

# The Institute for Historical Study Newsletter

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am happy to inform you that the Institute Web Page is up and running at [www.this.org](http://www.this.org), and can be visited by anyone who is so inclined. "this" stands for "The Institute for Historical Study"—for those who are not so high-techy. Lorrie O' Dell and her committee are planning to add more information and more links as time goes by.

To illustrate that time does indeed go by, I note that we have received a letter from the Maryland Women's Studies Department and Program at the University of Maryland advising that the AHA Year 2000 Annual Meeting will be in Chicago, 6-9 January 2000. With the AHA planning to greet the new century in Chicago (in January, yet), we should begin to think about whether the Institute will be represented. Any member who is thinking about going to the meeting should let a Director know so that Institution representation can be arranged.

This is a brief President's Message because we are on deadline, but I do want to say a word about a good friend of the Institute who has recently passed away. I am referring to Bryan Miller, husband of founding director Francesca Miller, and a friend of many of us who were involved in the Institute in its early days.

Bryan was a chemist and a member of the faculty at the University of California at Davis. He participated in many of the early meetings of the Institute's Board of Directors, and was a generous host during our summer Board meetings at his and Francesca's home. The Board adjourned its November meeting in memory of Bryan, and we want to extend our heartfelt condolences to Francesca and the Miller family.

—Jules Becker

## ANNUAL POTLUCK

About thirty of us gathered on a very hot day for the annual fall potluck dinner on 13 September at the home of Patricia and Chuck Swensen in Marin County. We enjoyed salmon and chicken, provided by our hosts and done to a turn on the barbeque, as well as all the gourmet goodies contributed by our

members. It was hot enough to lure several of the group into the pool, where they cooled off—splashing and gurgling all the while. Others, less daring [i.e., wiser], lounged about, enjoying cool wine, cold beer, good friends, and great conversation.

Our leader, Jules, alas, was in Italy—poor dear. [Whither are you leading us, Jules?] We missed him, but struggled along nevertheless—splashing, gurgling, and lounging with great aplomb. Those of you who were not there missed a fine day of fellowship, and even some tidbits of high-flown historical discussion.

—Nancy Zinn

## IHS MINIGRANT AWARDED

The Board of the Institute has awarded the 1998 Minigrant to Bonda Lewis, who will use it to defray travel expenses in connection with her work on the experiences of nurses serving the armies of the British Empire and the United States between 1809 (Wellington's Peninsular Campaign) and 1945. The final product will be a two-hour performance. Those of us who have seen Bonda in action look forward eagerly to this production.

For her project, entitled "From Camp Followers to Commissioned Officers," Bonda is interviewing a local World War II nurse veteran and several nurse veterans in England and Scotland. She will augment these oral memoirs with published works and with unpublished journals, diaries, letters, and field reports. She will also use archival material from the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps Museum in Hampshire and from the Florence Nightingale Museum in London.

It is particularly gratifying to be able to make a difference with a grant to a project as creative and exciting as this one. We also hope that Bonda can use the grant from the Institute to leverage other funding.

—Georgia Wright





## WORK-IN-PROGRESS

Laurette Goldberg

On Saturday, 19 September, in the concert hall of MusicSources in Berkeley, Institute members were treated to an introduction to music publishing in San Francisco before 1900, some theories about social dancing, and a brief history of the piano. Laurette Goldberg, director of MusicSources and a mentor and inspiration for many Bay Area musical groups, was joined by Carol Teten, an expert on historical dances, and Mary Kay Duggan, whom I knew as a medievalist but who has turned her hand to chronicling California sheet music on a website. Mary Kay had discovered sheet music with instructions on how the dances were to be performed—rather like those a square-dance caller might use. She and Laurette got together and decided that it would be fun to have a program on San Francisco music in the Gold Rush, with the dances performed by the audience. That's where Carol Teten would come in: she has acted as dance mistress for performances of historical dances.

But they needed an authentic period piano. While many pianos manufactured earlier than 1850 still exist, the 'square grand' was the instrument of choice in the latter half of the century. A behemoth with cast-iron innards, weighing some 900 pounds, it was not well designed. Most of the pianos—those that did not slip into the sea when unloaded or fall through the floors of their new homes—were eventually neglected until they became unrepairable. Laurette, however, found one in decent condition just in time to include it with the Gold Rush music in her program for 1998–1999.

The story of the piano hunt was interesting enough, but she also related how the fortepiano displaced the harpsichord (at least until this century) when composers and audiences developed a taste for dramatic loud and soft playing. (All pianos come off a bit lowbrow at MusicSources, where harpsichords and clavichords have pride of place.) She also demonstrated how the "Moonlight Sonata" sounded when played on the type of piano for which it was composed—one with dampers that could be held for several measures, blending the notes without creating a cacophony of the chords.

Carol Teten proposed the theory that square dances such as the quadrille were created for societies that emphasized hieratic order or class distinctions. Each person eventually returns to his or her original position. Line dances, on the other hand, produce less rigid patterns, and mix the participants;



they appear to have been more popular in egalitarian societies or groups. (She wondered whether the growing popularity of Swing after so many years of pair-dancing is merely an arbitrary change of fashion in social dancing or a symptom of a larger cultural change.)

Mary Kay passed out pages from her website with a sample of some contents and a few lithographs from the title pages of sheet music. Her analysis of the numbers of music titles published between 1850 and 1900 showed a steady increase until 1880 (472 titles were published in the 1870s), when railroad development permitted New York publishing houses to swamp the market with their products. There were 1,227 titles published between 1852 and 1900, most of which were new versions of popular tunes in the form of songs or dances, the latter often bearing French labels for each dancing part. African American music was popular during the Gold Rush period—in minstrel performances by whites in black-face, in compositions or performances by African Americans, or in the borrowings in Stephen Foster's songs. The dances that were printed came from all over, and included the quadrille, schottische, jota, polka, two-step, Turkish muscle dance, tarantella, and waltz.

This is the second contribution on music history to have been mounted by Laurette; it was both lively and thought-provoking. Please do check the flyers you receive from MusicSources. For more information and for pictures of California sheet music, you can turn to the website: [www.sims.berkeley.edu/~mkduggan/neh.html](http://www.sims.berkeley.edu/~mkduggan/neh.html).

—Georgia Wright



## AN ITALIAN SOJOURN

A liminal journey commenced for me on 24 September when I received a message from Patrizia Calefato of the University of Bari, and editor of Palomar Editrice, advising me that I had received "*un premio [prize] di saggistica molto prestigioso*" for my *Black Madonnas*, in an Italian edition, and that the Province of Salerno wanted me to come to Italy, all expenses covered, for award ceremonies on the first of October.

On the twenty-hour flight to Naples—seeking to understand the cultural context of the prize, whose winners are called *scienziati*—I reread Giambattista Vico's 1744 *La Scienza Nuova*. The Neapolitan philoso-



pher (who said that a city of God is made by God but that humans make societies) is a precursor of Marx in putting class struggle at the center of universal history. Vico differs from Marx (maybe) in holding that humans will build good societies insofar as they look to “common wisdom,” or popular beliefs embodying “poetic wisdom.” This poetic wisdom is close to what the great Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci called the *buon senso* of all peoples—a sense of justice transmitted innately in individuals, or in vernacular rituals of all cultures—offering hope for a better world.

Upon arriving in Naples I was met by representatives of the Province of Salerno bearing a placard: “Professoressa Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum, Premio Valitutti.” They drove me to Salerno along the route skirting enchanting Capri, Sorrento, the Amalfi Drive, and the historic ruins of Pompeii. The next morning, as the state car veered into the mountains south and east of Salerno, I thought about Vico’s new society as a society of *becoming*, and wondered where we were going as we led a long procession of cars carrying university and government officials.

I recalled Vico’s “common wisdom” as the cars wound along a serpentine mountain road, passing Eboli, the locale of Carlo Levi’s classic *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, a book whose imprint on my early life undoubtedly had something to do with my later study of black madonnas. Levi, observing the pagan rituals and beliefs that pulse beneath Italian Catholicism, described the madonna (often black) of these parts as a Proserpina who seems to come out of the depths of the earth. The winding road crossed Roccaspide, the aptly named rock of the asps, before we arrived for the award dinner at a restaurant in the mountains.

There we were met by a color guard reception for the president of the province (analogous to our governor), the mayor, the bishop, the prefect, the rector, and the prize-winners. As the restaurant filled with the prominent and the academics, the professor of the University of Naples, who was on the prize committee, came to sit next to me. I told her that I was unclear about the nature of the *premio* but that I had reread Vico on the plane, whereupon she responded, “exactly.” When my publisher, Gianfranco Cosma of Palomar Editrice, arrived from Bari, I asked him how my book fit into this curious event. He said that *Black Madonnas, Femminismo, religione, e politica in Italia* fit the *premio* very well—a scholarly study of a significant theme in history, philosophy, political science, or pedagogy.

After antipasti, ravioli, lamb, veal, etc., including scooped out walnuts and chestnuts filled with the appropriate ices, the procession of cars serpented to the nearby town of Bellosguardo, birthplace of Salvatore Valitutti, for whom the *premio* is named. Valitutti was the former Italian national minister of public instruction, and was associated with Maria Montessori, the internationally respected Italian educator whose pedagogy was grounded on respect for a child’s innate desire to learn.

Valitutti was also the beloved native son of this mountain hamlet, whose inhabitants preceded the arriving notables in filling the town hall—older women in black, younger women in short skirts, peasant men wearing partisan berets, and *bambini*. Along the walls of the council chamber were mounted the fifty-seven national books and international books translated into Italian that had been considered for the prize, including my *Black Madonnas*.

Not until I was put in the front row alongside professors Vittorelli and Renda did I realize that we were the three authors to be given the *premio*. Whereupon I might well have fallen into a somewhat unfeminist embarrassment, because Renda and Vittorelli are very distinguished historians. Renda is the dean of Sicilian historians. His work on the Sicilian socialist uprisings of the 1890s had an early influence on my work. Renda’s prize book was his study of the Inquisition in Sicily, while Vittorelli’s was a study of an antifascist political party of the Mussolini era. Both men have written dozens of books, have received many honors, and have been senators. In Italy, distinguished historians are elected to the Senate.

In front of the prize-winners was a dais, occupied by the president of the province, the chair of the prize jury (professor of the history of philosophy of the University of Naples), the bishop (in vestment) of Teggiano, the prefect of Salerno, the mayor of Bellosguardo (with green, white, and red cordon), as well as “other honored figures of the academic and research world,” presided. The only woman on the dais was the professor of the University of Naples. The chair, tweaking our shared feminism, said that for reasons of solidarity she would present my book.

Ironically, the chair chose the bishop of Teggiano to present the Valitutti award to me—a tweak because Palomar Editrice promotes the anticlerical themes of *Black Madonnas*. The church, in its ancient tradition of embracing troublemakers, seemed embodied in the bishop who, with a flourish of gallantry and a twinkle in his eye, bestowed the *premio* on me.

Feminist elation swept over me as a standing ovation—initiated by the peasant and professional women in the audience—greeted my award. Afterward, amid bouquets and interviews, when asked to whom I dedicated the *premio*, I responded, “the women of the area.”





When I examined the "golden roll of honor" of those who have received the Valitutti *premio* since its inception in 1994, I noted that only two other women have been given the award: Rosella Frasca of the University of Chieti in 1994, and Laura Marchetti of the philosophy journal *Paradigmi* in 1996. Most of the winners have been male professors affiliated with Italian universities; the exceptions are two from France and one from Hungary. I am, thus far, the only American to be honored.

In my unprepared words following the award, I said that I was very moved, because I am of the generation of Italian Americans who are seeking their roots in Italy, and because black madonnas, in my work, may be considered a metaphor for submerged popular beliefs—beliefs in justice, equality, and transformation ultimately associated with the African dark mother of prehistory. These beliefs are visible in Italy today in the women's movement, the student movement, and pervasive nonviolent initiatives aiming for individual and political transformation. Recalling Vico's "poetic wisdom," these popular beliefs are embodied in black madonnas—and are glimpsed in stories and in everyday as well as festival rituals of resistance to violent patriarchy by ordinary people the world over. In my present manuscript, "The future is an ancient memory: African origins and transformation," I place scientific findings of genetics and archeology alongside historical and cultural evidence of the continuing memory of the ancient dark mother, whose values—justice, equality, and transformation—point to a new world.

—Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum



## CALL FOR PAPERS

"Migration, Borders, and Displacement: The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America," the 10th international research conference of the Latin American Jewish Studies Association, will occur during 14–15 March 1999 in Princeton, New Jersey. Deadline for proposals is 7 January 1999. For details, contact PLAS-LAJSA '99, Princeton University, Joseph Henry House, Princeton, NJ 08544-1019. Fax: (609) 258-0113. E-mail: lajsa99@princeton.edu.

Radcliffe College and Harvard University Press have announced plans for Volume V of *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary*, to be published in 2003. It will include essays on approximately 500 to 600 women who will have died between 1 January 1976 and 1 January 2000. At present, they are seeking nominations of possible subjects, especially those

reflecting contributions of underdocumented groups, regions, or specialties. For those nominating a subject, supply a short synopsis of her career and its importance, as well as basic bibliographic sources, both secondary and archival (if known). They also welcome names of scholars who are interested in writing specific articles or serving as consultants for specialized fields. All communications should go to Susan Ware, Editor, *Notable American Women*, Volume Five, The Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, 10 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.



## CONFERENCES

An international conference on "Jews and the Urban Experience" will take place in Detroit, Michigan 7–8 March 1999. For details, contact Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies, Wayne State University, (313) 577-2679. Fax: (313) 577-3266. E-mail: aa2690@wayne.edu.

On 12–13 March 1999 a conference titled "Re-Producing Women's History: Working Seminars Across the Generations," will be held in New York City. Contact Bonnie S. Anderson, PhD Program in History, Graduate School and University Center, CUNY, 33 W. 42nd St., New York, NY 10036.

The annual meeting of the Western Association of Women Historians will be held at Asilomar during 21–23 May 1999.



## INTERNET INFORMATION

The National Women's History Project's award-winning Web site is located at <http://www.NWHP.org>. The site provides a gateway to the Internet for U.S. women's history, including links to other sites and an index to help locate biographical information about individual women, as well as women's experiences in different time periods or geographic regions.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Eleanor Alexander has moved to New Hampshire, near her daughter Ann, at 134 Rivermead Road, Peterborough, NH 03458. She would love to hear from biographers, Byzantinists, and other friends.



On 16 July Malcolm E. Barker was interviewed by Michael Krasny on KQED-FM's "Forum." Earlier the same day Malcolm appeared on Bay TV's morning news program. On 10 August he was on KPFA-FM, and on 30 August he was on KCBS-AM's "In Depth" program. All of these broadcasts and appearances gave Malcolm the opportunity to discuss his latest book, *Three Fearful Days: San Francisco Memoirs of the 1906 earthquake & fire*—the final volume in his *San Francisco Memoirs* trilogy.

In 1999, Malcolm will have speaking dates on 17 April, which also happens to be his birthday (one day before the anniversary of the 1906 earthquake), at the San Francisco Main Public Library, and on 9 June at the California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park.

In January and February, KRON-TV (Channel 4) will air two new segments in its "Decades" series of documentaries about San Francisco. The first will deal with the nineteenth century and the second will cover the first decade of this century—1900 through 1910. Malcolm is one of the Bay Area writers and historians who will be featured.

Anthony D'Agostino's book *Gorbachev's Revolution, 1985-91* has been published by MacMillan in the United Kingdom and by New York University Press in the United States.

Judith Offer will give a poetry reading at Cody's Bookstore in Berkeley on 6 January 1999 at 7:30 p.m.

Harvey Schwartz reports that he is working on many new and continuing oral history projects, and is also doing further work on San Francisco labor history. His review of David Selvin's *A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strikes in San Francisco* was published in the Winter 1997/98 issue of *California History*, the quarterly publication of the California Historical Society.

During the past year Harvey did three oral history interviews for the SFSU Labor Archives and Research Center; a presentation for the Bay Area Labor History Workshop; and another presentation on twenty-five years of labor law (1935-59) for a Micklejohn Civil Liberties Institute conference in July.

He published three longer oral history articles in the ILWU newspaper during the summer, and also gave a presentation at the Mills College Bay Area Historians' Resource Fair in September.

James C. Williams received a special certificate of commendation for his book *Energy and the Making of Modern California* from the American Association for State and Local History for exploring the relationship between technology and the environment.

His article on "Gender and Energy Marketing in

the Early 20th Century" was published by the University of Virginia Press in the journal *His and Hers: Gender, Consumption, and Technology*.

At the twenty-fifth Symposium of the International Committee for the History of Technology (ICOHTEC), in Lisbon, Portugal, he presented a paper on "Earthquakes and the Culture of Prevention."

James is a member of the ICOHTEC's executive committee.

## DO YOU WANT YOUR BOOK REVIEWED?

Wouldn't you enjoy having your book reviewed in the *Newsletter*? It does at least take some modest effort on your part. Please contact either Peter Browning or Elaine Rosenthal, and offer to submit a copy of your book for review. If you know of another member who would like to review it, so much the better. If you are interested in reviewing another member's book, contact Peter or Elaine for information on deadlines for submitting a review.

## NEW MEMBER

Barbara B. Wood of San Francisco received her BA in Russian language and literature from the University of Pennsylvania. She also has an MA in government from New York University, and has taken courses at Golden Gate University School of Law. Currently she is a case administrator for the American Arbitration Association. As a member of the American Association of University Women, SF, she serves as vice-president (Legal Advocacy Fund); and is a member of the Association of Women in Communications (SF). She has worked in media for a variety of groups, e.g., Children's Day Around the Bay; has been a communications advisor for ROLM Systems in Santa Clara; and has researched issues for Dianne Feinstein's U.S. Senate campaign. She was introduced to the Institute by Perri Hale.

## INSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP

We rely on continuing members to help maintain and increase Institute membership. Please send names and addresses of prospective members to Nancy Zinn, the Membership Chair, at the address on the back page of this *Newsletter*, or E-mail to: zinn@itsa.ucsf.edu. All of us profit from a large and diverse group of scholars and their activities.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- December 5** The Fall Dinner, at ZZA's Trattoria in Oakland, at 5:30 p.m. There will be a talk on "Apocalypse Now . . . and Then," by Julie Scholz.
- January 17** Work-in-Progress, by Fred Isaacs.
- February 27** Annual Meeting, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Rockridge branch of the Oakland Public Library.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Deadline for the fall Newsletter is **24 January**. Peter Browning and Elaine Rosenthal will continue as co-editors of the *Newsletter*. Please send all your reports, reviews, and other information to Peter. Material can be sent on either size floppy disk in Word Perfect 4.1, 4.2, or 5.0—or as an ASCII file.

Send **Membership News** to Wolfgang H. Rosenberg on the inserted form.

The editors would like to note that the various website and e-mail addresses that appear in the *Newsletter* are printed exactly as we received them, including upper-case and lower-case letters.

## THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The *Newsletter* is sent to all members. Non-members who wish to receive it and to get regular announcements of Institute events are invited to make tax-deductible contributions to assist with the cost of printing and mailing.

Direct membership inquiries to: Nancy Zinn,  
Membership Chair, 1410 21st Avenue,  
San Francisco, CA 94122

The Institute is affiliated with the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS) and with the American Historical Association (AHA).

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The Newsletter is the official publication of the Institute for Historical Study, a scholarly organization designed to promote the research, writing, and public discussion of history. Membership in the Institute is open to independent and academically affiliated scholars who are in agreement with its aims and who have a commitment to historical study. Membership inquiries should be sent to the Institute address.

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