

The Interpreter

Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries

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★ Remember September 11, 2001 ★

arv@colorado.edu

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Our Mission

In the Spring of 2000, the Archives continued the original efforts of Captain Roger Pineau and William Hudson, and the Archives first attempts in 1992, to gather the papers, letters, photographs, and records of graduates of the US Navy Japanese/Oriental Language School, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1942-1946. We assemble these papers in recognition of the contributions made by JLS/OLS instructors and graduates to the War effort in the Pacific and the Cold War, to the creation of East Asian language programs across the country, and to the development of Japanese-American cultural reconciliation programs after World War II.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN MARINES

Dear Aubrey [Farb]:

Another bit of advice from the old hand couriers was to carry some US\$ to buy local currencies from the private "entrepreneurs" who usually approached foreigners and offered a better exchange rate than the official one at banks and hotels. This gave one a good deal of extra walking-around money while travelling.

I made another trip to Madrid, scheduled from there to Tangier via Seville. On this trip I had some big pup tent sized bags containing packages and boxes. I was loaded into a compartment with my stuff and set off for Spain. At this time the French and the Spanish were having some sort of economic or diplomatic tiff and the border had been closed. Our Paris train arrived at Hendaye on the French side and stopped. We were told that a Spanish train would eventually come to Irun on the Spanish side to pick us up. Everyone stayed on the train

since guards would not allow anyone to cross the border. After some arguing, and waving my diplomatic passport and credentials, I was allowed to unload my stuff and engage a cart to trundle it across the line. Getting my luggage aboard the Spanish train during the hustle of the general re-boarding might have been difficult. My cart-puller got me a chair, for a price, and some delicious oranges, my lunch for the day as I read a book. As long as I have a book I don't mind waiting. The Spanish train pulled up a couple of hours later with a bevy of officials who set up to examine everyone's documentation. I told the official that I was not staying in Madrid, but was scheduled to go on to Tangier, via Seville. In that case, he said, I would have to check in with his office in Madrid before travelling on.

When we got to Madrid I was relieved of my baggage by an Embassy vehicle, and took a taxi to the address I had been given. I was conducted into the office of a different official than the one who had "invited" me. He was in a large private room, wearing a well-tailored uniform, and was seated behind a huge shiny desk. He questioned me about my reason for going to Seville. I told him that Seville was only a transfer point and I had no business there. He accepted this and said I was free to go. Our Embassy people said they were not sure why this had happened but it may have reflected Spanish concerns about smuggling.

The next morning I boarded a Junkers JU-52, the workhorse transport of the Luftwaffe during the war, now being used in civil aviation passenger service. The plane's exterior skin was corrugated metal and the plane had three engines. The JU-52 was also built in Spain during the wartime Hitler-Franco rapprochement. The plane carried about 30 passengers as I recall. We flew across the Mediterranean and landed at Tetuan, since Tangier at that

time did not have an airfield big enough for the JU-52. From there, those of us who wanted to go on to Tangier flew in on a smaller plane. Tangier at this time was an International Zone, which was equivalent to an extraterritorial enclave. This had been established in 1923 by the European powers who distrusted the Sultans nominally in charge of the area. In 1956 the Zone status was cancelled and control ceded to Morocco.

*Semper Fi
Glenn Nelson
JLS 1944*

Norton Curtis, Architect S.J. Native Helped Crack Russian Codes

Norton "Bud" Curtis, OLS 1944 (Russian), a prominent local architect and native of San Jose, died July 3, 2008, at his home in Willow Glen. He was 87.

His notable architectural projects included expansion of the Civic Auditorium, the San Jose City Library on San Carlos Street, the San Jose Police and Communication Center on First Street, and several residence halls at Santa Clara University.

Mr. Curtis' grandparents came to San Jose from a small village in Norton, England, in the 1880s. His grandfather, Fredrick Albert Curtis, was one of the early builders in San Jose, working on the first City Library on Market Street and the Winchester Mystery House.

Mr. Curtis was born on March 21, 1921, and raised in San Jose. The only child of Ernest Norton Curtis and Lottie B. Curtis, he attended Lowell Elementary School and graduated from San Jose High School in 1939. He attended San Jose State University for two years, then transferred to the University of California-Berkeley, earning a journalism degree from Cal in 1943.

His father, Ernest Curtis, was a partner in the pioneering architecture firm Binder and

Curtis. The firm played a prominent role in the development of San Jose, working on the YMCA, the Willow Glen Theater, the Civic Auditorium and San Jose Water Company.

As World War II erupted, Mr. Curtis entered the Navy, which sent him off to Harvard University for Russian language school. He also attended the US Navy Oriental Language School in Russian at the University of Colorado from 1943 to 1944. Mr. Curtis met his future wife, Joanna, while in Boston; she was a student at Radcliffe. They married in 1944.

While still in the Russian Language School, Mr. Curtis was one of 30 men selected for a top-secret program that later became the CIA. The group, which called themselves the "Dirty 30," was trained to break Russian codes. He lived in Washington, D.C., for a few years, and was discharged from active duty in March 1946.

Mr. Curtis returned to San Jose with Joanna and Ernest, their first child. Though he had no architecture experience, he needed a job and went to work for Binder & Curtis, his father's firm.

But designing and building must have been in his blood. He completed an architect degree, and in 1956, when his father died, he took over the family business.

Ernest Curtis, his oldest son, says his Dad never talked much about his work. He rarely mentioned his life as an elite code cracker in World War II or his architectural projects.

But he was a real San Jose man. "He was a San Jose boy his entire life," Ernest Curtis said. "His father's office was in a brick building right across San Carlos from Original Joe's, and that was his favorite restaurant."

Ernest Curtis said that Original Joe's, which is an institution among San Jose's old guard, was his father's single favorite spot in the city.

Mr. Curtis retired in 1991 at the age of 70. He loved sailing, playing tennis at the San Jose Swim and Racquet Club in Willow Glen, and spending time at his second home at La Selva Beach near Santa Cruz. In recent years, he has cared for his wife Joanna, who has Alzheimer's disease.

His family held a private memorial service at Oak Hill Cemetery, where three generations of the Curtis clan are buried.

He was survived by: son Ernest N. Curtis and wife Lynn of Tustin; daughter Janet R. (Curtis) Applegarth and husband Gary of El Dorado Hills; son Thomas B. Curtis of Folsom. Five grandchildren: Julia Jaeger, Alison Bowen, Jill Ahrens, Julie Jackson, Brian Applegarth and 6 great-grandchildren.

Dana Hull
[San Jose] Mercury News
07/29/2008
& David M. Hays
Editor & Archivist

[Ed. Note: Stephen Budiansky's *Battle of Wits* (2000) demonstrates how the attack on Soviet ciphers grew out of the decryption of imperial Japanese codes.]

ROEGGE, FRANK JLS 1943

ROEGGE -- Frank, 88, of Madison, CT, passed away March 30, 2008. Frank is survived by loving wife of nearly 50 years, Mary (Connors) Roegge, and children: John Roegge of Pawling, NY and William Roegge and his wife Diana of Branford, CT, four grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. Frank received his B.A. from Northwestern University and his J.D. from University of Michigan Law School, in 1947. Mr. Roegge attended the US Navy Japanese Language School at the University of Colorado from 1942 to 1943. He served as a Navy Japanese Language Officer stationed in Hawaii during World War II. He was assigned to JICPOA for a few months, before he and Bill Amos were interviewed and reassigned to FRUPAC [see *Issues* #78 and #79]. He retired from the USNR as a Lt. Commander. From 1951 to 1982, Frank worked for

Metropolitan Life Insurance Company becoming Vice-President and Associate General Counsel. He was a long-time director of Apple Bank for Savings in New York and co-editor of Practicing Law Institute books on real estate. The funeral service was private at Swan Funeral Home, Madison, CT.

New York Times
April 20, 2008
& David M. Hays
Archivist & Editor

G. William Skinner: A Personal Remembrance

I've been waiting to write this post as I just wasn't sure how to say what I wanted to say. Sadly, Professor G. William Skinner passed away on October 26, 2008.

There were students who knew Professor Skinner better than I did, his teaching career spanned over half a century, but I had the privilege to be a student in the last few seminars taught by this giant in the field of Chinese history and anthropology. Giant. It's a word that gets thrown around a lot when talking of the great figures in a particular field, but in the case of Professor Skinner one wonders if the word is a bit limiting.

Bill Skinner (literally) changed the way we look at China. Daniel Little at The China Beat has a solid and comprehensive review of Professor Skinner's many and lasting scholarly contributions which I won't repeat here. Suffice to say, Professor Skinner's work on marketing systems and urban hierarchies provided historians with a new approach to thinking about China in terms of spatial relationships. His research into the economic orientation of China's macroregions redrew the map (how many of us will ever be able to say that?) and created new ways of organizing data and research beyond the political boundaries drawn by the state.

I met Professor Skinner during my first year at graduate school. My colleague, the only other China history graduate student on campus at the time, and who had a habit of choosing our classes for us, informed me

we would be taking Professor Skinner's class in the spring. It was a seminar dealing with urban systems and economic hierarchies comparing France and China. I was not a social scientist. I became a historian, in part, because like Gerry Ford I was under the impression there would be no math. By the end of the semester, I had finished a seminar paper arguing contemporary China's principal inequality was between rural/urban not coastal/interior using statistics of income, consumer goods ownership, and educational access. Yeah, I know...not exactly "map changing," but Professor Skinner was good-hearted enough to work with me in corralling the numbers and guiding my clumsy attempts to organize those numbers spatially.

In the years to come, I would have more seminars with Professor Skinner, and they were the most challenging classes I have ever taken. His mind was oceanic in depth and breadth. There was never anything like a casual conversation with the man. Oh...he was casual: his calm, languid personality, his tall and lean frame (like some American novelist's idea of a gentleman farmer). But it was hard for me to stay calm. I admit it: I get starstruck easily. It took me two years to get over it. Even then, having a 'casual' conversation with Professor Skinner was like having a 'casual' game of tennis with Roger Federer. You waited for the serve, tried to make contact, and hoped that during your return you didn't accidentally hit yourself in the head with the racket.

Don't get me wrong: he was a kind man, a brilliant scholar, a (mostly) patient teacher.* And, I suppose like most of his students, my own career was certainly changed for having been in his class. Coming out of a humanities background, I suffered from the prejudice of my own incompetence when it came to using social science methodology in research. Professor Skinner cured that unfortunate blight. That's not to say I have any particular brilliance at it, and certainly not

when compared to Professor Skinner, but due to his influence I've tried to incorporate a more rigorous empiricism in my research and writing and it's made me a better researcher and scholar.

As a teacher, he was demanding (his own work ethic was legendary), and wise, and occasionally irascible, but he always brought out the best in his seminars. I've been exceedingly fortunate to have the career I do and the teachers I have had, but to have been Professor Skinner's student was truly one of the great honors in my life. He was a great man, and he will be dearly missed.

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*Let me go on the record now: Any impatience Professor Skinner ever showed in class in my general direction was due, entirely and absolutely, to my own thick headedness.

<http://granitestudio.org/2008/11/18/g-william-skinner/#comment-8979>
November 18th, 2008

Japanese American Redress Activist Tsuyako 'Sox' Kitashima Dies

Final Battles

With much of redress behind her, Kitashima turned her passions to other issues in recent years.

She brought attention to pedestrian safety measures in San Francisco's Japantown "particularly for seniors crossing the busy Geary Boulevard" and was an outspoken advocate for senior recreation in the attempt to save the Japantown Bowl, which has since closed.

And, consistent with her calls for justice, she also advocated for redress for victims of Japanese military atrocities, serving as a steering committee member of the Rape of Nanking Redress Coalition (RNRC) and encouraging support from other Japanese Americans.

"I distinctly remembered how she moved everyone in the room when she shed tears for the victims of Nanjing as she spoke about justice and the need to acknowledge Japan's war crimes," said retired San Francisco Superior Court Judge

Lillian Sing, who served as founding co-chair of the RNRC along with the late human rights activist Dr. Clifford Uyeda.

"She was always a fighter for the underdog and was never afraid to do the right thing," Sing added.

Devoted Mother

Son Alan Kitashima last saw his mother the day before she passed away.

"On Wednesday, she looked real good," he said. "I was surprised It was her time to go."

While many may know the public persona of Sox the captivating activist, her son painted a picture of a devoted mother.

Every year while he was in grammar school, his mother would visit his class with four to five dozen cupcakes for his birthday party.

"Everyone wanted to be in my class," Alan reflected.

As a den mother for his Boy Scout troop, she would cook breakfast, lunch and dinner for troop leaders at the Camp Royneh campgrounds.

Later, while Alan was playing in a Nikkei softball league, his mother would come every week, make lunch for the whole team, and even give instruction to the team from the stands.

He remembered that his mother loved the San Francisco 49ers football team, and possessed a "real good" singing voice.

Her husband Tom passed away on April 4, 1975, which really hit her hard, son Alan said.

"When my dad was alive, they were inseparable, joined at the hip," he said.

She found similar joy when grandson Aaron was born in 1983. The arrival of Aaron "kept her going," said Alan Kitashima, who noted that his son became an Asian American studies major at San Francisco State University after being inspired by his grandmother.

While confined to the care home, unable to walk, and suffering from various ailments such as the onset of dementia and diabetes, Kitashima looked forward to Sunday visits from her best friend, Mako Nishimura.

Kitashima was well-prepared for her death, son Alan said, even putting together an envelope in 1994 to be opened only upon her demise. In it, details of her memorial service, including a thank-you note to be read at the service.

The Power of One

Those whose lives she touched remember Kitashima fondly.

"Sox has been the driving force behind the Redress Movement, an inspiration to women, a role model for our daughters, and a true San Francisco treasure," said House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) in a comment on Kitashima's biography.

"As a friend, I'll remember her distinctive laugh, her generous heart and her signature closing line, "I love you all,"" said Hayashino.

"Sox was a great symbol with her great voice and hair and was one of the most recognized Japanese Americans across the country," added Okamoto.

"Since camp days, Sox, as block manager, has always been involved helping people to better their lives," said Tonai of the National Japanese American Historical Society. "She instinctively saw that through her direct efforts, things got done. She never boasted of her deeds, she'd always start off with "we."

Tonai said Kitashima will be remembered for her "dogged persistence" and "smart networking" that "made things happen."

"My admiration for Sox's integrity and strength of character came easily," wrote Joy K. Morimoto in the introduction to Kitashima's biography. "She has absolutely no facades. What you see is what you get."

Morimoto called the local and national attention that Kitashima garnered "from the media, the federal government, community organizations and others" as "well deserved."

"Sox is a role model for us all, exemplifying the power of one person to impact the lives of so many for the better," Morimoto stated in Kitashima's biography. "She is an extraordinarily ordinary woman graced with enormous

compassion and generosity. Her transformation into a grass-roots community activist has been nothing short of inspirational."

"Let us keep her in our hearts," encouraged Hayashino. "Whether it's at Sansei Live! or at the JCCCNC annual dinner, think of Sox. As we commemorate the Day of Remembrance, think of Sox. And, when you grab a cup of coffee at Benkyodo or May's Coffee Shop, think of Sox."

"Her spirit will be found all around us in Japantown," Hayashino said.

Kitashima was preceded in death by her husband Tom. She was the loving sister to the late Nobuko, Lillian, Masao and Hisao. She is survived by her son Alan (Sylvia), grandson Aaron, and her brother James (Boe). She was also the aunt to many nieces and nephews. (end)

Kenji G. Taguma
Nichi Bei Times
January 12, 2006

John Boles McCubbin JLS 1944, (1923-2008)

John Boles McCubbin, a member of the "Greatest Generation" and retired Wall Street lawyer, died on December 20, 2008 in Wilmington, Delaware.

He was born April 27, 1923, the son of Dr. James Burlington McCubbin and Lois Laine (nee McIntire) McCubbin of Fulton, Missouri. After attending Westminster College in Fulton for two years, he transferred to the University of Southern California from which he graduated *magna cum laude* in July 1943 whereupon he entered the US Navy. After intensive training at the US Navy Japanese Language School at the University of Colorado in Boulder, he began his naval duties on Okinawa where he was assigned to a unit which followed the 6th Marines as they advanced down the east side of Okinawa. Their mission was to explore the caves for hidden Japanese, examine documents and conduct interrogations. After Okinawa was secured, he flew to Manila in August to prepare for the invasion of the Japanese mainland and to proceed by ship to Japan. He arrived in Tokyo

Bay the day before the Japanese surrender. He was assigned to General MacArthur's Headquarters for telecommunications duties until July 1946 when he returned to the United States.

Before entering Columbia Law School in New York City, he worked at the Bank of America in San Francisco and for Standard Vacuum Oil Company in China as a sales engineer. In 1953, he was graduated from Columbia Law School as a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar and began his employment with Thatcher, Profitt, Prizer, Crawley & Wood and became the first member of his law school class to be made a law partner. He was a member of Idia House, Tuxedo Club, Skytop Club, and Port Royal Plantation Golf Club. He retired in 1984 to return to Japan to resume his language studies. For over a year he studied at the Japanese Language School in Shibuya, travelled and even climbed Mt. Fuji.

Upon his return to the United States from Japan, he assisted the landowners of Port Royal Plantation in the bankruptcy which involved a large portion of Hilton Head Island, including Sea Pines Plantation, by working with Port Royal's Charleston attorneys. A 26-acre Christmas tree and cattle farm in Mars Hill, NC was his project for seven years before returning to Hilton Head Island and landowner activities and golf. In 1998 he moved to Sarasota, FL where he lived until 2007 when he moved to Wilmington, DE to be nearer his family.

In 1954, he married Esther Wilbur who survives with his sons, John Peter of Los Angeles, CA; Paul Duncan of Forest Hills, NY; Dr. Donald Richard of Silver Spring, MD; and grandson John Peter, Jr.

Sent by Family

[Ed. Note: John McCubbin had been a generous and active contributor to the USN JLS/OLS Archival Project. See his comments in issues #62A,, #72, answered in #80, #80A, #81, and #82, #153, #160. We will miss him.]

Recent Losses:

CIA Officer Saved Okinawans' Lives

Glenn W. Nelson, 87, a retired operations officer with the Central Intelligence Agency, died February 11, 2009 at Reston Hospital Center after suffering a heart attack at his home in Vienna.

Mr. Nelson's career with the CIA, which included 15 years in Japan, grew out of his World War II experience. A captain in the Marine Corps, he graduated from the Navy Language School at the University of Colorado and was assigned to the Pacific as a language officer specializing in Japanese. Wounded during the invasion of Okinawa, he received the Purple Heart.

Immediately after the Japanese surrender, he was dispatched to Okinawa, where he and two other interpreters were instrumental in saving the lives of many Okinawa civilians who had hidden in caves.

The Japanese army had told them that the Americans would kill them if they surrendered. Mr. Nelson and his two associates assured them otherwise, although he recalled in later years that it took a long time for the civilians to venture out.

In 1990, the three interpreters were invited back to Naha, Okinawa, where they were recognized for their efforts. Many of the people they had saved turned out to greet them.

After his Okinawa assignment, the Marines sent Mr. Nelson to Tsingtao, China, where he helped in the repatriation of Japanese troops and civilians.

Mr. Nelson joined the CIA in 1947 and was based in Japan from 1951 to 1974. He also served in Washington, South Vietnam and Germany. He retired in 1979.

Glenn Walter Nelson was born in Slayter, Wyo., and grew up in Wahoo, Neb. He received a bachelor's degree in German from the University of Nebraska in 1942 and a master's degree in international affairs from George Washington University in 1968.

He was a member of the Japanese American Veterans Association, the China Marine Association and the National Rifle Association.

His first wife, Phyllis Carlson Nelson, died in an automobile accident in 1951.

Survivors include his wife of 55 years, Donna Burnsworth Nelson of Vienna; two sons from his first marriage, Kent Nelson of Greenville, N.C., and Derek Nelson of Norfolk; three children from his second marriage, Brett Nelson of Christiansburg, Va., Kristin Regan of Front Royal, Va., and Valerie Whitesides of Richmond; a sister; four grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

Joe Holley
Washington Post
March 3, 2009; B05

[Ed. Note: As any reader of this newsletter can tell, Glenn Nelson was one of our most dependable supporters. His stories were so numerous that they have graced our columns, posthumously, for several additional years, as perhaps it should be. I am certain that we will all miss his unfailing good cheer, his wry humor, and witty and wise stories. As his Marine buddy, Glen Slaughter remarked, the ranks keep thinning.]

Some Brushes with History: Handling the Japanese Language during WWII

(Cont'd) [Wendell Furnas] did, though, take part in the display of mass calisthenics which we students put on, clad in skivvy shirts and gym shorts, before a large crowd in [Folsom] Stadium celebrating Colorado University Days. Unfortunately, the Chief Petty Officer who was giving us commands over the public-address system got rattled half-way through the exercises, began counting wrong, and threw us all out of sync. The result was chaos on the field and cackinination in the stands [described also by Art Dornheim in issue #81].

Our *sensei* did better by us. They were a mixed lot. Some of them were academics, like Florence Walne, University of California specialist in Oriental languages, who was director of the school. Others were missionaries who had mastered *Nihongo* while trying to save souls in Japan during the 1920s and 1930s. There were a fair amount of *Nisei* who had been released from internment camps

in Arkansas, New Mexico, and elsewhere, to teach at Boulder. The *Nisei* were surprisingly lacking in bitterness about the way they had been uprooted from their homes on the West Coast after the attack on Pearl Harbor. One of them told us with some amusement that she took a copy of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* with her to the relocation center, expecting a long internment, only to have an army officer confiscate the book because he thought there was something suspicious about it. Only one of our *sensei* (a Japanese national who somehow had received clearance to teach) brought politics into the classroom. To our surprise – and wry amusement – he took time off *Nihongo* one day to explain that Japanese imperialism was no different from Europe's or even America's; and though no one in my class, so far as I know, ever tattled on him (or "named names," to use Victor Navasky's term for informing), his sloppy teaching eventually became known to the authorities and he was dropped from the teaching staff.

Upon graduating late in 1943, a few Boulderites went into the Marine Corps, but most of us entered the Naval Reserve as ensigns and then headed for Pearl Harbor, where we joined the Translation Section of the Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Area (JICPOA), headed by Lieutenant Commander John W. Steele, a retired Navy officer who had been called back to duty after Pearl Harbor because he had learned *Nihongo* before the war. Steele, a short, gritty, and slightly deaf man in his late thirties, was one of the hardest working human beings I have ever known. There were three eight-hour shifts at JICPOA, but, unlike the rest of us, he always worked two shifts, busily translating captured documents himself as well as supervising the work of two hundred or more language officers under his command. He never took a leave, not even for a weekend. Then came V-J Day, and, the story goes, he stayed in his quarters, got drunk, fell down some stairs, and spent the next few days in the hospital [with, no

doubt, the rest of the casualties of the revelry]. (to be cont'd)

From Paul F. Boller, Jr.,
Memoirs of an Obscure Professor
& Other Essays,
(Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 1992)
37-38.

Excerpt from:
Henry F. May

PROFESSOR OF
AMERICAN
INTELLECTUAL HISTORY,
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY,
1952-1980

... I applied to various military programs and was turned down.

Recruitment and Training as a
Japanese Translator

May: And then what happened was that Professor [Albert E.] Hindmarsh in Japanese history at Harvard came to San Francisco [in December 1942] to recruit people for the Japanese language school. There were very few people who knew Japanese at that time and they wanted translators and interpreters and so forth very badly. What they wanted were people who'd had some intensive experience of some kind of intellectual work. Mostly they got graduate students, some lawyers, some businessmen. So I went to be interviewed by him at his hotel and we talked a little while and he said, "Well, I think you'll find it nice. You'll like Boulder, on the whole." And I said, "Well, sir, have I any chance of getting in?" "Oh, you're in, you're in." And so that was that.

Lage: And Boulder was where the training was?

May: Yes. I was absolutely overjoyed because I had the two things I wanted: to be in the armed forces, which I thought was inevitable and wanted to get over with, and to still be with Jean for a long time, because the program was at least a year. It turned out to be fourteen months. So we went to Boulder. (to be cont'd)

an oral history conducted in 1998
by Ann Lage,
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library,
University of California,
Berkeley, 1999, 53.