told, but not by me and not on this occasion.

If one can speak of a "golden age" of history at Berkeley, it may have been the decade of the sixties, the troubles of those years notwithstanding. My personal view of that time may be warped by the nostalgia that old men often feel about their past. But I have checked my impressions with colleagues, and their perceptions of the department in the sixties generally coincide with my own. Though some senior scholars left the department in that decade, their departure did not seriously weaken the history program, for they were soon replaced by impressive new talent. For example, the American colonial historian, Carl Bridenbaugh, who had played a critical role in raising the department's standards in the 1950s, left Berkeley for Brown University in 1962. To replace him, the department hired two young scholars, Winthrop Jordan and Robert Middlekauff. Jordan's first book, *White Over Black*, was one of the most important studies on race relations published in the 1960s. Middlekauff's scholarly contributions—on colonial education, on Puritans and Puritanism, on the revolutionary war, and most recently, his biography of Benjamin Franklin—have established his reputation as one of America's most distinguished colonial historians. In those boom years, the University administration was very receptive to the department's request for new positions to strengthen established fields and to develop new areas, such as Africa, the Islamic world, and the Indian subcontinent. Recruitment was a major preoccupation, one that kept the faculty busy serving on search committees, reading the scholarly works of candidates, making collective decisions about new appointments. From the hindsight of 30 years, it now seems clear that the department's personnel policy was myopic in its failure to recruit women and minorities more aggressively. In 1970 there was no woman holding a tenured position in the department, though

Natalie Davis was hired in 1971. There were no blacks, no Chicanos, no Asians.

By the 1960s, the history department had not only enhanced its reputation in this country and abroad, it had transformed itself into a genuinely collegial community. There developed, in those years, a remarkable *esprit de corps* that reminded me of the small army unit in which I served during World War II. In my view, the most important element in creating and sustaining this atmosphere of collegiality was the shared conviction that we were qualified to read each other's scholarly work and to make judgments about its quality. Despite the diversity of our areas of study, and of our methodologies, we shared the belief that ours was an accessible discipline, with a common vocabulary and a common commitment to the understanding of the past. This spirit of collegiality was manifest in departmental meetings, in meetings of the tenure committee where differences of opinion were aired openly, and where judgments were made primarily on scholarly considerations. Collegiality involved the willingness of department members to accept the decisions of the majority of their colleagues. The collective decisions of the group had to prevail over those of individuals of whatever status or eminence.

How did this spirit, this ethos, of collegiality develop and grow? In my experience, it is a rare phenomenon in the academic world, which is more often characterized by faction and feud and by bitter rivalries among inflated egos. It was certainly fostered by the general sense of belonging to a community that was expanding in size and improving in quality and that was achieving national, indeed, international recognition. It was fostered, too, by the leadership of wise and experienced chairmen like George Guttridge and Delmer Brown, who had a most remarkable ability to build a consensus among their colleagues for sustaining and enhancing the department's intellectual quality and for improving its curriculum. It was enhanced by the example of men like the late Joseph Levenson, who epitomized this spirit of collegiality. Though a scholar of awesome intellect and erudition, he was a genuinely modest man. For several years in the 1960s, Joe and I served together in department administrative positions, and in that

context, I came to appreciate his rare gifts: his sound judgment, his tolerance and generosity, his wit and humor. When I was appointed department chairman in the spring of 1969, I wrote to Joe to ask him to serve as vice chairman, an offer that he gracefully declined. He then mentioned the troubles that were roiling the campus: "My office window [he wrote] was smashed by the troops last week, along with others on the second floor of Dwinelle. I put a little plastic medallion of Chairman Mao in the shattered glass, as a talisman and a sign to smite the Egyptians but pass us Hebrews over. I haven't been troubled since." This was my last communication with Joe, whose tragic death in a boating accident a few weeks later shook the department as no event has before or since.

The violence on the campus, to which Levenson alluded, was a constant element in our lives since the FSM (Free Speech Movement) erupted in 1964. The history department survived this "time of troubles," and, indeed, its cohesiveness, its collegiality, became stronger as a response to the disorders. Except for the Cambodian crisis in the spring of 1970, when the whole campus was effectively shut down, the history faculty taught its classes, sometimes on campus and sometimes off, and carried out its administrative responsibilities. I recall attending a Ph.D. oral examination in May 1969, when the campus was occupied by the National Guard. The candidate responded to questions (her field was medieval history) with helicopters hovering overhead and with the prospect of tear gas wafting through the windows. Members of the faculty were sharply divided over the issues raised by the student movement and over the Vietnam War. But these disagreements did not weaken significantly the faculty's solidarity, nor its commitment to teaching and research. We were all, of course, very troubled by the disruptions—the riots, the strikes, the tear gas—which threatened on many occasions to close down the University. There was, indeed, a minority of students and faculty that sought to do precisely that. That these efforts failed was due (I believe) to the insistence of campus administrators and a majority of the faculty that teaching and learning had to continue. We could not conceive of the possibility that the campus would be



Figure 4: "Peace Now." Marching in San Francisco, 1969. Historians Gerard Caspary, Peter Ascoli, Richard Herr, Robert Brentano, Kathleen Casey, Thomas Bisson, Carroll Brentano.

closed, that students would not enroll in our classes, and that these classes would not be taught. This attitude contrasted sharply with that of Italian professors of my acquaintance, many of whom welcomed strikes in their universities, since their salaries were not affected and, without teaching responsibilities, they had more time for their research.

The University did emerge from the turmoil of the 1960s and early 1970s, its organization relatively intact, and (its critics would say) its power structure essentially unaltered. There were changes, to be sure, though some were more cosmetic than real. Students did win a greater role (though not as much as they wanted) in the operation of the campus, through membership on some service and administrative committees, and as a result of the administration's greater willingness to consult with their leaders. The establishment of an ethnic studies program was largely the result of student pressure. Very serious efforts were made to improve the quality of undergraduate instruction and to broaden the curriculum. In the history department, there had already occurred before FSM a radical restructuring of the major, with greater emphasis on small seminar classes and on tutorial instruction. My colleague, Robert Brentano, was instrumental in developing History 101, which in the catalogue is described as "a seminar in historical research and writing for history majors." This course is the most demanding and (if one credits the reports of students who have taken it) the most rewarding course in which our majors enroll. The other significant instructional innovation, which (like History 101) predated FSM, was the expansion in the number of undergraduate proseminars, and the requirement that each major take a minimum of two of these courses. While lecture courses surveying broad segments of the past still constituted a significant portion of the major program, the greater emphasis on small, seminar-type courses provided students with wider choices and more options for constructing an academic program.

It is instructive to read the descriptions of recent course offerings, for they reflect quite accurately the topics that currently interest both instructors and students. Here are some examples: "The Normal and the Deviant in Late Modern Europe"; "The

Passions and Early Modern Europe”; “Criminalization and Decriminalization”; “Interpreting the World Wars: History, Memory, and Identity in Twentieth Century Europe”; “Women in European Society, 1780-1905”; “Race, Ethnicity, and American Foreign Relations, 1890-1975”; “Childhood in America”; “Colonial Ideologies of Authority and Identity”; “Unveiling Eve: Women in the Arab Islamic World”; “Technology, Science, and European Imperialism, 1492-1992”; “The Body, Space, and Nationalism.” This recitation may horrify Alan Bloom’s followers, who view the current educational system as being corrupted by political correctness and deconstruction. Let me reassure this audience that not every historical topic studied at Berkeley involves issues of race, gender, and class. Here are some examples of more traditional themes: “The Medieval Urban Experience”; “The Paradox of Victorian England”; “The 1930s in the United States”; “The Struggle for Independence: America from 1760 to 1815”; and “The History of the Athenian Democracy.”

The broad range of these topics reflects the enormous expansion of the discipline since the 1940s. The number of historians who write and publish in this country has tripled, perhaps quadrupled. Historical journals have proliferated, as has the number of books published on any topic. In 1970, C. Vann Woodward, in his presidential address to the American Historical Association, calculated that the number of history books published in the United States had tripled between 1950 and 1968. Though I have not counted, that number has surely doubled, and possibly tripled, in the past quarter-century. When I was a graduate student at Princeton in the early 1950s, I had a sense, doubtless illusory, that I could work through the important historical literature in my field; the readings assigned by professors in my courses were manageable. Today, any historian holding such views would be a candidate for an asylum. In my last years of teaching at Berkeley, I regularly taught a graduate reading course (not a research seminar) on Renaissance and Reformation history. I chose a cluster of significant topics for weekly discussions, on such themes as Italian urban history, Renaissance humanism, the late medieval church, Luther, and so forth. I compiled a list of significant books

on each topic, to give the students a sense of the bibliography, and to guide them in their reading. The total number of books that I compiled was over 200, from which the diligent student preparing for his Ph.D. exams, might manage to read, or at least scan, 30 or 40.

The dramatic growth of historical knowledge has created a problem for the discipline, that of integrating and synthesizing this flood of new information. Even with the aid of the computer, the task of collating and assimilating data has become more complex. The temptation to narrow rather than broaden one's historical horizons is very strong; there is some truth in that old adage that defines the scholar as someone who knows more and more about less and less. But there are historians who are still willing to tackle very large and complex subjects, and to synthesize vast amounts of material into viable packages. I think of John Keegan's magisterial surveys of military history and of Paul Kennedy's analysis of European politics and economy from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Several of my history colleagues have published important works of synthesis in their fields. To cite just two examples: Ira Lapidus' comprehensive *History of Islamic Societies*, described by one reviewer as an "awesome achievement"; and Jan De Vries' *European Urbanization, 1500-1800*, which prompted one reviewer to write: "It is one of those rare books which reshape a subject so that it can never be quite the same again."

The overloading of history's information circuits may be the least of the current problems confronting the discipline. More serious are the internecine quarrels over the privileging of certain fields or subjects over others and the role of theory in historical analysis. The recent highly publicized debate over new guidelines for history teachers has revived a dispute of long standing between traditionalists and revisionists, which in America goes back to the early twentieth century. A leading advocate of the traditionalist viewpoint, Gertrude Himmelfarb, has sharply criticized the new directions in historical research and writing, the shift from the public to the private realm and from the study of elites to the exploration of the experiences of "the common people." For

Himmelfarb, the proper subject of the historian is the state and the men who govern the state. She favors (in the words of one critic) "narrative history of a somewhat moralizing sort." Though her conservative position does command substantial support in our society, it is not shared by most professional historians who would instead favor this statement by the British historian Patrick Collinson who wrote recently: "We are all social historians now, and we owe it to our audience to share what we know about population, marriage, households, familial relationships, women, disease, landscape, economic growth and contraction, social relations . . . the language of ritual, religion, violence and play, and above all the sense of the interconnections linking all of these things." An ambitious goal, but a worthy one.

Many social scientists would argue that history's problems are due to the failure of its practitioners to construct a theoretical foundation for interpreting the past. These critics assert that theory provides an essential framework, a structure, a means of organizing and interpreting evidence. But the main problem for many historians with these intellectual constructs, these abstractions, is their failure to develop valid explanations for a past that is so complex, so vicissitudinous and so unpredictable. Alisdair McIntyre has written:

All the great social theories to date, including those of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and behavioral social science are in fact false. They overextend categories appropriate only to a particular time and place; they offer us false predictions; they are deceived by the ideological structures of their own society; they formulate generalizations which they propose as laws where laws are inappropriate; they reify abstractions in misleading ways.

One by one, these grand interpretative theories have foundered on what Isaiah Berlin has called the "crooked timber of humanity," the perversity and contrariness of men and women who do not lead lives, individually or collectively, according to any theoretical structure. And that, in my view, includes the most recent efforts

by poststructuralists and postmodernists to place history into yet another ideological strait-jacket.

Is the discipline of history then so lacking in structure and coherence that its study is a fruitless, irrelevant exercise? Is history bunk as Henry Ford believed? Is it merely a mercenary product forged by myth makers in the service of ruling elites? You will not be startled to hear that I would argue strongly for the value of history and for its future as a core subject in our educational system. It has been a remarkably durable discipline, more than two thousand years old. Though students often complain that they are bored by the history courses in which they enroll, they continue to populate these courses in large numbers. This is partly due, I believe, to the accessibility of the subject. Unlike literary criticism, for example, history does not have its own esoteric vocabulary. It remains, to a large degree, comprehensible to students and to a wider lay public. History constitutes between one-quarter and one-third of all books published by scholarly presses, and the subject, including biography, remains a staple of commercial publishing, as a cursory perusal of *The New York Review of Books* or *Times Literary Supplement* will demonstrate. Recently, we witnessed the validation of history as a significant component of mass culture, with the inauguration of a special history channel on cable TV.

But one must avoid painting too rosy and sanguine a picture of our discipline and its place in our private and public lives. Too often, exaggerated claims have been made about its virtues and its capacity to improve ourselves and our society. Contrary to what is often asserted, there is no evidence that the study of history makes people better. Some of the nastiest individuals whom I have known have been historians. Nor does a knowledge of history necessarily make people wiser, though it should inspire its students to take the long view, to contextualize events, and to accept as valid the statement by the British novelist, David Lodge, "We live in an imperfect world that is bettered only with great difficulty and can easily be made worse—much worse."

There are significant restraints on the influence of our discipline in today's world. The kind of history that professional

historians teach and write—with its emphasis on change, on accident and contingency, and on ambiguity—does not satisfy those who yearn for certainty and stability. Our secular interpretation of the past, which excludes any consideration of divine will or intervention, does not appeal to that substantial portion of the population that embraces a providential scheme of historical development. If one can accept the results of a recent poll, 44 percent of the American people believe that the world will end in a final battle of Armageddon between the forces of good and evil, with true believers whisked off the planet and transported to heaven.

But the most unreceptive audience for history is not adults but students. It is widely recognized that the historical instruction that they receive in primary and secondary schools is abysmal. Russell Baker has spoken for millions of his generation, and for millions since, when he wrote recently in *The New York Times* that “my history learning was a boneyard of unrelated facts, useful for passing tests but utterly useless for making sense out of my world.” Not until much later, Baker wrote, did history weave its magical spell over him. He concluded:

I doubt that many school children can be brought to value history or enjoy the delights of its tantalizing subjectivity. Much of its pleasure lies in discovering its ironies, and irony is uncommon in the typical harassed, scared, browbeaten American schoolchild looking forward in dread to SATs that may wreck his life while simultaneously wondering if the student in the desk behind him is packing a semiautomatic pistol.

But we historians do need these young students with their limited knowledge and their unformed minds. They constitute our primary audience for practicing our trade, for developing our knowledge and our rhetorical skills to make our subject interesting and instructive, if only to a minority. And from that minority we recruit and train the next generation of professional historians. That part of our enterprise is critically important for the future of the discipline. Our task is to promote the development of the skills

that will enable these neophyte scholars to perform what I consider our profession's most important public service: the monitoring of our society's myths about the past. My colleague, William Bouwsma, has written that the existence of a professional community assists the historian:

to resist the all-too-human demand for simple answers to difficult questions, to resist the tendency of mankind to prefer confirmation in its collective self-esteem to the unflattering truth, to resist the . . . yearning to forget what is unlovely in the past even when this is essential to self-understanding, to resist the pressure to exploit the past selectively and even cynically.

History, as studied and taught and written at Berkeley today, remains in fundamental ways the same intellectual activity that it was for Thucydides when he wrote a narrative of the Peloponnesian Wars around 400 B.C. It is based, firmly and unequivocally, on surviving evidence: whether that evidence be Chinese oracle bones examined by David Keightley, or fourth-century papyrii deciphered by Susanna Elm, or statistics on Mexican population compiled and analyzed by Woodrow Borah, or films and photographs that have provided Lawrence Levine with material for his study of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Without evidence, there can be no history. Writing about aristocratic marriage in early medieval France, the historian Georges Duby asked: "And what did what we call love have to do with it all?" And he answered: "I must say at once and emphatically that we do not know and no one ever will." He was asserting that no evidence—documentary, literary, iconographic—has survived that would permit any conjecture concerning the role of emotion and sentiment in these relationships.

But the discipline of history has been dramatically transformed in recent decades, as I have attempted to show in this lecture. Thucydides wrote narrative history, and he wrote about wars and politics and Greek elites. My colleague, Raphael Sealey, continues in that venerable tradition, and so too does Robert Middlekauff with his powerful and elegant narrative of the American Revolu-

tionary War, and most recently, his biography of Benjamin Franklin, based on correspondence and private records, the classic sources of the narrative historian. But others have explored new paths and new material, utilizing new methods to expand the parameters of our discipline and to reinforce its ecumenical character. Lawrence Levine and Leon Litwack have been pioneers in the study of black experience in America, using sources (oral histories, folk tales, jokes, and music) that were largely ignored by traditional scholarship. Thomas Laqueur's book, *Making Sex*, is an original cultural study of gender creation from the Greeks to Freud. Martin Jay's recent book, *Downcast Eyes*, has been described as "the most comprehensive treatment of Western visuality . . . an indispensable tool for students of the history and theory of visual culture. . . ." Neither of these works would have been conceivable as historical works when I entered the profession 40 years ago.

Whatever kind of sources we use, whatever kind of history we write, we are bound together by our commitment to this craft and by our obligation to describe the past as fully and as honestly as we can. We test our findings against experience and available evidence. We arrive at forms of probability that are not absolute but matters of accretion and degree, always subject to revision. We might favor some methods and techniques over others; we might prefer narrative over statistical analysis, or vice versa. We would not be able to agree on who, over the centuries, have been the best practitioners of our profession. My candidate is Marc Bloch, one of the greatest medieval historians of the twentieth century. He had served in the French army during both world wars, and after what he described as France's "strange defeat," he wrote a little book, *The Historian's Craft*, which is, in my view, the best description of the historian's metier ever written. He also joined the French Resistance. Shortly before he was executed by a German firing squad in June 1944, he made this comment in a letter to his son:

The historians' craft—I mean searching, discovering and reconstructing—is a fine calling but a difficult one. To do it