

DESERT HARVEST

Newsletter of the Division for Late Medieval and Reformation Studies

The University of Arizona®

Vol. 5, No. 1

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

April 1997

From the Desk of the Director

As I write this column, the History Department is bracing itself for this week's academic program review, an external peer evaluation that takes place every five years—a glorious American initiative which the better European universities envy...but are slow to adopt. I have no doubt that the Division will score high marks for its 100% success rate in placing graduates and for its students' equally extraordinary 100% achievement in winning fellowships (primarily Fulbrights) for dissertation research in overseas archives and libraries.

Nevertheless, one sensitive—and sensible—critical issue is bound to come up, and if it is not broached by the committee, I will raise it: the time span needed to earn a Ph.D. degree in Late Medieval and Reformation History. On average, this takes seven years, some three years longer than needed to earn a comparable degree in U.S. History. Two explanations are obvious: The Division's program embraces and reunites the three, long-separated fields of Medieval, Renaissance, and Reformation studies, and for this it has won national acclaim and visibility. The greater obstacle confronting the newly enrolled graduate student, however, is the language barrier. In order to join the ranks of international scholarship—and it is with this very goal in mind that candidates are selected and trained—the young historian must be able to read Latin and at least two modern languages—usually French and German—with the ease of reading a newspaper! It is a malicious rumor that I insist on Dutch, but it is true that this list should be extended to include the early vernacular variants with their own vocabulary and irregular spelling.

A third explanation probes deeper. Meeting with high school teachers in an extended seminar session last year, I was deeply impressed by the daily challenges they face to raise their students beyond the—extensively tested—'three Rs' to gain an appreciation for the past and discover the need to decode its heritage. This is no newsflash for any of you, but it dawned on me all too slowly that we can no longer expect high schools to instill a sense of history and a cultural curiosity that are not stimulated in the home. Our teachers accomplish a great deal under extremely difficult—at times even adverse—circumstances; we at the university should be ready, and indeed eager, to take up the slack. Initially, I recruited only students with thorough language training but soon came to realize that this approach disqualified many highly gifted, deserving candidates. Necessarily, they need extra years in the 'language laboratory' before they are ready to open the sources of the past and share their findings with the next generation of college students.

Our eminent Classics Department has been an effective and enthusiastic ally, and my new Tuesday morning seminar dedicated to a common reading of key documents is starting to bear fruit in bridging that crucial leap from grammar to comprehension.

There is no question in my mind, however, that the most significant help has come from you, the Division's supporters. Through your generous contributions you have extended the University's four year funding limit for graduate students to provide the additional, critical three years of growth to ensure that we produce scholars who will be able to let the past speak to the present.

With a sense of true gratitude,
Cordially yours,

Herb A. Oberman

Spanning the Globe: Division Members Report from Abroad

John Frymire: Tübingen, Germany

Unlike many American doctoral candidates who lose several of their first research months in Europe learning the languages and obtaining all the required rubber stamps on their papers, I arrived with the confidence of a veteran. I had, after all, already studied in

Desert Harvest:
The Annual Newsletter of the
Division for Late Medieval
and Reformation Studies

Social Sciences Rm. 120
University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ 85721
(520) 621-1284

Director:
Prof. Dr. Heiko A. Oberman

Administrative Associate:
Luise Betterton

Board of Advisors:
Stanley Feldman, Chair
Hermann Bleibtreu
Richard Duffield
Morris Martin
Nancy O'Neill
George Rosenberg
Bazy Tankersley

Fund-Raising Committee:
Richard Duffield, Chair
Hermann Bleibtreu

"Desert Harvest" Editors:
Michael Bruening
Derek Halvorson
Atilla Vékony

Germany for several years, and, as promised in my Fulbright application, I could jump right into my work. I forgot a few of the details, I suppose, like marriage, a son, and my wife Christina, who is completing her Masters degree in genetics here at the University of Tübingen. In fact, my arrival in May was greeted not by expectant professors and archivists, but by the duties of child care, as Christina was enrolled in an intensive course from May until the end of August. After a hectic schedule in Tucson, I finally had time to enjoy my son Augustin and to learn about Germany from the perspective of 'male primary care-giver'—a term which, in this country at least, smacks oxymoronic. To my shock, as I daily carted my son about town in his *Kinderwagon*, I strolled behind him as male primary care-giver. Several times a week, while jockeying for position at the bakery counter (an epic battle, I assure you), I had to answer, "No, my wife is not sick," or "No, I'm not on vacation." And this is a 'progressive' university town! Anyway, I am proud to report that my son and I enjoyed ourselves tremendously, and that—despite periodic abdominal discomfort—the family survived my cooking. Would that I could write as smugly about the remnants of what was once the laundry...

I was equally unprepared for my next venture: renovating our new apartment in September. As an historian, I am continually confronted by the past as a culture which, especially when it seems most familiar, can be astonishingly different from our own. This lesson was more than reinforced during four weeks of twice-daily visits to Baumarkt, the German equivalent of Home Depot. And I thought the vocabulary of sixteenth-century theology was difficult! As luck would have it, many Germans take their vacations in September, and this made the gathering of building materials only slightly easier than it must have been in the former Eastern Block. "Excuse me, please, do you have...(hastily thumbing through my dictionary)...sandpaper?" Only to hear, "Normally yes, but the distributor is on vacation. Try again in two weeks." Had anyone, I wondered, thought to order twice the normal amount *before* his vacation? There I was, about to hand the carpet salesman hundreds of dollars, when he mused, "Delivery? Sure, but I don't know when. The delivery man has been overworked, and he *really* needs a vacation." I got smarter, and like every decidedly unhandy father laboring at home improvement, I suffered temporary insanity. It became a simple matter of running into carpet stores, waving my money in the air, and promising immediate cash payment to the first salesperson who could guarantee delivery within a week. By the fifth store, I'd succeeded in buying our carpet. Since then, it has been pointed

out by loved ones that I was perhaps less successful in my selection of color and pattern. I prefer a more optimistic interpretation: I arranged for delivery during the month of September in Germany. In a recently completed application to extend my research fellowship, one need not ask what I wrote under the question, "What have you done that displays successful integration into the foreign culture?" Admittedly, I filled in that blank knowing no one from the Fulbright Commission would actually *see* what was delivered. To my knowledge, no aspiring grantee has ever been rejected on the grounds of bad taste.

So it was that, after learning more about certain aspects of German culture than I should have hoped, I got down to my research when my grant began in late September. I have been studying conflicts of honor and vengeance in the Late Medieval and Reformation city, with a view to the changes these concepts underwent in the wake of the praxis and ideology of reform. Our apartment is situated in Holzgerlingen, a small town in the Schönbuch forest that lies between Stuttgart and Tübingen. Thus, I am within easy commuting distance of the manuscripts in the Hauptstaatsarchiv and the early printed sources in the Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen.

Sixteenth-century Germans, I have discovered, were litigious, and practically everything was regulated in their cities: not just moral behavior and taxes, but also clothing, language, and the amount of flour required in the baker's loaf. Citizens acted within a strictly defined framework of honor in which not only deeds as blatant as adultery were punished, but slanderous words as well. In fact, the various possibilities one had to offend another's honor were as broad as the punishments meted out: monetary fines, days of humiliation (e.g., walking around town for an afternoon with a grotesque 'shame mask' on your head), even castration.

As my project combines legal, theological, and literary history, it is a pleasure to report that those traditionally stereotyped cold German professors have been most warm and receptive to my questions. For that I may thank my senior colleagues in Tucson, whose previous doctoral research in Tübingen helped establish our program in the mind of the research community here.

All things considered, and despite our carpet, we are all healthy and busy with the business of family life and research. Without a doubt, I miss Professor Oberman's weekly seminars in Tucson, for nothing over here matches that level of intensity and critique. We know, however, that neither the intellectual stimulation nor the graciousness of so many of the Division's supporters will have vanished from

Appointments of Division Graduates

Robert Bast

University of Tennessee, History
Department

Curtis Bostick

Southern Utah University, History
Department

Andrew Gow

University of Alberta, Edmonton,
History Department

Brad Gregory

Stanford University, History
Department

Sigrun Haude

University of Cincinnati, History
Department

Marjory Lange

Viterbo College, La Crosse,
Wisconsin, English Department:
History and Literature of the
Renaissance

Eric Saak

University of Groningen, The
Netherlands, Senior Fellow, Federal
Research Institute for Medieval
Studies

Jeff Tyler

Hope College, Michigan, Department
of Religion

. . .

Darleen Pryds (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin at Madison)

A two-year member of the Division,
Darleen is now teaching in the Center
for Interdisciplinary Studies at
Virginia Tech.

the desert when we return. Until then, greetings from Holzgerlingen, and God's blessing to all.

Jonathan Reid: Paris, France

I wish I were Art Buchwald. Now there is a guy who could write an entertaining column from Paris. Turning his experiences into laughs, I do not think he ever lacked for fat cigars either. Perhaps my envy for this 'anti-historian' (who writes about the present, distorts the truth, and is not very serious!) is misguided. However, this desire is not a sign of a lack of seriousness; precisely the opposite. I remember fondly having many a good belly laugh during Professor Oberman's seminars. For months here, this is what I missed most about the States. I kept bemoaning to myself, "Paris is not a funny place."

This may seem a pitifully insignificant, or grossly inappropriate, observation to report after a year of living abroad for the purpose of researching a history thesis. However, from where I sit, this reaction is an index to what I have experienced and learned along the way. Unlike the States, it seemed to me that French people hardly talk, laugh, or crack jokes in public. When I hear those strange sounds on the subway, I turn my head curiously with the rest of the French to discover that it is—you guessed it—a bunch of tourists. For all their other good qualities, the French hardly seemed more boisterous in private. At such moments, my thoughts sometimes drifted to a conversation ice-breaker suggested by Dave Berry (Buchwald's hugely successful competition) upon meeting a French person: "Boy, you guys really took it in the shorts in W.W.II, didn't you?"

But, that would be in grossly bad taste. (No, I have never used this little gem.) In fact, it epitomizes what many French people consider to be Americans' bad qualities: immature, a little too proud of their self-anointed 'savior of the world' personas, crass in their humor, etc... My point is that humor, even more than a matter of taste or intent—to laugh with or at someone—is largely cultural. The humorous understatement, exaggeration, or contradiction

does not stand out unless one already understands the course of normal life. Many people say that song lyrics and jokes are the hardest things to understand in a foreign language and its culture. If you master them, it is a mark of cultural fluency.

In a similar vein, Professor Oberman has said that historians should be 'bilingual': creative translators for modern folk of an otherwise misunderstood past. During this last year, Laura and I have, we hope, been becoming more culturally fluent in France. For my part, I find that our daily adventures as foreigners have enriched my approach to history. Simply negotiating French social space has provided lessons about the difficulty in and means of achieving those translator's skills.

We have had the legendary, annoying encounters with rude French shop owners, bank tellers, and bureaucrats. In striking contrast, we have admired their civility in social situations and have struggled to master the etiquette of French *politesse* without causing insult: *Tu* or *vous*? Is it a handshake or two kisses (or three or four) when meeting acquaintances, colleagues, and friends? Do you plant the lips on the cheek or just make that lip-smacking sound in their ears? Finally, we have marveled at the rich quality of French social life (and their willingness to pay for it in elevated taxes, high prices, and seemingly lower levels of individual freedom): the graces of their meal times, their strong family life, the generous governmental support for private community groups, and their 'cradle to the grave' social system.

Over time our puzzled wonderment at these things has turned to understanding. By reflecting on our experiences, asking questions, and trying new approaches to avoid previous *faux pas*, we have come to see more clearly the reasons behind French behavior and institutions (their bureaucracy excluded). And of course, the French have their sense of humor. We have enjoyed some good laughs, and if we have missed many a joke more, that is only because we are not yet fluent in French culture.

So too in my research, I feel that I have made steady progress towards that elusive goal of becoming a 'bilingual' historian. As the

essential first step, I have had a thrilling year collecting the core evidence for my thesis, most importantly, scores of unedited letters. I now have data detailing the career of an influential court faction, centered around King Francis I's sister, Marguerite of Navarre. In essence, this group was spiritually engaged with the religious ideas of Luther, among others, and actively embroiled in the political events of that 'Machiavellian' age. They attempted to integrate a peaceful religious renewal in France while pursuing Francis I's ambitious royal agenda at home and abroad. Ultimately, they did not succeed.

As I turn to write about my findings, I will have to suggest how and why they failed. This is where difficult interpretations of their political systems, social structures, cultural values, and religious practices and beliefs will matter. After more than a year struggling with those issues in my daily existence and in my historical sources, I feel much more confident about proposing my conclusions.

Fittingly, I have taken great joy in coming to see and appreciate the substantial role played by humor in those sixteenth-century struggles. In court circles, Marguerite of Navarre confronted the loathed Chancellor Duprat with his literary double, an evil priest of the same

name in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, asking him damningly if he was any relation. On another occasion, she joked with an English ambassador that her brother did not sleep with his second wife because "she is too hot in bed, and wanteth too much to be embraced." Unloved Eleanor, sister of Emperor Charles V, was also the symbolic head of Marguerite's rivals, the pro-imperial faction.

This was the era of the immensely popular satirist, Rabelais. He plied his 'Gargantuan' wit, in a cause allied to Marguerite's, against 'obscurantist' theologians in Paris and overtaxing reformers in Geneva. Marguerite wrote *comédies* and farces as well. In turn, she was the subject of venomous plays by Parisian students. If I had not fully realized the importance of such humor before, then I just was not getting the joke. The recent French film *Ridicule*, albeit for a later period, brilliantly shows how such duels of wits were often skirmishes in the high-stakes struggle to influence court and society.

So, as I pursue my career in history, I hope it is not too flippant to wish among my other ardent professional and high-minded goals, to make those long-silenced merry voices intelligible. If we can comprehend their humor, then we are bound to have understood them.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

From Lake Geneva and the San Francisco Bay to the Rillito River Francis Higman and John Dillenberger Visit Tucson

As in the past, the Division was proud to welcome internationally renowned scholars to Tucson again this year. Professor Francis Higman from the University of Geneva visited in October to give a lecture and meet with Division students at the Thursday night seminar, and Professor John Dillenberger from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley delivered the Annual Town and Gown Lecture in February.

Dr. Higman is the director of the *Institut d'Histoire de la Réformation* at the University of Geneva and one of the world's foremost experts on John Calvin and early modern

printing. His most recent contribution to the world of Reformation scholarship was last year's publication of *Piety and the People, Religious Printing in French, 1511-1551*, an invaluable resource for the study of printing and religion—both Protestant and Catholic—in the Francophone areas of Europe.

Higman delivered a lecture co-sponsored by the Division, the History Department, and the Department of French and Italian, entitled *Cultural Characteristics of Early Modern Europe*, in which he focused on the concept of early modernity, tracing our concepts of 'modernity' back to the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries.

On the following evening, we were delighted to welcome Higman to the Thursday night seminar, at which time he fielded questions from Division students about his scholarship. The most fruitful and revealing



Francis Higman attends the Thursday night seminar, seated next to Professor Oberman.

discussions revolved around his work on John Calvin's writing style and the spread of Protestantism in France. Higman has discovered that John Calvin standardized the French prose style that continues to be written today—much like Martin Luther did for German with his *Deutsche Bibel*. Calvin abandoned Latin's long, complex sentence structures in favor of a simpler, more succinct French style that was easier to read and comprehend. Calvin's new vernacular together with daring printers and merchants who produced and sold illegal pocket-sized Protestant works helped the Reformed faith to spread throughout France.

John Dillenberger, our Town and Gown lecturer, is professor emeritus at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Although he started his academic career examining Luther and the Reformation, more recently he has focused on art history. He effectively employed his unique combination of specialties in his lecture, *Painters as Prophets: Unexpected Visions of Heaven and Earth*.

Audience members were treated to Dillenberger's commentary on a wide array of paintings by artists from Michelangelo to Andy Warhol. Dillenberger pointed out the religious and theological meanings conveyed by the paintings, which are not always picked up by the untrained eye. Some surprises included finding Satan in Michelangelo's famous Sistine Chapel

depiction of God creating, viewing modern variants of DaVinci's *Last Supper*, each with its own message, and learning of Andy Warhol's strong religious convictions.

We are indeed fortunate to be able to bring such noted scholars to Tucson. Their visits never fail to provide fresh perspectives on the past—and the present.

New Students and Old

The academic year 1996/97 was an exciting one, bringing with it several changes in the composition of the Division. The year started off with a bang, ushering in, count 'em, FIVE new students:

- **Derek Halvorson**, one of your humble editors, comes to us from Covenant College and a brief stint in that fairytale land that we often hear about called 'the real world', where he had a real job trading foreign currencies and actually made money. Casting aside his riches, Derek comes to the Division hoping to work on monasticism during the Reformation period. Embarking on yet another daring enterprise this year, Derek got engaged recently; we wish him luck in both new endeavors.
- **Nicole Kuropka** hopped on a plane across the Atlantic in August to leave her native Wuppertal, Germany, and come to Arizona. Evidently, she got tired of being around all those archives that we try so hard to get grants to visit. Nicole is working on Philip Melancthon's understanding of the Scriptures.
- **Jerry Pierce** left the University of Oregon, where he received both his B.A. and M.A., to come to Tucson last fall. Jerry is interested in Satan—we hope for strictly academic purposes.
- **Joel Van Amberg** attended Bowdoin College as an undergraduate and received his M.A. in church history at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary. He moved here last summer with his wife Deirdre, and word has it that there's a little Van Amberg on the way. Joel intends to continue the great Reformation history tradition of focusing on Martin Luther.
- **Atilla Vékony**, another of your editors, comes to us all the way from Makó, Hungary, although he is quite acclimated to the United States, having attended Trinity Christian College as an undergraduate. Atilla has survived the "Hun" jokes and is interested in the much-neglected study of the Reformation in Central Europe.

As for the members of the Old Guard, **John Frymire** left us at the end of last spring to reap the benefits of his Fulbright Scholarship in Tübingen, Germany (see his article, p. 2). Overseas for his second year, **Jonathan Reid** continues to do his research in Paris (see his article, p. 4). We're beginning to wonder if he'll ever return. Let's see, Paris or Tucson? *Café au lait* on the *Champs d'Elysées* or Slurpees on Speedway and Park? You make the call. **Mike Milway** continues to work on his dissertation in Toronto, which he plans to defend at the end of this month.

Here in Tucson, **Pete Dykema** and **Scott Manetsch** are putting the final touches on their dissertations. Pete's work examines the roles and expectations of parish priests in Late Medieval and Reformation Germany. Scott is taking a long, hard look at Théodore de Bèze, Calvin's successor in Geneva. Of course, along with the end of one's graduate school career comes the need to test the job market, which they are also busy doing. Good luck on both counts, guys; we don't want you hanging around here longer than you have to.

Mike Bruening, your editor for the past three installments of the *Desert Harvest*, is plugging along with his work on Pierre Viret, one of Calvin's close associates, and is looking forward to finishing his course work this semester and passing (*Deo volente*) his comprehensive exams next fall.

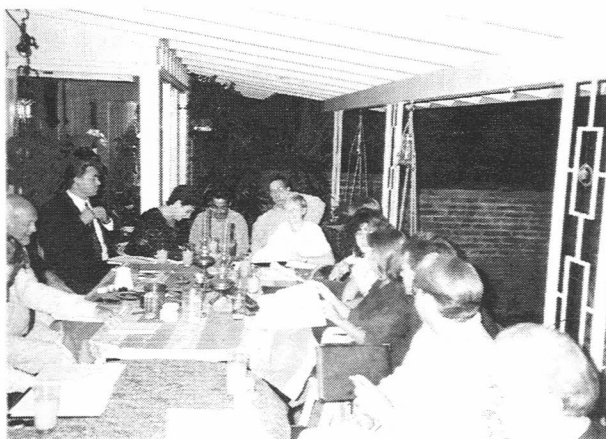
Kudos to **Robert Christman** who just passed the oral exam for his Masters degree. After he unwinds a bit with the requisite post-exam celebrations, he plans to continue his work on the legacy of the forged *Donation of Constantine*, which claimed to give the pope secular dominion over Western Europe.

Last but not least, **Cathy Pomerleau** continues to examine the transformation of the 'unchaste cleric' from literary motif to Reformation propaganda. Pursuing this theme, she won the prize for best medieval/early modern paper for the second time at the annual history department conference this spring for her contribution, "Paths of Medieval Sexuality: Same-Gender Behaviors and Societal Views in Penitentials." Congratulations, Cathy, and keep digging up that great dirt on those naughty priests.

As for our fearless leader, **Professor Oberman** took time out from his busy schedule to go to the Netherlands in September to receive

the prestigious Heineken Prize for Historical Scholarship. Although the prize carried with it a substantial monetary award, we were a little disappointed that a lifetime supply of the beer with the same name was not granted for purposes of sustaining his graduate students.

In addition to his unflinching work with a larger-than-usual cast of graduate students, Professor Oberman battled a poor sound system in the Social Sciences auditorium to teach History 101, Western Civilization, to approximately 450 undergraduates. Unfortunately, he was not as successful fighting the university's computer system when it accidentally canceled his class on Medieval Intellectual History.



Students gather around the seminar table (L to R: Jerry Pierce, Deborah Kaye, Aurelio Espinosa, Pete Dykema, Cathy Pomerleau).

The *Thursday Night Seminar* continues to delve into the intricacies of Late Medieval and Reformation History. In the fall, we focused on the Catholic Reformation, with an emphasis on the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. This spring we are looking at Martin Luther, particularly his early works and his writings on marriage. In addition to the members of the Division, we have benefited from the insights of department head Helen Nader's students, **Cristian Berco**, **Michael Crawford**, and **Aurelio Espinosa**, as well as non-degree students **Victoria Speder** and **Scott Taylor**.

As you can tell, the Division is still going strong. With some of the older, more experienced students preparing to graduate, the new students have stepped in with eager minds and fresh perspectives that will preserve the Division's dynamic association of students for years to come.