

NEWS



of the History Department at Boston University

January 1999

98-99

Introduction to Visiting Faculty



Cathal Nolan

Of fortune, faith, and an emigration beyond the sea

BY CATHAL J. NOLAN

In autobiography, it is best to start at the beginning. This permits one to include in the narrative more colorful—and sometimes even true—stories about a deprived, but not a

depraved, childhood than one could hope to find in any objective account.

So, I was placed—kicking and squalling even then, no doubt—in my sainted mother's arms in a Dublin hospital, just off St. Stephen's Green, during the early Eisenhower administration. I was the tenth tightly swaddled gift from God, who is often magnificently generous to Irish Catholic parents, to loudly demand my mother's care and my father's provision. This posed a problem, as kinder readers will have guessed, since supporting so much divine bounty under one Dublin roof in the 1950s required, well, almost the good fortune needed to win the Sweepstakes, and considerable faith.

Of fortune there was very little (this is an Irishman's tale, so you knew I was going to say that). And the closest my parents came to the Sweeps Office was when my mother visited her sister who worked there. Yet there was faith in plenty (I am sure you saw that cliché, too, rising over the paragraph horizon), in religious and political form. Indeed, the crooked contour of modern Irish history twisted through my family heritage in ways that made instantly understandable to me, years later, William Butler Yeats' odd admixture of myth, mysticism, and concurrent admiration

See NOLAN, page 3



Konrad Tuchscherer

A passion for the history of writing

BY KONRAD TUCHSCHERER

Although I am a new face in the History Department, some of you may already know me from the African Studies Center, where I am in my second year as a Research Fellow. For my new colleagues and future friends, I take this opportunity to

introduce myself to you here, via my story.

My interest in the historical development of writing was sparked during my junior year abroad in Sierra Leone, at Fourah Bay College in Freetown. Inspired by what I had learned about oral traditions in Jan Vansina's African history classes at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I set off to discover what I could about the indigenous Mende *Kikakui* script of Sierra Leone. The script had been presumed extinct by historians from the early 1960s, and little of the script's history had been documented in the scholarly literature. Who had employed the script and how had it been used? Why had it fallen into extinction? Thinking that oral sources might provide insight into these and other questions, I skipped a month of classes at Fourah Bay and headed off to the area of Mendeland, where the script was reputed to have originated.

I was not prepared for what I would find. In the first Mende village I visited, I greeted the chief and relayed my reason for being there, telling him of my interest in the history of the Mende script ("Kikakui," I asked through an interpreter, "have you heard of it?"). To my amazement, he responded that the history of the script was common knowledge. The chief gave me the name of the village historian and said he would likely tell me whatever I wanted to know on the subject. I was directed to call on this man at his home and was told to follow a young boy who would take me to him. After I met the man, and again communicated my interest, he stepped back into his house and quietly emerged with a stack of papers in his hands. They were written in Kikakui! As I stood before him, having what I thought was an out-of-body experience, he went on to explain the necessity of written documentation, as he was not only the village historian but the village tax collector as well. By the end of my one-month sojourn in Mendeland, I had located some fifteen men who were actively using the script on a daily basis for writing letters, in their accounting, and for other purposes.

Upon my return to Fourah Bay College, the reaction to my new information was one of disbelief. One of my professors, who had authored a book on Sierra Leonean history and who had written in it that the indigenous Mende script was both extinct and forgotten, forcefully disputed my findings. My evidence, in the form of copious manuscripts written in the script, changed his thinking. A further shock came when I reported that the individual credited with having invented the script in the scholarly literature was not ac-

corded that same distinction in the oral tradition of the script. News of my research spread quickly in Freetown, and within a week the new information was reported in Freetown newspapers and eventually found its way into the widely circulated *West Africa* magazine, which dubbed the information "a major cultural find."

It was from this point that my study of the historical development of writing in Africa became my passion. Following my senior year at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in 1992, I was awarded a Marshall Scholarship for study at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). At SOAS I studied under the supervision of former professor of history at Boston University Louis Brenner. By 1993-94, I was back in Sierra Leone, conducting research on the history of the Mende script. The thesis was completed at the end of 1996. The examiners of the thesis wrote in their report: "the history of Kikakui can now contribute to general discussions of the development of writing systems, matching and even surpassing the previous contribution provided by the history of the neighbouring and earlier Vai script."

My interest in the history of writing in Africa has now expanded beyond the Mende script, as I have researched and published on a number of other African writing systems, including Egyptian hieroglyphs, the Bagam and Bamum scripts of Cameroon, and the Vai script of Liberia. Two projects of great interest in which I am involved link African systems of writing to scripts outside the continent. The first of these is an article on an early nineteenth-century connection between the Vai and Cherokee scripts, which I will publish together with Paul Hair. The second is an article which examines Mende traditions of graphic symbolism and writing in West Africa as possible sources of inspiration for traditions of writing and graphic symbolism used by peoples of African descent in the new world, such as the Gullah of South Carolina and Georgia, and the Ndjuka of Suriname. At some point in the future, I plan to complete a volume on the historical development of writing in Africa with David Dalby. Some of my other research interests outside of this area include the history of Mende and Temne interactions with missionaries in Sierra Leone, colonial language policies in Africa, and the history of the Amistad episode.

Since I have already used the word "passion" to describe my scholarly interests, I will have to come up with a more powerful word to describe what gives my life and work meaning. This is my family, which I might call my "life force." My wife of five years is Hannah Kema. Our daughter, Nyambe Kema, recently celebrated her first birthday. In March our little family expands again, with the expected arrival of our first son.

In the spring term I will be teaching two courses: World History II (since 1500) and Colonialism in Africa. I look forward to joining the History Department community. Please do stop and say "hello" if you recognize me from my photo!

◆

Konrad Tuchscherer earned his BA in African Studies and African Languages from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1992 and his PhD in African History and African Languages from the University of London. At that institution he held both Marshall and Fulbright Scholarships.

In the spring semester he will teach HI 176 (World History Since 1500), which meets Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-11 a.m., and HI 292 (Colonialism in Africa: Impact and Aftermath), meeting Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 2-3 p.m. His office is at the African Studies Center.

and revulsion for nationalist rebellion. To my own surprise, even now Yeats remains my favorite poet.

Let's start with the politics. My paternal grandfather was a gaoler for the British Empire, and then for the Free State during and after the Irish Civil War. He rose in the civil service to become Chief Clerk of Mountjoy Prison, until the election of Eamon De Valera compelled his retirement in 1932. As might be expected from a member of my grandfather's profession, he disdained the "terrible beauty" of IRA revolution that burst into flame along Sackville (O'Connell) Street in 1916, and thereafter along thin roads that wound through rural counties, before going to ground after 1921 in bloody Ulster. If not happily, then dutifully he worked to turn the iron key on IRA fundamentalists who would not accept Michael Collins' Free State treaty with Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. (I never knew my grandfather in life, but I have come to admire his political pragmatism.) My father, however, embraced the IRA, at least in a detached

and romantic sense, ensuring that the civil war continued within the family—as in many Irish families—for decades more. He was just six during the Easter Rising, but remembered standing with a silent, prayerful crowd outside another famous prison's walls, listening as the firing squads put an end to English rule in Ireland by executing "MacDonagh and MacBride, and Connolly and Pearse," and the rest. During the War of Independence he saw the hated "Black and Tans" savagely beat an IRA prisoner, and once crawled under his bed while IRA and Auxiliary gunfire tore up and down the street outside. And when visiting his father, he read the execution notices posted on the walls of Mountjoy.

On my mother's side the politics were more gentle, and of the cultural variety. Her grandmother owned the *Pioneer Irish Lace* company, which kept an outlet shop in Dublin. She plied a lucrative trade with America, in liturgical vestments, and grew quite wealthy in an era when lace was all the rage among the fashionable. Among her customers was Queen Mary, wife of George V. They met once, at an Imperial Exhibition in London. After a stiff exchange in which they traded small snubs, they struck a slender acquaintance that continued for some years. A formidable Victorian woman, "Granny Gordon" became a footnote in literary history by standing during an early performance of John Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* to denounce it as a disgrace to decent Irish womanhood. Then—and I am not making this up, you know—famously (or notoriously, depending on your taste in literature) she led a good part of the crowd out of the Abbey Theatre, accompanied by jeers and taunts from dozens of Dublin students seated 'in the gods.' The first time I saw a play at the Abbey, some sixty years or so later, I confess I spent most of the first act nervously imagining the scene and planning a quieter exit.

My maternal grandmother, Alice Gordon, was a concert pianist of some talent, I am told. She married Tom Curley, a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and a Dublin alderman

(and yes, a close relative of James Michael Curley). His political career was ended abruptly by an infection that took his life in 1916. The Gordon lace factory was inherited by another branch of the family, so that during and after the Great Depression my bit went into permanent decline. I don't know where my mother learned her politics; not likely from the dour nuns who ran the orphanage where she spent ten of her earliest years. I do remember that she could not speak Churchill's name without bitterness, as she blamed him for Ireland's partition. His enemies became our heroes: De Valera and Gandhi, most of all. A tale my mother told often, and with heavy feeling, was of listening to De Valera speaking over the radio in response to Churchill's threat to occupy Ireland's southern ports for Britain's use in the Battle of the Atlantic. "Whoever crosses the border first," she would repeat the Great Man's invocation in ominous voice, "if they wear field grau or khaki, *that* is the enemy." To a boy, it was thrilling stuff.

What of religion, the other great burden of the Irish? My father cleaved to old ideas of the Church Militant he gathered during nine years as a Jesuit novice and then scholastic, preparing for a commission that never came in the officer corps of a godly army—until recent times, the only type permitted the Irish by the English, and even then begrudged under the Penal Laws. You might imagine the result: thirty years before a bestseller proclaimed that the Irish once saved Western civilization, I heard vivid tales of Celtic monks who educated Charlemagne and baptized and civilized whole hordes of Franks and Germans. So prideful, he wore his defeats hard. My mother's faith was more willow: it bent and swayed but stayed firmly rooted, and never broke. We children fell somewhere in between, or fell away from the old faith altogether. The final lacquer on the family's cultural furnishings came from the three years my father taught classics at Clongowes Wood College, in County Kildare. Years before, James Joyce had schooled at Clongowes, where he made Stephen Dedalus write in the flyleaf of his geography book a rhyming autobi-

Cathal Nolan has a BA and an MA in History. His PhD is in Political Science (with a minor in International History), from the University of Toronto. He is author and/or editor of five books: *Shepherd of Democracy? America and Germany in the 20th Century* (1992); *Principled Diplomacy: Security and Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy* (1993); *Ethics and Statecraft* (1995); *The Longman Guide to World Affairs* (1995); and *Notable U.S. Ambassadors Since 1776* (1997), selected by *Choice* as an "Outstanding Academic Book of 1998." He is completing a two-volume *Historical Encyclopedia of World Affairs*, which will be published in 2000, and editing *Great Power Responsibility After the Cold War*, which draws upon a recent conference held at Boston University and is also forthcoming in 2000. He is founding editor of the Praeger series *Humanistic Perspectives on International Relations* and co-editor (with William Keylor and Erik Goldstein) of a second Praeger series, in *International History*. His current position is Assistant to the Chancellor at Boston University. He lives in Natick, Massachusetts, with his very Canadian wife, Valerie, and their two children, Ryan Casey and Genevieve Michelle. The children are Canadian by birth, American by accident, and—under the law of *jus sanguinis* that is honored by Britain and Ireland down to the third generation—are still considering their option of declaring for Canada, for the United States, or for one of the fifteen member states (and counting!) of the European Union.

In the spring semester Cathal Nolan is teaching HI 340 ("History of Modern Diplomacy") Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 12-1 p.m.

ography that might have been my father's, or near any other schoolboy's of that time and place: "Stephen Dedalus is my name, Ireland is my nation, Clongowes is my dwelling place, and heaven my expectation."

Well, those are the really interesting bits. What should come next is a hard tale of boyhood poverty that yet remembered the damnable oppressions of the Sassenach, unemployment, the Great Hunger, in short the whole lamentable history of an island nation that forced its sons and daughters across the far oceans in search of fair play (and, truth be told, fairer weather). But I will skip all that: you've heard it before anyway, in umpteen, ashen versions. Suffice it to say that well after the Depression and World War II had ended, neither Ireland's nor my family's fortunes recovered. When I arrived, blessed but hungry, the old decision had to be made: it was time to emigrate. And thus, I very nearly became an Australian.

Not that I would have minded; I would have grown up a lot warmer, for one thing. But my father was asthmatic, and was told that he would never survive a sea voyage through the tropics. If he must leave Ireland, the doctors said, he would have to go to America. Acting boldly, but with an absolutely dreadful sense of political direction for an Irish Republican, he booked his passage to Toronto instead of New York. (Talk about hitting the goalpost!) We children followed in batches, three and six months later. My mother took me, the baby, on an Air France DC-7 to Newfoundland and on to Montréal, thence in fits and starts by plane, train, and automobile to northern Alberta, where I grew up always cold, but reasonably content and with more opportunity than Ireland then afforded. My older siblings came later, via the "CNR Supercontinental," arriving in the middle of a frozen Canadian night in November, 1957. That fateful decision to emigrate made me what I am: Irish by birth, Canadian by accident, but American by choice and inclination. As soon as I realized that, I left the drear cultural and physical isolation of a monarchist tundra for warmer, more Republican

climes: I moved to Boston. All right, so my own sense of climate and political geography may be a bit off, too; perhaps it's hereditary. But I'm here now, I quite like it, and I will have to make the best of it. And if things don't work out, well, there's always Australia.... ♦

in brief

EVENTS OF NOTE!

Professor **Diana Wylie** traveled to New York City on December 14 to serve on the National Screening Committee for Fulbright-Hays fellowships. She and two other southern African specialists discussed over 80 applications for grants that fund one year of research in South Africa. In February she will travel to Sauhegan High School in New Hampshire to participate in a National Endowment for the Humanities-funded workshop with secondary school teachers who want to update their teaching of African history.

In November, Professor **Nina Silber** spoke at a panel on "The Civil War in Memory" at the Southern Historical Association meeting in Birmingham, Alabama.

Professor **Jill Lepore** was recently elected to membership in the American Antiquarian Society. In November and December she delivered lectures at the Colonial Society of Massachusetts and at the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology at Brown and spoke before a group of Trustee Scholars and at the School of Theology's Food for Thought series.

Professor **Reggie Blaszczyk** had a busy fall. In October, she delivered a paper at the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) in Baltimore; in November, she chaired a session on race and technical education at the American Studies Association meeting in Seattle. She also participated in a panel on "Saving the Leviathan: Un-

derstanding the Scholarly Use of Business Records, From Ledgers to Advertising" at the New England Archivists' Fall Meeting at the University of Connecticut-Storrs. In January, she begins a three-year term on SHOT's Dibner Prize Committee for Excellence in Museum Exhibitions.

In October at the annual meeting of the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference in Toronto, Professor **Barbara Diefendorf** delivered the plenary address, "Waging Peace: Memory, Identity, and the Edict of Nantes." In Boston in November, she gave a lecture entitled "Paris in the Age of the Musketeers" in conjunction with the Museum of Fine Arts exhibition on French prints from the age of the musketeers.

Professor **James McCann's** paper, "A Tale of Two Forests: Narratives of Deforestation in Ethiopia, 1840-1990," has been selected from 180 papers to appear in a volume celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University. His paper, presented to the Seminar in Agrarian Studies in September 1996 and since published in the journal *Environmental History*, was chosen as one of 25 selections from the program's ten years of existence. The volume of papers will be published by Yale University Press....Prof. McCann has been invited to participate in a conference "Nature Transformed" organized by the MacArthur Foundation and the National Humanities Center. The April 1999 conference, to take place at the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, N.C., will involve a dozen scholars from around the United States in anthropology, English, American literature, history, philosophy, and religious studies in planning a new project of teaching and scholarship on "the relationship between the humanities and our understanding of the environment."

A recent issue of *News from the Republic of Letters* (a journal edited by Saul Bellow and Keith Botsford, both of Boston University) includes a parable by Jack Miles (author of *God: A Biography*)

See EVENTS OF NOTE, page 9

Y2K *and the History Department*

BY JAMES T. DUTTON

By now there is probably no one on earth who does not possess at least a basic knowledge of the computer problems associated with the beginning of the next century. From those who have resolved not to be in an airplane on New Year's Day 2000 to others who have stocked up on candles in preparation for a nationwide collapse of the electric grid that day, most people have some apprehension about what a computer's "confusion" may mean on a personal level.

To restate the problem briefly: Most computers (and most people too, for that matter) deal with dates as six-digit numbers, e.g., 09/15/98 (the U.S. convention is to place the month first); the assumption is that "19" precedes the two digits indicating the year. But if that assumption continues into the new millennium, many problems will occur: does 09/15/01 mean September 15, 1901, or September 15, 2001? Calculations of mortgages, bank interest, etc., depend on the most basic assumption—namely, that 01/01/00 follows 12/31/99. But as of 2000 that assumption cannot be trusted.

The obvious solution to the problem is to store the year portion of dates in computer memory as a four-digit number; it is clear to all (and to the computer) that 01/01/2000 does in fact follow 12/31/1999. The obvious is not in this case easy to accomplish because changing the way dates are stored (and displayed) in computer programs means going through the code behind the program and changing all references to two-digit years. An entire industry in many parts of the world (there is a particularly active one in India) has sprung up to deal with this problem—my brother-in-law makes his living solving the Y2K problem in California. Boston University began dealing with the issue quite some time ago, and the conversion continues; some University Information Systems programs now require four-digit years, while others still call for two.

I maintain the department records using the database program called dBASE. Looking ahead to the turn of the century, dBASE began, several versions back, allowing a program developer to switch to four-digit years (the command is "set century on"). It also added a clever command to the language, "set epoch to..." which allows a developer to continue using two-digit years but to determine how the two digits will be evaluated. "Set epoch to 1930," for example, means that two-digit years after 30 would be in the twentieth century and those before 30 would be in the twenty-first. The developer can allow the individual user of a program to decide what the dividing year will be. This is also the solution chosen by Microsoft in dealing with the Y2K problem.

The crashing of computer-run aircraft and electrical systems is of crucial concern to all of us. A less critical problem—but one that must be solved—occurs in academic circles which have been accustomed to referring to academic years in abbreviated form, for example, 98-99. And this is the area that continues to require work in the departmental database records.

First, why do we have departmental records separate from the university's? It may come as a surprise, but the university does not provide a handy function for viewing the history of enrollments in a course or an individual instructor's enrollments or enrollments for a year (yes, the information is all there, but it can be viewed only one semester at a time, one screen at a time—there are no summaries). Nor is it possible to get an overall view of budgetary expenditures on a single

screen. And scheduled courses are displayed on screen eight at a time—and only in numerical order, not by instructor name or by day of the week (all important information in scheduling classes).

The dBASE command "set epoch to..." solves the date problem with budgetary records, which are restricted to a single fiscal year. In other words, dBASE will "know" that the first expenditure of 2000 should be indexed so as to follow the final expenditure of 1999. It is in class scheduling and enrollments that the Y2K problem appears. Like virtually everyone else, I set up the records blithely unaware of the looming problem. And again like virtually everyone else, I have had to sift through the lines of code (the single program used to schedule courses for a given academic year is 7655 lines long) to find places where a two-digit year causes problems. A simple example: Course enrollments were stored according to academic year and semester shorthand; "97981" meant 1997-98, Semester 1. This system worked well: To list enrollments indexed by year was easy because the years increased in a simple progression: 97981 led to 97982 to 98991 to 98992. But the progression fails in the move from 99002 to 00011 (that is, from 1999-2000, Semester 2, to 2000-01, Semester 1). Therefore the database had to be redesigned to allow for the year/semester to be stored as a seven-digit number: in index order, 2000011 will follow 1999002, and enrollments will be listed correctly. A similar redesign was necessary for the course inventory, which provides the basic information for all history courses (number, title, description). When a course title is changed, there must be a "phase-in" year for the change: For example, in the years preceding 1999-2000, HI 101 is "Western Civilization in the Making I"; beginning with Semester 1 of 1999-2000, its title is "The Dawn of Europe: Antiquity to the Renaissance." The phase-in date must be stored with the century included to provide for correct indexing of years.

A related issue in academic circles concerns how we will refer to academic years. We know what "1998-99" means,

but a unique problem occurs next academic year, when it will be incorrect to refer to the year as "1999-00"—since, as in a bibliographic entry, the omission of numerals after the hyphen assumes a repetition of "19." Of course we are accustomed to abbreviating the academic year to something like "98-99." And beginning in 2000-01, it will again be "correct" shorthand to refer to the academic year by four digits (as in the "00-01" academic year). How we actually pronounce this combination of digits remains unclear; I suspect that, for a while at least, the full designation "two thousand" will be used.

The comforting aspect of the Y2K problem in the Department of History is that I don't expect dire consequences if all the database issues are not ironed out by January 1, 2000. I just have to be careful to proofread all the automatically formatted information we publish in our course brochure, bulletin copy, and Web pages to be sure I have not overlooked a problematic line of computer code.

But what about other users of personal computers? As a faculty member asked recently, "What will happen to all my documents when the century changes?" For those whose primary use of a computer is word processing and reading e-mail and searching the Internet, there *should* be no crisis next January—particularly if the computer was purchased within the last several years. If a computer does not display the date correctly on 01/01/2000, it may be necessary to use the machine's setup program to change it manually. Windows 95 or 98 users can go into the Control Panel's Regional Settings and tell the computer how to interpret two-digit years. Apple asserts that its computers have always been capable of handling dates up to 2040—and newer Macintosh operating systems can deal with dates as distant as 29,940. Eudora (the e-mail program most of us use) already displays the year with four digits and thus will continue to sort messages by date without problem. Even if a computer does not deal with the new century with total success, with the result that, for instance, word processing files do not have the correct date, such errors will not be catastrophic for most people—your documents should be OK.

In general, there *should* be no problem with older computers of any type, but there has never been a time when the advice to "back up everything" was more apposite. If the Cassandras should prove to be correct and your 1985 IBM refuses to boot, the knowledge that your documents are on your (inaccessible) hard drive will not prove a consolation. Even if one ignores the direst predictions, it is quite possible that older versions of spreadsheet or financial management software will not function properly in the new century. As is almost always the case in general, it is best in this instance to have the latest version of software.

There are Web sites that can help with Y2K issues (e.g., www.microsoft.com/year2000 for Windows users and www.apple.com/about/year2000 for Mac users), but with the great variety of computer equipment in existence, no one has all the answers. To be absolutely sure New Year's Day 2000 will be a happy computing day for all of us, there is one fundamental bit of advice: back up all important documents. He who holds a backup of his hard drive laughs at the clock come midnight on December 31. ♦

Middle Eastern Search News

The closing date for applications for the search for a historian of the Middle East and North Africa was December 15. As of that date, the department office had received 46 complete applications (an additional 10 were incomplete). Professor William Keylor will be interviewing candidates at the annual convention of the American Historical Association in early January, and the search committee will narrow the list down to a group of finalists later in the month, with campus visits to follow.

The newsletter will provide information on the visits of finalists as deadlines permit, but, as always, the best place to find up-to-date schedules is the Web site (www.bu.edu/history—go to the "Department News" section).



Reinhold Schumann at the first convocation of Brandeis University

Reinhold Schumann and the Brandeis years

As was reported in the November issue of the newsletter, Professor Emeritus Reinhold Schumann was one of those who was part of Brandeis University's fiftieth anniversary celebration in October; at the rank of "Teaching Fellow," he was among the original fourteen faculty members at that university. Professor Schumann describes his experiences of those days and since:

I met my first class on Wednesday, October 20, 1948, four days after our wedding. Jirina had fought her way out of Czechoslovakia turned communist less than a month before. We had met when I came to Pilsen as an American lieutenant in 1945 and had not seen each other since. My first class was Social Science A, taught by David Berkowitz, in which all 107 students of the new university were enrolled. The course was divided into five sections which I met consecutively on Wednesdays and Fridays, with a 20-minute in-class essay-test every week and the usual midterms, term papers, and fi-

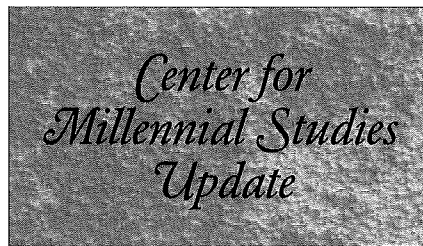
nals. David Berkowitz was the only history professor and carried in addition the burden of university administrator (under President Abram Leon Sachar)—a truly superhuman task which he fielded admirably. His Monday morning lectures were always powerful and inspiring performances. In addition, he found time to meet with me every week in an hour-long session to monitor the progress of the students, critique the in-class essays and my corrections, and formulate with me the next essay topics. Our goal, as that of the other departments, was to achieve early accreditation for the new university. I understand that Brandeis was accredited when the first class graduated in 1952.

September, October, and even November were gorgeous months in 1948, and in this setting Brandeis was a tremendous new experience for Jirina. She was accepted into the enthusiastic group of faculty wives and felt close to the students, near her own age. The Brandeis faculty functioned admirably with weekly faculty lunches and receptions for faculty and wives at the homes of the trustees and Abram and Thelma Sachar. Jirina had heard of President Roosevelt's leadership in the war for freedom over the London radio, and now she was introduced to Eleanor Roosevelt, one of the trustees.

In 1949-50, Social Science A was divided between David Berkowitz and Frank Manuel. Since Professor Manuel taught his own sections, I had some time to return to my doctoral dissertation. I had completed the first draft of this dissertation before my thesis director, Gaetano Salvemini, left in the early fall of 1948 to be reinstated in his chair at the University of Florence. I had written this first draft in Italian to receive the most insightful critique of Salvemini. I now rewrote the dissertation in English with the expert formal supervision of Charles Taylor, the French medievalist at Harvard. I defended the dissertation in the early fall of 1950, and it is this text which I brought up to date in my first years at Boston University and which was published in 1973 by the Historical Commission of Parma as *Authority and the*

Commune, Parma 833-1133. The rest you know.

Fifty years later, I am the last of the First Fourteen of the Brandeis faculty. At the October celebration President Reinhartz called attention to me among the 1000 guests, and I rose to be recognized. At the far side of the ballroom some of the first students had their own table and recognized me. One of them came over to ask me to come to their table, which Jirina and I did. These are the true rewards of academic life. ♦



The Center for Millennial Studies completed its third annual international conference in millennial studies in December. The number of both scholars and attendees doubled from last year (ca. 50 and 100), and the mechanics went far more smoothly thanks to the generous contribution of the Lilly Foundation and the conference organizer, history graduate student Beth Forrest.

The interest in CMS from the media has also increased notably, from a dozen calls a week to a half-dozen a day. Some of this is due to the proximity of the end of the year (look for pieces on the millennium and/or CMS in *Newsweek*, *Time*, *The Boston Globe*, etc.), but still more to the Y2K problem, which has begun to reach public consciousness on a broader scale. If you thought the main story of 1999 was impeachment, think again: it'll be Y2K. And the apocalyptic dimensions of the problem—this is the first remorseless deadline in history, a secular prophecy of apocalyptic proportions that spans secular and religious—mean it has found a place of choice in Christian apocalyptic prophecies (e.g., Jack Van

Impe, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson).

CMS is involved in a number of initiatives to explore this apocalyptic dimension. On January 22, 1999, we will sponsor a day's session of scenarios focusing on the municipal level at the Center on Strategic and International Studies in Washington, in collaboration with that center, the Arlington Institute, and the Global Action Plan. Y2K has, to some extent, pushed us from research and documentation into the area of what one might call "millennial policy," where our efforts are focusing not on the reduction of the intensity of the (time)quake—the technicians' job—but on increasing the resilience of the social infrastructures the quake, however weak or powerful, will hit (for further information, visit our Web site at www.mille.org/y2kpage.html).

CMS is also involved in a number of initiatives, some in collaboration with the Library of Congress (photography, public participation in archiving—send us your millennial items: newspaper articles, fliers, pamphlets, photographs—and possibly an oral "history" project), one with the Weisenthal Center (an exhibition on "Millennial Peace, Millennial Violence"), and one with a group of photographers to do another round of national photography like the campaign sponsored by the FSA in the late 1930s for the years 2000-2001. Busy times.

The day after his public lecture in November, Paul Boyer (the History Department's Visiting Scholar for 1998-99), came to the CMS for a two-hour discussion with some of our regular "Millennial Café" attendees: Chip Berlet, Father David Michael, Jerome Socolovski, Adam Seligman, a couple of reporters, a couple of graduate students, and the CMS staff. Discussion began with points Boyer had raised the evening before in his paper on apocalyptic thinking in the post-Cold War era and quickly developed into a consideration of various modern groups and their prewar predecessors. We discussed everything from the impact of Y2K on Christian apocalyptic expectation, to the rise in various forms of conspiracism in American

popular culture, to the differences between the spirituality of the papal Jubilee and Protestant Rapture theology, to the interaction between Jewish messianism (especially "Third Temple" enthusiasts) and Christian apocalyptic Zionists, to next year's CMS conference on American apocalyptic, "New World Orders: Millennialism in the Western Hemisphere, Indigenous and European." When asked about the Y2K computer problem, Boyer responded that the reactions of those people expecting more disruptions than were likely to occur would be an interesting study.

General information on the Center for Millennial Studies is available at the Web site: www.mille.org.

Richard A. Landes
Director, Center for Millennial Studies

Web Classes Offered

Registration is now open for spring Web classes provided by Networked Information Services, including such topics as:

- Publishing on PeopleWeb for Faculty
- Publishing on PeopleWeb for Students

In addition, the Libraries offer 12 separate Web research classes, including these new ones:

- Introduction to Web of Science
- Science Literature on the Web
- Finding Historical Information on the Web
- Identify Film and Photographs for Documentary Productions
- Music Literature in Indexes and Abstracts on the Web
- Music in an Online Catalog
- International Relations
- Business Information on the Web

For course descriptions and registration, see www.bu.edu/webcentral/training. There is no charge for the classes.

The job market and the production of PhDs in history

BY WILLIAM R. KEYLOR

I was asked by the Professional Division of the American Historical Association (AHA) to serve on a panel at that organization's annual meeting this January entitled "The Job Market and the Production of PhDs in History." My initial reaction to the request was a profound sense of *déjà vu*. When I joined the History Department of Boston University more than a quarter of a century ago, my new colleagues had decided to issue a written *carveat emptor* to all applicants to our graduate program warning them about the bleak employment prospects in the profession. Since that time, the issue of the "job crisis," not only in history but in all of the academic disciplines, has been the subject of continuous discussion within the various scholarly associations and the source of considerable anxiety for generations of graduate students. I agreed to serve on the AHA panel, but did so without the confidence that anything new could be said about the unpleasant subject.

After that preliminary reaction, however, I decided to cast aside my old prejudices and approach the issue in an entirely ingenuous frame of mind. The first task that I set out to accomplish was to collect as much hard evidence as I could about the actual employment situation in our profession. I requested and received from the AHA's amiable resident statistician, Robert Townsend, a wealth of data on the number of PhDs produced in recent years, the number of advertisements for teaching jobs, and the percentage of history PhDs that had secured employment.

Without going into the details, suffice it to say that these aggregate data confirmed the widespread impression of a substantial gap between the number of history PhDs seeking employment and the number of job openings. The most startling and disheartening figure reveals that in the 1997-98 aca-

demical year "the percentage of history PhDs with 'definite employment' after commencement fell to its lowest level ever in the survey, with only 46.3 percent reporting a job, and 36.2 reporting that they were still 'seeking employment.'"

Having confirmed with statistical information my impression of this wide gap between the production of history PhDs and the availability of teaching positions, I then explored the causes of this disparity. Why is the supply of people with PhDs in history seeking to do what they were trained to do so much larger than the demand for their services?

The "demand side" of this question presented a puzzling paradox: According to the AHA's figures, there has been a solid increase in the number of history majors in the last two decades as well as a significant increase in the number of students enrolled in history courses in American colleges and universities during the same period. Why, then, did this increase in student demand not lead to more jobs for history PhDs capable of teaching them? The AHA itself offered an explanation for this paradox that placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of those who control the purse strings: "Unfortunately, college and university administrations...[chose] to address a sharp rise in undergraduate history enrollments by hiring more part-time faculty or simply allowing larger class sizes" instead of hiring new faculty to fill full-time, tenure-track positions.

Why is the supply of people with PhDs in history seeking to do what they were trained to do so much larger than the demand for their services?

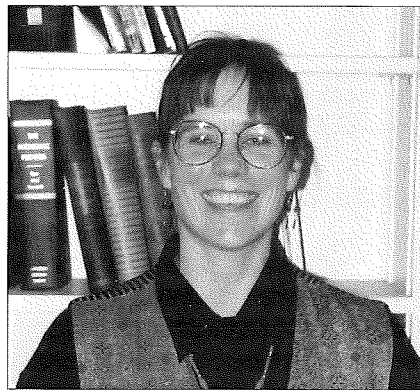
In attempting to verify this allegation, which I had seen repeated elsewhere, I discovered that the employment data gathered by the AHA do not distinguish between full-time, tenure-track jobs and part-time, short-term jobs. Inquiries that I directed to Mr. Townsend revealed that it was not yet possible to arrive at a statistical breakdown of these two types of employment. But I think it is fair to say that the perception is widespread throughout many of the learned professions, including history, that the increasing reliance on part-time, short-term teaching aggravates the already-difficult employment situation for recent PhDs.

The "supply side" of the question raised another set of interesting questions in my mind. The combination of tenure and the federal prohibition against mandatory retirement enables senior faculty to teach far beyond the customary age of retirement. Barring demonstrable incompetence or Clintonesque behavior toward students or subordinates, a faculty member is guaranteed the right to teach as long as he or she wishes. This enviable situation for senior faculty is an unenviable one for the recent recipients of PhDs since it reduces, at least for a time, the number of teaching slots that might otherwise become available to them.

Another aspect of the "supply side" of the issue seemed particularly intriguing. Why, in the face of such odds against landing a full-time, tenure-track job, do so many bright young people continue to enter graduate school? (The latest figures indicate 10,206 full-time and 2,556 part-time graduate students in history, of whom 3,967 were working on doctoral dissertations.) Two possible answers to this question occurred to me. First, approximately 24% of all historians with PhDs are employed outside the university. That is clearly a viable alternative to college teaching that more and more talented young people are exploring as a kind of insurance policy in case the discouraging employment situation in higher education continues. Secondly, I suspect that many of those who remain tenaciously committed to pursuing a full-time, tenure-track college or uni-

versity teaching position do so for the finest of motives (indeed, the one that prompted me to enter the profession): the love of the subject.

The job market is expected to improve significantly with the retirement of the generation of senior historians who were hired in the great era of expansion of the 1960s. If that happens in the course of the next decade, and if university administrations resist the temptation to replace expensive senior faculty with inexpensive part-timers, the dedication and patience of this generation of graduate students will pay off. They will obtain full-time positions which will enable them to spend the rest of their career doing what they love to do: read, write, and teach history. ♦



Anne S. Brown

Anne Brown returns to department teaching

The department is pleased to welcome back Anne Brown, who received her PhD from the department in 1995. She previously taught early American history (at both undergraduate and graduate levels) in 1995-96 at Boston University.

This coming semester Anne, who will be replacing Professor Jill Lepore (on leave), will once again teach HI 455 ("Early American History and Culture"), an undergraduate colloquium (which meets Tuesdays and Thursdays 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.), and the lecture course on the American Revolution (HI 356/856), meeting Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-5 p.m.

phy), with a "riposte" from graduate student **Scott Hovey** entitled "A Taoist Surfer Responds." Those who know how unhappily this Californian endures his temporary exile in New England will not be surprised at the persona adopted in the piece.

In January, Professor **Richard Landes** will give a keynote address to a one-day symposium entitled "Jews and the Millennium" at the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York (using the "Bible Code," some Jews have now dated the advent of the messiah to 5760 AM, which happens to equal 2000 CE) and a talk at the Weisenthal Center on "Millennial Peace, Millennial Violence" at the Praesidio in San Francisco on Y2K.

In early January, Professor **Merle Goldman** will join a group from the Carter Center to observe township elections in China. The elections for leadership in the village are now moving up to the town level. "It is likely," she reports, "that we will be shown 'model' townships, but it is the beginning of a process that will be difficult to stop once underway. The idea is to re-establish authority in the local areas which disintegrated with the end of the communes in the early 1980s. Research has shown that the villagers are more willing to accept the authority of elected leaders than of those who are appointed."

Traci Hodgson (PhD 1997) writes that she now has a tenure-track, full-time position teaching history at Chemeketa Community College in Salem, Oregon. Since she and her husband are expecting their first child in January, she will teach two on-line courses from her home during the winter quarter before and after the birth, returning to on-campus teaching in March. ♦

Graduate Student Notes

Foreign language examinations will next be administered on Friday, January 22, at 2 p.m.

Applications for financial aid for 1999-2000 will be distributed in early February.

Department of History
Boston University
226 Bay State Road
Boston, MA 02215



Jean Hay once again named department member

Jean Hay has held various titles in the History Department over the years, ranging from “visiting” to “research” to “adjunct,” depending on her duties (and the definition of terms used by the administration). Regardless of the title, she has proved to be an essential member of both the African Studies Center and the Department of History, serving on dissertation committees, advising students, and teaching courses ranging from large undergraduate lecture courses to graduate seminars and directed studies.

In 1996 she left Boston University to assume an editorial position with Heinemann Publishers but as of this past September returned to take up her position at the African Studies Center as Publications Editor. In addition, she has been, as of January 1999, appointed Adjunct Associate Professor of History. Even before this appointment became official, she had cheerfully offered to teach an undergraduate colloquium in the spring semester (HI 488, “Life Histories of African Women”) and to serve on the search committee for a historian of the Middle East and North Africa—neither of these duties part of her “job description.”

Jean received her BA from Stanford University in 1965 and her MA and PhD from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1967 and 1972 respectively. She held a position as assistant professor at Wellesley College before coming to Boston University in 1976. She is the author of *African Women South of the Sahara* (1996) and founder of the journal *African Economic History*; in addition, she was co-editor of Heinemann’s *Social History of Africa* series (1994-97). Besides her academic achievements, she is an accomplished maker of quilts.

The department welcomes Jean Hay back with great enthusiasm.

