

## **“Thoreau as I Understand Him after Long Absence from New England” by Charles Sullivan**

People all over the world have been inspired and confused by the writings of Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), especially his book *Walden or Life in the Woods* (1854), which is easily mistaken for an unrealistic endorsement of “simple living” (to quote from the cover of my 1960 paperback edition) or simply escapism. As I understand him now, however, Thoreau actually enjoyed much of the complexity of day-to-day existence; and he was anything but an escapist. He spent most of his 45 years as a gregarious resident of Concord, Massachusetts, living in comfortable houses with relatives or friends, such as the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson. His celebrated attempt at “life in the woods” (1845-47) was clearly a departure from this familiar routine, if only a temporary one. Why did he need it?

To explain his two-year sojourn at nearby Walden Pond in a 10' x 15' hut (built by him on land owned by Emerson), he wrote: “I went to the woods because I wished to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” Among other facts of life, Thoreau was afflicted with tuberculosis, which hindered his exertions and eventually killed him. And recent scholarly research suggests that he may have fallen in love with Emerson’s wife Lidian while the so-called “Sage of Concord” was absent in England. These complications could not be avoided.

However, Thoreau did try to simplify things in other ways. He lived at Walden for “two years, two months, and two days,” age 28 to 30, during which he grew vegetables, caught fish, picked blackberries, and accepted dinner invitations fairly often in Concord, a 20-minute walk from the hut. Luckily he could earn what little cash he needed by working occasionally at any of several occupations in which he had acquired skill. A college graduate (Harvard class of 1837) with no specific major, he famously responded to an alumni survey: “I am a Schoolmaster—a Private Tutor, a Surveyor—a Gardener, a Farmer, a Painter—I mean a House Painter, a Carpenter, a Mason, a Day-Laborer, a Pencil-Maker, a Glass-paper Maker, a Writer, and sometimes a Poetaster,” meaning a composer of inferior verse.

Thoreau wished above all to be a published writer whose books earned royalties, and this dream would eventually come true, big time, with multiple publications after his death. While living at Walden he labored prodigiously on writing projects, including at least two books and a voluminous journal from which additional books and essays would come. He had gone to the woods hoping to see his literary talents blossoming there, with most other commitments pruned away, and that’s what happened. It was the major transition of his life.

Was Thoreau’s move to Walden also an anti-social gesture, as some critics have claimed? Apparently not. He was clearly pro-social in his writings. The quiet little town of Concord may have served Emerson and other well-known intellectuals as a “retreat” from city life in Boston or New York, but for Thoreau this was the bustling metropolis. He had relatives there, plus a wide array of friends and acquaintances, ranging from well-established townspeople to the interesting strangers he encountered on walks. Reportedly he liked to sing, dance, gossip, and always to observe things for himself, to find out more. “What is a course

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## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

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I wanted to start off by thanking Jim Gasperini for hosting our first in-person get-together since February 2020, a potluck picnic in his backyard on September 24. In other news, Jim was the sole applicant this year and thus the sole recipient of an Institute mini-grant. So I’d like to say a bit more about Jim—he is a star of our organization! He took on managing our website and kept it up through a major battle with leukemia. While undergoing treatment, he continued to write chapters of his book on “Fire in the Mind: From the Burning Bush to Burning Man, How We Imagine Fire.” While some of us plod along at a slower pace, he is nearly done with the manuscript after a mere six years of research and writing. Jim also serves on our board, is active in the Writers Group, and has given more than one beautifully illustrated monthly program. Thank you for everything, Jim!

Our other current board members have all been exemplary, too. If you would like to join this distinguished group beginning next year, please contact vice president and nominating committee chair Liz Thacker-Estrada. (I hope you all have your member rosters handy.)

Our Google Group conversation recently crackled with strong opinions about the San Francisco Monuments and Memorials Survey. Rose Marie Cleese has invited us all to respond to the survey from a historian’s point of view. From the survey’s introduction:

“Like many communities across the country, San Francisco is reckoning with the legacy of white supremacy, patriarchy, and colonialism reflected in public spaces, specifically in monuments and memorials that are part of San Francisco’s Civic Art Collection. Many of the monuments and memorials in the collection do not reflect the diversity of San Francisco, intentionally erase stories of communities of color, and reinforce inequities in race, gender, and culture.

“The San Francisco Arts Commission [SFAC] envisions a San Francisco where the transformative power of art is critical to strengthening neighborhoods, building infrastructure, and fostering positive social change. In order to achieve this vision and create public spaces where diversity is celebrated, inclusion and equity are fostered, and white supremacy, patriarchy, and colonialism are dismantled, SFAC is committed to building upon existing community work that studied the collection’s monuments and memorials, and to develop guidelines to determine the future of each monument and memorial in the collection.”

Those who commented felt strongly that this introduction created a bias and probably reflected outcomes that are already predetermined. (I can’t imagine more than a few of the 98 existing monuments being controversial. The Douglas Tilden statue of Junipero Serra is probably the one of most concern.) There are opportunities in some of the questions to suggest that historians should be involved and interpretive plaques could be added. However, historians are not all of the same mind regarding monuments. Erin Thompson, author of *Smashing Statues: The Rise and Fall of America’s Public Monuments*, commented

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## MONTHLY PROGRAMS

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### “Second Wave Feminism in a Postwar Suburban Synagogue”

Michael Several’s amusing, informative, and satisfying presentation in May took me entirely by surprise. I couldn’t have imagined the fun this talk described. As an historian, theater professional, and veteran of Second Wave Feminism, I was glad that I had come to learn about a place where women searching for greater meaning in their lives found a voice through stories, theater production, having and making fun.

It was fascinating to hear about a world where women “were not a part of the praying community, the minyan. Instead the primary place for women at that time in the Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center was the Sisterhood . . . (which) held well attended monthly luncheons. . . (with) a touch of philanthropy.” The luncheons, Michael noted, were mostly social occasions. But in 1965, Marilyn Fingerhut, a New York import to Southern California, and her also-recently-arrived-friend and former Bostonian, Marsha Alper began putting together and presenting musical “skits,” changing the nature of the luncheons. Original lyrics about the women’s (and Women’s) own experiences, set to popular music, satirized the Sisterhood and its members.

From luncheon skits the ambitions of the women matured into full-blown musicals written and performed for the whole synagogue community. The success of the first musical (1968) “Pharshimelte Fairy Tales” (Yiddish for “mixed up”), which raised \$1,000, encouraged the production of the next one, “Mission Improbable,” two years later. The Sisterhood wrote and performed three more musicals (“The Sensuous Spy,” 1971, “Blazing Girdles,” 1974 and “Moishe and Mendle,” 1979).

Music for both the sketches and the musicals came from wide-ranging sources, including

Hollywood movies: *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (“Boring, that’s what my life’s become . . .”) and *Chinatown* (“Weep for us oh mah jong tiles . . .”); Broadway musicals: *Hello Dolly!* (“Hello Molly, well hello Sarah, It is time to have our meeting once again . . .” and *Annie Get Your Gun* (“We could bake a challah/ for a chosen-kallah/ Make it round or braided/ Totally unaided . . .”). At least one Gilbert and Sullivan tune was purloined: *Pirates of Penzance* (“I am the very model of a Modern Jewish Mamale/ I take care of the children and the not-so-hotsy tatele . . .”). Of course popular songs were freely borrowed; even “Onward Christian Soldiers” made an appearance.

All of this took place in the context of the Women’s Movement that Betty Friedan’s best-selling book *The Feminine Mystique* set into motion. Michael presented summaries of the plays and examples of the lyrics along with a well-illustrated timeline of the movement’s achievements which included the organization of NOW, sit-ins, picketing, consciousness-raising groups, election of women to political office. The burgeoning of this second wave Women’s Movement affected what the Sisterhood women accomplished, over time changing the tenor of it, giving real weight to their laments of being stuck at home without opportunity to be creative.

By the time the Sisterhood produced its last musical (1979), media pundits were declaring that “the Women’s Movement was dead.” Life caught up with the women of the Sisterhood as they were changed by the movement. They took jobs outside the home and began what previously would have been impossible careers: Marilyn became manager of a pharmaceutical sales office; Marsha, among other roles, became “the congregation’s first woman Torah reader and its first woman President.”

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Michael concluded: “[Taken as a whole] the musicals’ references to the Lower East Side, food, and the Yiddish language, combined with the depictions of women and references to prominent feminists, we might say the musicals did more than create a sense of identity and community in a post-war suburban synagogue. They can also be seen as a record of the evolving impact of the Women’s Movement on a group of middle class Jewish suburban women who were among Friedan’s original target audience.”

It was a talk I could never have imagined; unexpected and delightful. If you missed it, be sure to view it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beTdAmwnkLY>.

– *Bonda Lewis*

### “Joy of Life: Impressionists and Post-Impressionists in Russia”

July’s monthly program featured guest speaker **Marina Oborotova** whose presentation was roughly divided in two parts. The first described the way in which such a large collection of French Impressionist paintings ended up in the museums of St. Petersburg and Moscow. Oborotova detailed the efforts of Russian merchants who, following the path initially pursued by royal and aristocratic families, patronized often unknown artists and brought their masterworks to Russia. The second part of the presentation focused on the development of the Russian school of Impressionism.

Oborotova, who is president of the Center for International Studies, holds a PhD from the Institute of World Economy and International Relations in Moscow. She is a published author, landscape artist, and former professor at the University of New Mexico. Oborotova’s understanding of Russian foreign policy, paired with her passionate knowledge and firsthand experience with museum artworks, made her a

wonderful guide to the collecting motives of late imperial business magnates and the Soviet government’s treatment of privately held assets.

Oborotova briefly traced the history of Russian art collecting, showing how it emerged as that country engaged with the culture of Western Europe. Peter the Great (1672-1725) introduced a number of western art forms to Russia, and sent Russian artists to be trained elsewhere in Europe. But it was Catherine the Great (1729-1796), a self-described “art glutton,” who is properly credited with amassing Russia’s first great royal collection, laying the foundation of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Other collectors, almost exclusively from the nobility, would follow in her footsteps. Towards the end of the 19th century, however, the wealthy and increasingly cultured merchant class began to dominate the scene.

Sergey Shchukin (1854 -1936) was a key figure in the gathering and sharing of French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting, as well as helping to plant the seeds of abstract art in Russia. An educated, widely traveled textile merchant, Shchukin acquired his first Monet in 1897. He continued buying French paintings with the assistance of dealers, seeking works that expressed “strong feelings” even if he did not initially find the paintings attractive. Shchukin would bring these acquisitions to his Trubetskoy Palace where he invited the likes of Kazimir Malevich and other Russian painters to view and study them. In addition to paintings by Cezanne, he owned 13 Monets, 16 Gauguins, 39 Matisse, and 59 Picassos. Shchukin kept buying art until war and revolution intervened. In 1918 the Bolsheviks nationalized his collection.

The Morozov brothers Mikhail (1870-1903) and Ivan (1871-1921), also heirs to riches derived from textiles, saw Shchukin as a collecting mentor. Together the Morozovs acquired paintings by Cezanne, Derain, Monet, Pissarro,

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Renoir, Rodin, Sisley, Van Gogh, Vlaminick, and Maurice Denis along with the works of Russian masters. Oborotova connected personal details about the Morovoz family—their public personae, and business savvy—to the growth of their collection. Like the Shchukin collection, the Morozovs' treasures were nationalized in 1918. Both families' acquisitions became part of first Museum of Modern Western Art in the former Morozov mansion. After World War II, under threat of liquidation by Stalin the two collections were divided between the Hermitage and the Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow.

Oborotova capped her presentation with a discussion of Russia's own Impressionist painters, whose timeline differed from that of the French masters. She introduced us to a prominent group of landscape painters who were trained, or taught, at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture. Alexsei Savrasov, Ivan Shishkin, Vasily Polenov, Isaac Levitan, and Konstantin Korovin created the core of the new landscape-painting movement. Reflecting a nationalist sentiment, these artists painted scenes of their homeland rather than academically influenced landscapes. Oborotova was skillful in interpreting one of Savrasov's works that depicted dirty, melting snow. Through her presentation of various paintings she allowed us to feel wind rippling across water and dry grass being cut by a farmer's scythe. If we are able to travel to Russia once again, we can experience these works in person at the Museum of Russian Impressionism which opened in 2016.

What is evident from Oborotova's talk is the fervor with which Russian painters pursued Impressionism, or plein air painting, well into the 20th century, as a way to continue celebrating national identity in contrast to the spirit of socialist realism.

In recent history, the reunion of the Shchukin and Morozov collections in major exhibitions

was a cause for international celebration. At a time when Russia's connection to the west is questioned because of Putin's invasion of Ukraine, it is important to be reminded of the role the Russians have taken in shaping our shared history. Oborotova encourages us to hope that we will be able to see paintings at Russian museums again. — *Nathan Foxton*

### **“Writing and Revising Narrative History”**

For the monthly program on August 21st, the Institute teamed up with the Mechanics' Institute for a presentation from Megan Kate Nelson on writing history for general readers. Dr. Nelson, whose PhD from the University of Iowa is in American Studies, has taught US history and American Studies at Texas Tech, Cal State Fullerton, Harvard, and Brown. Since 2014 she has been writing full time on the Civil War, the West, and American culture. Megan's articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Atlantic*, *Smithsonian*, and *Time*. She is the author of several books, including *The Three-Cornered War: The Union, the Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West* (Scribner 2020), which was a finalist for the 2021 Pulitzer Prize in History.

Megan began by explaining that she had to learn early on the difference between academic writing and trade writing—writing for a general audience. Academic writing is argument-driven and generally thematically structured. Writing a narrative history book is very different. Here, the structure is based on telling a *story*: there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. Chapters are generally shorter—no more than fifteen to twenty pages is her recommendation. When you present your argument, you should have a prologue to let the reader know what's coming, but the argument itself should be imbedded—woven—into the story. The reader's focus should remain on the story.

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Presenting evidence in narrative history is also done differently than in academic writing. Here, the goal is to make the evidence part of the scene, not to openly advance the argument. Megan used an example from one of her books, showing how she turned a diary entry from her research into recreated dialogue between two of her characters.

Another difference is that narrative history must create a sense of place. The author should use all manner of detail, including color and smells, creating a vivid sense of the past for the reader. Readers want to be drawn into the action, to turn the page, to find out what happens next to the main characters. Narrative history, Megan states, is all about the *who*.

Megan then turned to the always thorny subject of revising, a painful but critical part of writing. For herself, she finds it easier to revise while she is writing, but whichever way one does it, her firmest advice is to keep in mind that your words are not your darlings.

Finding your voice in the narrative history genre takes time and practice, she admits—but it's fun.

Megan's website is [megankatenelson.com](http://megankatenelson.com)

– *Dan Kohanski*

### “How to Create Your Own Legacy Book”

September's program featured longtime member **Margaretta Mitchell**. Before discussing her ongoing project, a series of “legacy books,” Gretta presented an overview of her experience with many approaches to “publishing” during her long career as photographer, writer, and publisher. She defined “publisher” as “the one who puts up the money.”

Her first book, *Gift of Place*, a personal book about place, family, and home, came out under the Scrimshaw Press imprint. A small

publishing company she started with her husband, Scrimshaw had one big success (*Handmade Houses*), which “had to pay for a lot of other books” that failed to make money. *To a Cabin*, in collaboration with photographer Dorothea Lange, was brought out by the Grossman imprint of Viking. It portrayed a vanished time when friends of Roger Kent, whose family owned and developed large properties in Marin, owned or borrowed rustic cabins at Steep Ravine near Stinson Beach. The cabins are now part of Mount Tamalpais State Park.

*Dance for Life* is a boxed photogravure collection of images of Isadora Duncan dances performed at a dance school at the Temple of the Wings in Berkeley. Viking published *Recollections: Ten Women of Photography*, based on an exhibition about pioneering women photographers at the International Center for Photography in New York. *The Face of Poetry*, from UC Press, drew on her long experience as a portrait photographer. Though it was a great experience meeting these people, it wasn't always easy getting good portraits of Ntozake Shange and other luminaries.

Another approach Gretta explored was the art book. This included *English Gardens*, which came out in a letterpress edition of 30, each page a little print, and *On the Avenue*, which bound images into a purse.

In recent years Gretta began self-publishing a series of “legacy books,” each of which encapsulates an aspect of her creative life. Published in a uniform size and shape, when placed together they form a series or catalog, though they were produced at different times with different inspirations. *Iconographies*, based on an exhibit at an Oakland gallery, collected large-format Polaroid camera images inspired by the history of art. *Island* displays nudes taken in Hawaii and on an island in Canada, posing women not as goddesses but as mortal creatures that are part of nature. The most recent,

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*Dreamscapes & Destinations*, pulls together images of places Gretta visited over the years, including Stonehenge, Constable Walk, and Death Valley. Her current work in progress, “Stories from A Year in Spain, 1959-1960,” reaches back to her early days as an artist and includes wood engravings, photographs, and drawings.

It can be difficult to find a publisher for the type of personal project Gretta likes to do. Then, if you do manage to find one after time-consuming effort, how long will it take to get the book out? The process can take four years. At this point in her life, she no longer has the patience. Those people you have dealt with and trust can leave their companies. Early on she had good relationships at Viking, and a great friend at ICP, founder Cornell Capa. Then he retired.

After researching various self-publishing options, Gretta decided that online printing options were too expensive, unless you want to print just a few. A friend used one to publish a book on infrared photography; each cost \$50 just to produce. Having decided to make a limited run using a local printer, she had to decide how many to print for each edition. She has printed as many as 250. The Spanish work in progress will be limited to 200 since she judges it to be “more esoteric.”

If a book has images, it is important to make sure that the publisher handles them well. She long had good experience at Brandes Printing in Berkeley. The man who ran it for years was a very sensitive craftsman. Now she works with another local printer, Roller Press. She hired a designer for each of these books. Though she could design them herself, she feels she could never have achieved the romantic feeling she wanted without professional help.

Marketing a book is big job, and not what book creators are born to do. Many bookstores don't want self-published books. Gretta's goal is not

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so much to sell the books, which she makes available through her website, but to create an artistic record. “I sell when I sell.”

The lively discussion that followed the presentation dwelt partly on the pros and cons of different approaches to self-publishing and partly on fascinating stories about the cabins at Steep Ravine and several incarnations of the dance school at the Temple of the Wings.

– *Jim Gasperini*

### Writers Group

In our summer sessions, the Writers Group discussed three very different and stimulating chapters of books in progress. In July, Esther Mordant presented a portion of her study “God, Good and Evil” in which she addressed the question why an all-powerful and all-knowing God doesn't “do something” to prevent evil acts from occurring. She considered the question of divine intervention either indirectly, through designing humans to be unable to commit evil, or directly, by means of miracles, and rejected both options. Human beings are created to have free will and agency. Through evil acts, both individual and systemic, she argued, they expel God from the world. These actions are reversals of human rationality, which can and should be prevented, using mechanisms of social influence. Human beings can design communities that are evil-aware and evil-intolerant. God can be reintroduced into the world through acts of care and compassion. The Group was impressed by Esther's lucid and provocative analysis of one of theology's most profound and troubling questions.

In August, Katya Miller gave us a section of her “biography” of Lady Freedom, the statue atop the US Capitol. Katya examined the various artistic and cultural influences that shaped the statue. She considered classical, nationalistic, patriotic, libertarian, and Native American

themes that were found in early 19th century art in the United States and discussed their public presentation. Katya paid greatest attention to Native American influences, something that many of the Group's members felt was being overdone. They urged Katya to focus more sharply on the specific influences reflected in the statue itself and to give a more balanced discussion of the forces that shaped it.

At our September session Jim Gasperini offered us one more chapter of his cultural history of fire, this one entitled "The Fires of the Body." Jim explored ideas about the relationship between fire and living creatures. He considered how various medical systems conceived how internal heat is generated and how it can get out of control, but he also looked at belief systems that viewed internal fires more mystically, as a place within the body that houses the soul or even the soul itself. In addition, Jim wrote about questions of spontaneous human combustion, examined various ways humans have exerted control of their own vital heat, and discussed how, in some situations, they developed a demonstrated immunity to fire's effects on the body. A fascinating subject marked by excellent writing. The Group is fired up, excited that Jim's work is now nearing completion.

– **Rob Robbins**

### **A Few More Words about Richard Herr**

by Margaretta Mitchell

Richard Herr was my oldest friend in Berkeley. My late husband, Frederick, and I met him in Spain in 1960 before we came to Berkeley, where Dick came to teach and Frederick came to graduate school. Over the years we became part of the Herr parties and campus events centered around Spanish themes.

I may have been influential in bringing Dick into the Institute, but I think that he saw his membership as a gift to all of us! He was older

and prominent in Spanish circles. He had written books on Spain and had been knighted by the King of Spain.

Over the years most of our gatherings were late afternoon sherry at either house. Later, Dick married Valerie (in 1968); I was witness to their marriage at the Oakland City Hall. In the last several years, during Dick's years over ninety, we visited a bit more often. The Herrs continued to host their annual Epiphany party in early January.

I am honored to be Dick's long-standing friend. My most recent book is on that year living in Spain in 1959-60, which I dedicated to Dick. He knew that I was going to dedicate the book to him. "Stories from a Year in Spain, 1959-60" will be published soon—before the year ends! Here is the text I used from his book on Spain:

*Mountains and the sea have isolated Spain from the rest of Europe. Leaving the green plains and humid hills of France, the traveler who crosses the Pyrenees seems carried by magic to a faraway land of dazzling sun, clear dry air, and turquoise seas; of snow-crowned granite peaks, and gray rocky hills where sheep graze on fragrant herbs, partridges steal garbanzo beans, and bees gather exquisite honey; of silvery green oak and olive trees outlined against the ochres and crimsons of the earth. Today the traveler can still see why Louis XIV is supposed to have said that Africa began at the Pyrennes, and why Romantic authors set their tales in Spain. Even man seems different, torn between the past and the present. Primitive towns all but disappear into the hillsides whence came the stones to build their houses. Mules still pull Roman plows and peasants harvest grain with sickles, while more prosperous farmers drive tractors and run gasoline threshers. At intervals new geometric apartments rise abruptly out of the fields like fortified rings built to protect medieval cities from some unknown danger the traveler may bring. Ragpickers with donkey*



## MEMBER NEWS

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*carts collect the garbage from metropolises of a million people, and country priests in long black cassocks ride motor scooters to their scattered parishes. The clash of ages and cultures is that of present-day Spain itself.*

— Richard Herr, *An Historical Essay on Modern Spain*, 1974; 1971.

**Chris Webber** writes: “There’s a new hymnal out there for folk who like to sing—and for people who care about justice and peace. World Library Publications (a division of GIA Publications) has published my collection of over a hundred hymns titled *Songs of Justice, Peace, and Love: The Sharon Hymnal*. Set to music by contemporary composers, as well as to traditional and familiar tunes, the texts center on a wide range of subjects from Advent to Easter as well as hunger and homelessness.

In May **Joe C. Miller** gave his talk on women’s suffrage to the Canadian Women’s Club of San Francisco, “Wild Women Suffragists and their Reputation as Sex Radicals. “It was well received,” he writes. Joe has also developed a new presentation: “How Women’s Clubs Lost Their Moral Authority When Women Got the Vote.” He posits that during the heyday of American women’s clubs, 1890 to 1920, “whenever women’s clubs lobbied for the creation of parks, schools, libraries, or safe water supplies, people understood that they were doing it for the public good, whereas politicians and businessmen were often suspected of having selfish motives.” Joe intends to give the new talk to other groups. (He is among several speakers and performers listed on an interesting website: [NationalWomensHistoryAlliance.org/California/](http://NationalWomensHistoryAlliance.org/California/).) Joe concluded his report with his appreciation of the financial support (mini-grants) he has received from the Institute.

**Harvey Schwartz** has a new book coming out this fall entitled *Labor Under Siege: Big Bob McEllrath and the ILWU’s Fight for Organized Labor in an Anti-Union Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2022). Harvey Schwartz and his coauthor Ronald E. Magden have written compelling stories and found forceful voices which “capture a tenacious union in transition. Big Bob—six-foot-four Robert McEllrath’s waterfront handle—was heralded for his powerful speaking style, charisma, unifying vision, and negotiating prowess. President of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) for twelve eventful years, McEllrath retired in 2018 after nearly forty years as a union officer. More than just a telling of a storied career, *Labor under Siege* explores how the influential union persisted in an era when the US labor movement was under attack and seemingly in retreat.” (From the publisher’s flier describing the book.)

— *from page 2*

in a recent *New Yorker* interview: “I think it’s always more interesting to ask how a monument has shaped its society versus what sort of past it’s commemorating. Monuments are not how we learn about the past. Often, they erase the past. A Northern Civil War monument that shows only white soldiers, for example, is erasing the participation of Black soldiers.”

“[M]onuments get the privilege of preservation by being put in the category of art, and thus get to disseminate ideas even if we mostly all agree that those ideas no longer characterize the community. It doesn’t make sense to me that, just because it’s in bronze or marble, it gets to stay up as a loudspeaker.”

To respond to the San Francisco survey (by October 31): <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SFACMonumentsandMemorials>

— *Ann Harlow*

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of history, or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen?"

It appeared to Thoreau that as individual plants and animals came and went, some of them enduring under very adverse conditions, there must be some overall impulse towards continuity in nature, a nearly irresistible urge for survival, which he attributed to a mysterious force that he called "wildness." At Walden, for example, having cleared a small field of brambles (thorny vines & bushes) in order to plant beans, Thoreau found that tiny new brambles were constantly appearing among the sprouts he wanted to cultivate in tidy rows. Being Thoreau, of course, he cheered for the brambles in their competition with the beans, wildness preferred to artificial order, even if this would cost a little more effort on his part, or a little less for him to eat.

Gradually and more fundamentally, I think, Thoreau came to realize that the natural world was not hostile to him, or merely indifferent, but in some sense familiar. "I was so distinctly made aware of the presence of something kindred to me, even in scenes which we are accustomed to call wild and dreary. . . that I thought no place could ever be strange to me again."

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