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From the Chair's Desk

Greetings from Bay State Road!

As chair of the BU History Department, I include in this newsletter more essays from the Department of History's Sawyer seminar series that was focused on revisiting the narrative of the 20th century. I also include a recent article written by the chair and a graduate student.

Thank you for supporting excellence in the History Department. Please keep in touch! We are always interested to hear what is happening in the lives of our alumni and how studying history at BU has impacted your career and life. Send stories, jokes, adventures, misadventures, cautionary tales, and any other material to me at ferleger@bu.edu or just email history@bu.edu.

Louis Ferleger

Chair, Professor of History, History Department

NEW FACULTY MEMBER

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The History Department is pleased to welcome a new faculty member, Andrew Robichaud. Robichaud received his B.A. from Brandeis University, *summa cum laude*, in 2004, his M.A. from Stanford University in 2010, and his PhD in History from Stanford University in 2015.

His dissertation, “The Animal City: Remaking Human and Animal Lives, 1820-1910,” uses aspects of urban, environmental and cultural history to examine the treatment and presence of animals in American cities in the nineteenth century. He explores how sensibilities about the presence of animals in the American urban environment changed, and how the drive to normalize those changes led to the creation of new institutions—the SPCA and the ASPCA, among others—that expressed power structures in the growing cities. His work makes a significant contribution to the literature and is suggestive about how natural, human and animal rights were invoked and related to one another by nineteenth-century writers, officials and reformers, how that changed over time, and how those changes related to the creation of institutions, public and private, that both regulated animals in the urban environment and governed their treatment.
Professor Robichaud's appointment begins Fall 2015, and he will be offering the following courses:

HI 190: History of Boston: Community and Conflict

HI 450 C1: Animals in American History and Popular Culture

“The Triumph of Core American Values in the Epic Battle for a Grocery Store Chain”

The Market Basket conflict illustrates why recognizing the contributions of

workers is the key to success.

Louis Ferleger and Matthew Lavallee

Over the last few years conflicts between management and labor have generated considerable press and the story lines have mostly focused on the downsizing or firing of workers. But a different narrative unfolded this summer when a battle for control of a large and profitable New England grocery chain made headlines as two cousins, Arthur T. Demoulas and Arthur S. Demoulas, fought over who would manage the growing chain of stores. Managerial control of Market Basket changed in June 2014, when Arthur S. convinced the board of directors to fire his cousin, who had been managing the company, and hire a new management team.
This unleashed a storm of protest and a reaction from the company's 25,000 supermarket employees, from low-level managers to workers, including store supervisors, shelf stockers and cashiers, who walked out over the firing of their CEO, bringing the company to the verge of collapse.

But why would supermarket workers and managers walk off the job in defense of their CEO?

The prevailing explanation about what took place at Market Basket is a tale of compassion versus greed straight out of *It's a Wonderful Life*. The striking workers certainly embraced this dichotomy between "good" Arthur T. and "bad" Arthur S., two cousins locked in a family feud over control of the enterprise that goes back decades. As one fired warehouse manager told the Lowell Sun during the conflict, "I'll follow Arthur T. to the end of the world."

However, the emphasis on good versus bad oversimplifies the matter and masks important questions. Why would workers voluntarily follow their former CEO to the unemployment line? How did Market Basket workers achieve their goal in an era when most collective action by labor fails?

Founded by Greek immigrants in 1917 as a small grocery shop in Lowell's Acre neighborhood, Market Basket now has over 70 stores across Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. How did the enterprise become so successful? Top managers at Market Basket, led by Arthur T., seem to have recognized that value—that is, profit—is created on the shop floor, where workers' efforts helped the company achieve a considerable competitive advantage over similar grocery enterprises.

Market Basket's management team created a work environment that emphasized cooperative shop-floor relations. Over time, workers came to identify with the goals of the company. This explains a critical difference between the Market Basket case and other labor conflicts in American history: managers and workers assumed leadership

roles during the strike and ensured that store operations would cease.

Arthur T. recognized how important workers were to the success of the business, so the company's organizational structure was geared toward acknowledging and rewarding them. Workers were given a stake in the company, profit sharing and bonuses. Arthur T. knew most workers in the company by name, he knew something about their lives, and he continuously reminded them that they were key to the company's success. These genuine personal connections contributed to the workers' high level of effort, loyalty and commitment.

Market Basket adopted a slightly different business model than most supermarkets. Instead of making its profits on high margins, Market Basket focuses on volume. As customers across New England know, its prices on everything are much lower—produce is often priced at half of what competing supermarkets charge—and as result its stores are packed, with huge lines at the checkouts from open to close. Other grocery chains, notably Shaw's/Star Market, have recently dropped their prices to compete with Market Basket, and have launched major ad campaigns to advertise their new and better deals. Yet even with these new attempts to compete on cost, Market Basket's prices for most items are still lower.

The battle for Market Basket was waged over sharing the rewards of economic success and having a management team committed to building cooperative relations with its workforce. Market Basket customers seem to have recognized this, and they provided overwhelming support for the strikers and for Arthur T. Demoulas. At workers' urging, they shopped at other, more expensive, supermarkets, often posting their receipts on Market Basket windows afterward to drive the point home.

In December 2014 Arthur T. finalized his purchase of the chain of grocery stores. To Market Basket employees, he was more than simply a CEO who paid good wages and knew their names; he symbolized a business strategy that was proven to work and that provided stable employment for tens of thousands. His firing represented the elimination of that approach, ushering in a labor conflict that, at its core, was less about jobs or wages than it was about values.

Cynthia Enloe Sawyer Seminar Lecture

Zach Fredman

Clark University political science and women's studies scholar Cynthia Enloe delivered

our penultimate Sawyer Seminar lecture on April 14. Seventy-six years young and full of energy, Enloe spoke without notes in an engaging talk entitled “The Somme, the Suffragists, and the Gatling Gun.” World War I, she argued, was fought on the backside of debates about gender and manhood. Enloe’s feminist rethinking of the Great War also touched on other twentieth century conflicts and broader notions of masculinity.

World War I happened at the height of women’s suffrage mobilization, making it different from the Boer War and other late nineteenth and early twentieth century conflicts. The transnational Alliance for Women’s Suffrage had recently held conferences all across Europe. Ideas about women’s relationship to men, the state, and society were all being contested. Of course, Enloe noted, the Great War was not the first interstate conflict concerned with how to use men or women, but World War I was unique in that it occurred in an atmosphere of much wider disagreement about the relationship between masculinity and waging war.

Debates about the relationship between suffrage and war mobilization crossed national boundaries. Suffragists face the question of whether to withhold support from government war efforts in order to show how important women were, or to throw themselves into war work to show how much women could contribute. Women were split over the issue. Meanwhile, French women took over many farming responsibilities during the 1914 harvest. Elsewhere women took up work in the munitions factories as national governments debated how to maximize industrial strength while mobilizing men for war. Policymakers sought to mobilize women in ways that did not upset war aims or the social order.

Enloe urged the audience to think about how war intervenes in relationships between women and men and between women and the state. Every war, she reminded us, takes place during debates about the role of womanhood. Without asking gender questions, we underestimate the amount of power used to wage war and the amount of confusion among policymakers trying to wage war with alienating the home population from the war effort. The aftermaths of war, too, are much more gendered in their complications than we realize. The ways in which male-female relations change, or remain the same, can be telling.

Enloe also said that she became interested in World War I while studying Iraq. During the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqi government became dependent on women’s labor just as the British and French governments had during the First World War. Many Iraqi women also saw this as an opportunity to advance women’s rights.

Enloe’s talk prompted many questions from the audience, leading to short discussions on the Civil War, women serving in the military, and changes in American masculinity following the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Andrew Bacevich provided the comment during our Wednesday seminar. His comment centered on the question of how Enloe's gendered reading of war played out in the decades after 1918. He argued that advocates of domestic political change have used war to advance their causes. Suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst, an important figure in Enloe's lecture, threw herself into the war effort along with many of her fellow suffragists in order to obtain her domestic goals. In the United States, many other groups followed the same pattern: Catholic bishops, universities, the labor movement, and black activists like W.E.B. DuBois. In each case, these movements and individuals compromised their principles in order to advance their own interests. Had proponents of radical and transnational movements followed a different path, perhaps the twentieth century might have taken a different course.

Jonathan Zatlin followed Bacevich by asking whether there were splits between individuals and organizations during the First World War. The conflict represented a fundamental change, he argued, in the way populations were mobilized. The suffragists believed a promise was being made to them about women's rights, but they failed to negotiate anything, and no payoff occurred. French women, for example, did not get the right to vote until 1944.

Brooke Blower questioned our assumptions that war is bad and people get duped. Often times in history people viewed war as something positive. Bacevich noted that 1945 was again an inflection point. Here American servicemen got a payoff for going along with the war effort: the GI Bill.

Michael Holm also questioned our assumptions, pointing out that our debate was very western centric. In Vietnam, the DRV and NLF did not need conscription or promises to get women to join the war effort.

In all, professor Enloe's impressive energy and range facilitated an engaging and thoughtful discussion. She emphasized how much conscription challenged European governments, which in the past had relied on mercenaries to wage war. She also noted that militarism has daunting power in all societies. It can tap into emotions and marginalize opponents.

Professor Enloe's talk and the Wednesday seminar left us with much to think about with wars waging in Ukraine and Middle East and World War I memorialization events happening around the globe.

Caroline Elkins Sawyer Seminar Lecture

Zach Fredman

Harvard University Africanist Caroline Elkins closed out our Sawyer Seminar Series on April 28. A historian of colonial violence and post-conflict reconciliation in Africa, Elkins won a Pulitzer Prize for her first book, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*. Her Sawyer lecture, " Rethinking the End of the British Empire," took us to Kenya and beyond while exploring several interrelated themes. It also provided a jumping off point for lively concluding seminar on April 29.

During her lecture, Elkins showed how the intentional and secret destruction of archival sources from Britain's colonies influenced the historiography of British Empire for decades. The British government followed a systematic policy in its various colonies of destroying any evidence that could make the British look bad. In Kenya alone they burned around three-and-a-half tons of documents. This selective release of archival material, coupled with British historians' skepticism toward oral histories from non-European peoples, supported the Whig interpretation of British history. In this view, the story of the British Empire writ large was a story of progress. Scholars explained away punitive missions in the name of progress and ignored aggression during the post-World War II imperial revival. Distinguished historian John Gallagher, for example, argued that Britain's empire came to and end only because the British tired of "playing the game."
In fact, Elkins argued, the last days of British Empire were characterized by ferocious violence. She explained how liberalism and a justification of imperial violence have long been intertwined in Britain. The British invariably justified imperial violence by claiming that their colonial subjects were so barbaric that it left the British with no choice. Violence in the colonies, the British argued, had to be done in order to save the world for civilization.

Another key theme Elkins explored was the connection between intelligence gathering in World War II and postwar imperial violence. The wartime experience provided a framework for empire. Britain's two main wartime interrogation centers, the London Cage and Camp 020, provided a space to hone interrogation techniques. In these interrogation centers—the existence of which was kept secret for decades—interrogators used torture in violation of the Geneva Conventions and deemed their methods effective. During the postwar imperial revival, wartime MI5 interrogators passed through almost all colonial stations, training special branch officers in Kenya, Palestine, Malaya, and elsewhere. These men used electric shock, toenail torture, and other violent interrogation techniques. And because the British government destroyed or kept classified all the relevant archival materials, scholars like Elkins have had rely on oral history and fieldwork. Only recently have the British begun declassifying some of these embarrassing documents.

Elkins ended her talk by discussing how to rethink the twentieth century in light of what we now know about archival destruction. Scholars working in authoritarian countries like China have always had to deal with access issues and selective archival opening. But as Elkins showed, even liberal democracies like Britain attempt to distort history for the very same reason the Chinese government does: to suppress information that could embarrass the state.

Elkins' informative talk led to a fruitful discussion as seminar participants reflected on both what Elkins had to say and the broader themes that have emerged over the lecture series. Elkins was one of many lecturers who discussed the centrality of World War II and the year 1945. Andrew Bacevich said that our seminar suggested the need to resituate World War II and examine what that war means for the twentieth century. Elkins responded by noting that World War II is still an important moment for reasons we haven't fully understood. Bacevich also pointed out how Elkins' talk illustrated the failure of the historical profession. For decades, British scholars using only English-language sources produced inferior scholarship that other historians accepted without criticism. Their assumptions about the unreliability of non-European sources followed the same racist assumptions that underpinned empire.

Bruce Schulman asked whether the twentieth century should be understood through the lens of imperial history. Is the twentieth century the age of empire? Julian Go compared twentieth century empire to empire in previous centuries and pointed out that only over the past hundred years or so have empires become delegitimized. Bacevich agreed that after 1945 defenders of liberal imperialism have had to redefine empire. The Americans, for example, practiced a nominally anti-imperialist form of imperialism.

Yet what actually made British and American empire different from Soviet imperialism, Elkins wondered. American and British imperialists have always defended their actions as being progressive and undertaken for a good purpose. But Lenin said the same thing, and even Stalin justified his actions in terms of progress. Schulman, however, noted that not all oppression is imperial and urged us to be careful in defining which practices constitute empire and which do not.

By the time we finished laying a definition of formal versus informal empire, our time had had run out. But this was one discussion that could have probably continued all afternoon.

In conclusion, we found it difficult to reinterpret the twentieth century. Our lecture series actually supported much of the older narrative about the centrality of World War II and imperialism.

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