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ACCIDENTAL HISTORIAN: *An Interview with Arnold J. Bauer*

Appreciated among Latin Americanists in the United States and highly regarded in Chile, Arnold ("Arnie") Bauer taught history at the University of California at Davis from 1970 to 2005, and was director of the University of California's Education Abroad Program in Santiago, Chile, for five years between 1994 and 2005. Well-known for his engaging writing style, Bauer reflects broad interests in his publications: agrarian history (*Chilean Rural Society: From the Spanish Conquest to 1930* [1975]), the Catholic Church and society (as editor, *La iglesia en la economía de América Latina, siglos XIX–XIX* [1986]), and material culture (*Goods, Power, History: Latin America's Material Culture* [2001]). He has also written an academic mystery regarding a sixteenth-century Mexican codex, *The Search for the Codex Cardona* (2009). His coming-of-age memoir (*Time's Shadow: Remembering a Family Farm in Kansas* [2012]) describes his childhood and was recently named one of the top five books of 2012 by *The Atlantic*. He has also written some 50 articles and book chapters and more than 60 book reviews.

Among Bauer's publications in Spanish is *Chile y algo más. Estudios de historia latinoamericana* (2004), a collection of essays that Heidi Tinsman has called the chronicle of "a love story" between Bauer and Chile.[1] In 2005, he was awarded the Order of Merit Gabriela Mistral (*Orden al Mérito Docente y Cultural Gabriela Mistral*), Chile's highest honor for foreigners, for his contributions to education and culture. His house and small winery in Davis, California, which he built with his own hands, has hosted decades of lively meals and guests as distinguished as Eric Hobsbawm and Fidel Castro's brother-in-law.

This interview was conducted by Charles Walker, Professor of History and director of the Hemispheric Institute on the Americas at the University of California at Davis, on December 10, 2011. He has enjoyed weekly coffees (and the occasional *tinto*) with Arnie since 1992. Sara Islas helped with the transcription. Bauer and Walker would like to acknowledge the support of *The Americas* in helping to bring this interview to fruition.

1. Heidi Tinsman, "Arnold Bauer and Chile: A Love Story," review of *Arnold J. Bauer's Chile y algo más: Estudios de historia latinoamericana*, *A Contracorriente* 5:2 (2008), pp. 341–345.

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Yet, he has always considered himself an "accidental academic." This interview follows the twists and turns of Bauer's unusual career.

Charles Walker: Let's start with the rather uncommon path you took to becoming a Latin Americanist. It's quite different from most, I believe.

Arnold Bauer: Yes, I'd think so. I was born on a 160-acre farm northeast of the town of Clay Center, Kansas, 15 miles of unpaved roads from the nearest doctor, with my Aunt Helen serving as midwife. My great-grandparents homesteaded that land after the Civil War and it remained in my family until we were swept away in the 1960s by what I learned to call in Berkeley, the onset of "agrarian capitalism." And I walked the mile and a half to the iconic one-room rural school—a total of 15 kids in all eight grades. The founding of that school accompanied the Homestead Acts [1862].

Walker: Then I imagine you went to high school. That must have taken you off the farm.

Bauer: Not really. I rode with the blacksmith's son in his Model A Ford to the high school in Clay Center and returned in time to do the ordinary farm chores. Clay County Community High School had 300 students, devoted teachers, and a wide range of courses, including music, theater, and Latin. I excelled in making small, concrete hog-troughs, case-hardened chisels, and oak and cedar furniture for our house. I made it from logs sawed in the small sawmill my father had designed and built to survive the Depression and drought in the 1930s. I remember getting a B in Geometry, a C in Mrs. Reynolds's U.S. history class, and good marks in shop.

Walker: I know you served in the U.S. Air Force. How did that happen?

Bauer: I spent the summer following high school graduation back on the farm, but then with encouragement from the parents of one of my high school buddies, I managed to get into Kansas State University. I spent two desultory semesters there, coming home to work on weekends. Then the Korean War began and I enlisted in the Air Force for a four-year assignment.

Walker: Very few of our colleagues at UC Davis served in the military.

Bauer: Well, it's true that I thought the Communists had to be stopped—I was a primitive, uninformed, and consequently, a convinced Cold Warrior—but it was also true that I was about to be drafted into the Army, which most likely would mean trench warfare in Korea, so I opted for the Air Force.

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Walker: So how did that play out?

Bauer: Basic training in Texas, electronics school at Keesler Air Force Base near New Orleans, and then Sandia Base near Albuquerque. I don't know why I was shunted along this particular track but I ended up in the Armed Forces Special Weapons Command, which to my surprise meant that we were to become specialists in the fusing systems of the first of what are now called weapons of mass destruction, then in the form of Mark VI atomic bombs.

Walker: So let's see. This is before missiles, no? Tell us a bit more about this.

Bauer: Our outfit was made up of six or seven officers, a dozen enlisted men, and a large number of security people. We accompanied the first nuclear weapons to Morocco, to a base just outside Casablanca. This was 1953-54. We worked in heavily reinforced underground concrete bunkers; our job was to maintain the fusing systems and then, at any moment, day or night, to load the weapons onto jet bombers that came screaming in from bases in the U.S. This was so that there would always be nuclear bombs in the air ready to be assigned to specific targets. Rather interesting to reflect that we had WMDs in North Africa 50 years before Bush couldn't find any in Iraq.

Walker: So then, apart from the Air Force experience, what did the two years in Casablanca do for you? An abrupt change, no doubt, from a Kansas farm.

Bauer: Casablanca was then the third-largest city in Africa. It was still French Morocco so apart from other attractions, one saw through the bus window the unfolding of an anti-colonial revolt, explosions in the marketplaces, and the gunning down of the odd policeman. Trying to buy a desk lamp and chessboard in the city, I quickly learned the meaning of a "language barrier." I'm surprised to read now, in the diary I kept, that within three weeks of landing in Morocco I'd found a widow of a French Army officer who gave me French lessons downtown. Several months later, I was able more or less to defend myself in that language. I practiced with barmaids and a couple of French soldiers I'd met, and even became a kind of unofficial translator of love letters between my barrack mates and the girls downtown, widening my vocabulary into unanticipated realms. During the second year, I was able to explore a bit, take a couple of long trips through France and Spain by myself, opening new worlds, widening my horizons.

Walker: You've talked about some Spanish connection in Casablanca.

Bauer: Yes, one of my barrack buddies, who had studied geology at Stanford, met and married a young woman whose father had been murdered by the Fas-

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cists in Seville in 1936, and through her—and the wedding parties and other festivities that followed—I and the groom fell in with the Spanish (but French-speaking) exile community in Casablanca. That cracked open a door to Spain, led me to a couple of books by Gerald Brenan, the great British Hispanist, that were available in the base library, and an enduring interest.[2] By the end of my second year of "defending democracy" in Casablanca, things were going well. Here's my diary entry for December 2, 1953: "Birthday party for Teresa at the Café Sevilla last night. They rolled out the carpet for us, people danced on tabletops, etc. There was a very pretty Spanish girl there called Angélica, known to have 'les jambes plus jolies de l'Afrique du Nord.'

Walker: You're making me jealous. Please go on.

Bauer: Well, to sum up, Casablanca was my "bend in the river." The two years in Morocco, travel in post-war Europe, exposure to an exotic culture in the throes of an anti-colonial struggle, the chance to spend time in a different language, however imperfectly, with people very different from me, changed everything. I entered those two years as a naïve, uneducated, plain Kansas farm kid, and emerged as a still uneducated farm kid, but with a different set of naïvetés, open to a wider world that—for better or for worse—would lead me to leave the farm.

Walker: How did you imagine life after the Air Force?

Bauer: In June 1954, the four-year tour in the Air Force was ending so there was lot of speculation about what we'd do after discharge. Three or four of our small group had plans for college in the fall; others were heading home. Someone in our barracks had a magazine with an ad offering "Study in Mexico City" at a place called Mexico City College [later Universidad de las Américas] that accepted students on the G.I. Bill. I applied, and to my surprise, was accepted. I returned to work on the farm that summer, and in early October headed south, alone, with no knowledge of Spanish or Mexico: a plunge into the unknown in a 1950 Ford, leaving my parents standing in the driveway.

Walker: Mexico in the 1950s . . . what was that like for you?

Bauer: Completely wonderful. Five million people, in what Carlos Fuentes called "*la región más transparente*," Popocatépetl gleaming in the morning sun, *carnitas* chopped up in sidewalk stands. The peso had just been devalued

2. The works of Edward FitzGerald ("Gerald") Brenan (1894–1987) include *The Spanish Labyrinth* (1943) and *The Literature of the Spanish People* (1951).

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some 30 percent so 160 bucks a month plus tuition from the G.I. Bill went a long way. I got a room just off the [Avenida] Reforma at Río de la Plata #16, with a Mexican family. The teenage daughter immediately began my Spanish instruction: "*Esto es una cuchara, esto es . . .*," etc. The son, called Chato, an engineering student at UNAM, brought his buddies around to look me over, and eventually—after several weeks—they considered me respectable enough to introduce to other friends. One of them, Víctor Lomelí, seemed to know everyone in Mexico City; he invited me practically every weekend to proper house parties (with mothers and aunts present) and the occasional weekend in Cuernavaca and even two or three times to Acapulco.

Walker: You hear a lot about Mexico City College in those years.

Bauer: Mexico City College had several outstanding teachers and intellectuals, among them Fernando Horcasitas, John Padden, Robert Barlow, the art historian Alexander Baron von Wuthenau, the ethnologist Robert Weitlaner, and such outstanding Mexican historians as Silvio Zavala and the philosopher Ramón Xirau. They were attracted by the relatively high salaries. It was an unusual place, less known perhaps for instructional rigor than for its enormously heterodox student body, right-wing administrators, precocious American hippies, and adventurous veterans. Two of my teachers were former Berkeley economics professors who had refused to sign the University of California's loyalty oath and were fired in the McCarthy years. I ended up with an economics degree, but during these years my true love was an amateur's interest in Mexico and Mexican history.

Walker: This must have been an interesting time. Weren't Fidel and Che in Mexico during these same years? After the experience in Casablanca and now Mexico in the '50s, were your own political views changing?

Bauer: Well, I'd say they were still pretty naïve. And I certainly wasn't hanging out with Fidel and Che. But I was moving, rather hesitatingly, toward the left and certainly toward a more critical view of the U.S. attitudes toward Latin America. I began to think of myself as an anti-imperialist and became afflicted with a didactic urge to stand at the border to explain Mexico and the Mexicans to the U.S. tourists who had begun to flood into Mexico.

But speaking of Che and Fidel, I did have a curious, if vicarious experience, with the Cubans. There was a young man, perhaps my age, a Russian, who hung out a bit at Mexican City College talking to students, having coffee. For some reason we struck up a conversation and he invited me, twice in fact, to have lunch at an outdoor place on Calle Xola. I think it was called Las Palapas.

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I remember the ambivalent thrill of sitting face to face with a real Communist after having scheduled armed nuclear weapons to drop on his homeland. I believe we discussed, both of us in rudimentary Spanish, such things as the recent overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala, my impressions of Mexico, and so on. He must have seen quickly that there was no point in wasting his time with me. In fact, there were bigger fish to fry, because at the same time (this is 1955), and not too far away, up in Polanco (perhaps he took a taxi up there after our lunch), he found, undoubtedly, far more interesting company. Sitting on the floor eating pasta were Fidel, Raúl, "El Che," and a handful of other Cubans; they were planning the assault on the Batista regime. Another man was there, Nikolai Leonov, who would become a KGB general, the key liaison with the emerging Cuban Revolution, and later the Soviet Union's foremost specialist on Latin America.[3] So at least I was brushed by history, even though unaware of it. A closer personal and enduring connection with Cuban things came a few years later, in 1960, when Víctor Lomelí married Enma Castro Ruz, Fidel's sister, a co-revolutionary and fund-raiser.

Walker: That's fascinating. I wonder how many of our colleagues know about Leonov? Did you ever consider staying in Mexico?

Bauer: At first I did have the idea of finding a job with an American company in Mexico. I interviewed with Black & Decker, Pan American Airways, and a couple of others, but that didn't work out. The money had run out and so—perhaps even tearfully—I headed north. I stayed with my older sister in Wichita, found a job with Boeing, and after six months of accumulating I had a target fund of a thousand dollars and headed west to San Francisco. I found a job with General Motors and then a better position as the manager of the small West Coast office of a New England paper and electrical insulation company. My "territory" was northern California and the Pacific Northwest, with clients such as Tektronics in Portland, Boeing in Seattle, and Hercules Powder Company. Implausibly, I became an American businessman. After five years of this, I had a very nice flat a half-block north of the Fairmont Hotel on Nob Hill in San Francisco, eating, drinking, discovering the good California reds, living a quite nice, rather pointless, somewhat dissolute life.

Walker: So then, somehow, you changed your life?

Bauer: The experience in Mexico and my now general interest in Latin America, were gnawing away at my brain. And things were happening. The Cuban

3. On Leonov and Che, see Jon Lee Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Grove Press, 1997), pp. 173–174 and following.

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Revolution was big news. I was handing out Fair Play for Cuba flyers on weekends and organizing solidarity parties in my flat. There was a larger world out there and I was drifting along in what seemed an evermore boring and useless life. Then too, my girl friend had run off with a *Life* magazine photographer.

On a warm early-spring day in late February 1961, I called on Hewlett-Packard, one of my accounts. After a not unusual two-martini lunch with the purchasing agent, I came down the hill into Palo Alto, took off my jacket, loosened my tie, and stretched out on a patch of grass in a small park. I looked up through the barren branches of a tree and asked myself: "What in the world am I doing here?" I jumped up, went to my office in San Francisco, called my boss, a very nice man named Charles Kuhn, "I can't do it any longer," I said. "I have to stop, resign from the job, find some other way to live." "Wait," he said, "I'll come out; we can talk."

I got him a room at the St. Francis, we had a nice dinner in North Beach, and I spun out my story to him, talked of my anxieties, inquietudes, desires. After the long evening he said that if he were in my shoes and my age he'd do the same thing. I drove him back to the St. Francis. "Come through the office in Los Angeles," he said. "There'll be two months of extra severance pay for you." I let go of my flat, gave away the furniture and kitchen stuff, paid my bills, and headed south to Mexico and South America, a journey composed of equal parts exploration and self-destruction. You could say that if Casablanca was my bend in the river, the small park in Palo Alto was my change of life.

Walker: So tell us how this led to Berkeley and graduate study.

Bauer: My journey south took four months. I went by surface, drove my own car to Veracruz, took Volkswagen buses through Central America to Panama, a plane to Barranquilla, a bus through Colombia to Quito, staying at various places. I was talking with fellow travelers and got invited to people's houses. At Guayaquil I turned back, retracing my steps. In Mexico City, I applied for admission to graduate school at Berkeley. Utterly unfamiliar with academic proceedings or culture, I can't imagine, nor bear to remember, what I was thinking. My savings exhausted, no place to hang my hat, the rejection letter was waiting for me at a friend's house in San Francisco. I took the letter across the Bay to the admissions office in Sproul Hall and handed it to the woman behind the window grill. "It's a rejection letter," she explained, "we send out hundreds every year." Desperate, I insisted on talking with the person who had signed the letter. There was no point, she said. "We don't accept appeals, especially in a case like yours." I again refused to leave. A second woman in the office, visibly exasperated, made an appointment with James King, the associ-

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ate dean of the Graduate Division, and, as it turned out, a quite well-known historian of Latin America.

Walker: What a story! King was one of my professors when I was an undergrad at Berkeley 30 years ago. I remember Sproul Hall as such a forbidding place . . . so what did he say?

Bauer: He was a very kindly man. He listened to my story. After an hour of talk, he said there might be a way to accommodate me. "But," he said, "you have to talk with Woodrow Borah, the graduate advisor in History." Then he warned me: "He's a 'salty character.'"

Walker: Did you know who Borah was?

Bauer: Of course not. I had no idea what graduate study entailed. I know it sounds weird, but think back over my life.

Walker: Then what?

Bauer: A friend in San Francisco had given me a room for a couple of days. I took the bus over the Bay Bridge, found Borah's office in Dwinelle Hall, and knocked at the closed door. An irritated voice answered, "Come in." Borah was hunched over a microfilm reader, his back to the door. He very slowly turned. I introduced myself: "Mr. Borah, my name is Bauer and I'm interested in pursuing graduate studies at the University of California here in Berkeley." Mr. Borah ignored my outstretched hand, turned, swiveled back to his desk, picked up the manila folder containing my application that had been sent over by Dean King, turned back to me, and said in his unforgettably precise, penetrating voice: "This is just the record of a misdirected life." He turned back to the microfilm reader. I stood in the room, long-armed farm hands dangling. "What do you suggest I do?" I foolishly asked. "Why don't you try Stanford?" he said, making it sound like Devil's Island. I indicated that it was not really within my means.

Walker: How did you get here then, I mean to graduate school and the faculty?

Bauer: I went back to Dean King and explained that the interview had not gone entirely well. He found another possible track. "We can put you on something called 'special status,'" he said. "Not in the graduate division; you wouldn't be in the History department. But you could take the History Honors track and if you do well, apply again next year."

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I leapt at the chance, got high marks all the way through, applied the following fall term to the graduate program, and was accepted. I had no financial support the first two years but I got a job up the hill at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory, sometimes working 6:00 P.M. to midnight, sometimes midnight to 6:00 A.M. I shaved my head to avoid distractions and devoted myself entirely to studies. The third year I got a teaching assistantship, thereafter fellowships. I took graduate seminars from regular faculty and from visiting scholars such as Tulio Halperín Donghi and Álvaro Jara. During my last year, Professor Jara wrote me a golden letter of support and I received a Ford Foundation Latin American Fellowship that gave me two years of doctoral dissertation research in Chile.

Walker: There were lots of graduate students during those years at Berkeley. Can you give me a name or two?

Bauer: I think Berkeley at that time was *the* place for Latin American studies, perhaps along with Texas. I should mention the professors. Woodrow, of course, was the best known. But there were renowned people across the board in Latin American Studies. Jim Scobie and John Padden were there, the legendary Carl Sauer, plus two recent hires, David Brading and Bill McGreevey, and the anthropologists John Rowe and George Foster. Leslie Byrd Simpson in Spanish had retired but was still a presence. A large number of graduate students—if I remember correctly, there were over 200 in History and perhaps 35 in the Latin American area—thickened the broth. It was a thriving and stimulating place.

Walker: This was also Berkeley in the '60s.

Bauer: The main memory is of my nose firmly pressed to the grindstone. I had a decade to make up. Besides I'd gotten married and had a stepdaughter. Of course there was Joan Baez on the steps of Sproul Hall singing to enormous crowds, and inspirational young speakers such as Mario Savio, Steve Weisman, Frank Bardacke, and others. I took both my M.A. exam and the Ph.D. qualifying exams in the midst of helicopter teargas attacks.

Walker: And then, you received a very nice fellowship—the Latin American Teaching Fellowship in 1967 for research in Chile, the early basis for your long association with that country.

Bauer: Yes. I was fortunate to have taken a seminar with Álvaro Jara while he was a visiting professor at Berkeley and at the same time a key figure in the Centro de Estudios Americanos (CEA), a prestigious, if short-lived, graduate

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teaching center in Santiago. Professor Jara wrote an immodest letter of support to the LATF fellowship committee, offering an adjunct teaching position (a requirement of the fellowship) for me at the Centro in Santiago. That sealed the deal. The Centro itself drew specialists such as Rolando Mellafe on the new demographic history (the French liked to call it *"l'ecole Berkeley"*), while Jara (who had earned his doctorate in Paris) and Ruggiero Romano, a close associate of the grand [Fernand] Braudel, promoted the Annales School of historical research. The Santiago Centro drew visiting professors and graduate students from all over Latin America—people like Aníbal Quijano, Carlos Sempat, Gustavo Beyhaut, Germán Colmenares, Carmen Castillo, and many others whose names may not be familiar now but at the time formed a vital center of Chilean intellectual life. The Chileans embraced me, giving me an academic and social base.

Walker: When I visit Santiago or host *chilenos* here, I'm struck by the wide admiration for you in Chile. By this I mean not only historians and progressive historians, say, but people of different generations, people of different political stripes, people outside the academy. You received the Order of Merit Gabriela Mistral in 2005.

Bauer: It's true that I developed a lasting affection for the country, and more to the point, there's quite a large number of people from different walks of life and in political positions that I've been able to have as friends. I think the Chileans are to blame. They are in general a delightful, attractive people, notable for a sly, wry, rather underground sense of humor, a consequence perhaps of living at the ends of the earth. They have a natural humanity and in my experience were prepared to support my work without jealousy or rancor. I even believe there is present a special "Chilean" mode of walking, manners, humor, even flirtation. Now, having sold our small flat in Providencia [Santiago] with little likelihood of returning, a hollow space has opened in my heart.

Walker: But Arnie, I've told you that you're like the Rolling Stones—you've had numerous good-bye tours. You'll go back. But didn't the intense conflicts after 1970 require that you navigate very carefully through the political minefields? Aren't there Chileans who will not break bread with people of different political beliefs?

Bauer: Yes, that's also true, but I think the more characteristic and enduring quality is conviviality and accommodation. Perhaps I exaggerate this, and perhaps my opinion is formed excessively from my first experiences. In the Frei Montalva years [1964–1970] and even in the Allende years [1970–1973], one commonly went to dinner, and around the table, you found *marxistas*, social-

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ists, *democristianos*, and conservatives—a much wider spectrum of political discourse, of course, than you ever found in the United States—engaged in intense, even heated discussion. But in the end everyone happily walked out together into the night. Obviously, the Pinochet dictatorship changed that, and I have friends who suffered terror, torture, and repression. But now, I believe, the more secular qualities of accommodation and conviviality have returned.

Walker: Tell us a bit about your role in the development of the Education Abroad Program [EAP] in Chile [through the University of California] and the graduate seminars you taught at the Universidad Católica in Santiago.

Bauer: I was an early enthusiast of the Education Abroad Program. I served as chair on its statewide committee for several years, and then when the decision came to establish a Study Center in Santiago, I became the first permanent director, in 1993. I returned to serve as director for four additional years beginning in 2005. Some 1,400 University of California undergraduates have participated in the EAP over the entire period. During my years as director, the invaluable assistance of both Carmen Gloria Guiñez, the EAP's permanent academic coordinator, and my wife, Danielle Greenwood, was central to the program's success. Serving as Study Center director was one of the most rewarding tasks of my career. During the same years I taught graduate seminars at La Católica.

Walker: Let's shift now to your academic interests and writing, which began with Chile and moved into different geographical and thematic areas. You named your first book, published by Cambridge, *Chilean Rural Society from the Spanish Conquest to 1930.* The Spanish version is *La sociedad rural chilena desde la conquista española hasta nuestros días.* The book has been well received in both the English and Spanish versions, and is considered something of a classic in Chile.[4]

Bauer: I was pleased that this early effort was well received across the political spectrum, because in the 1960s agrarian reform was a hot political issue. I'd also like to say that I was conscious of the dangers in trying to write another people's history. From the beginning, I tried to imagine the opposite situation of, say, a Chilean having lived only two years in Kansas, with an imperfect knowledge of English, sitting down among my people in Goshen township,

4. Arnold Bauer, *Chilean Rural Society from the Spanish Conquest to 1930* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1975); same title published in Spanish as *La sociedad rural chilena desde la conquista española hasta nuestros días* (Santiago: Ed. Andrés Bello, 1994).

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wondering whether he would be able to understand how they thought or felt. I published some of these concerns in the Chilean journal *Proposiciones.*[5] I talked whenever I could to country people, spent a lot of time with a dear friend, Carlos Hurtado, who knew far more about my subject than I would ever know. But most important for the reception I got is the fact that Chileans are inclined to be generous to foreigners and tolerant of their work.

Walker: Along with your early interest in rural history, you also wrote about the colonial Church, ecclesiastical credit systems (the business of *censos*), the expulsion of the eighteenth-century Jesuits from Latin America, and so on.[6] Where did this interest in the Church come from?

Bauer: The economic role of the colonial Church was intimately related to rural economy. Then too, one of my best graduate student friends at Berkeley was a Jesuit. We had long walks and arguments about the Church in Latin America and finally, impatient with my ignorance, he set me straight: "Look," he said, "in the long history of the Church in the world, it's been on the right side of things about 51 percent of the time. And that's good enough for me." Apparently, I was provoked to learn more.

Walker: Your book, *Goods, Power, History: Latin America's Material Culture* [Cambridge, 2001] was translated as *Somos lo que compramos* [Mexico, Taurus, 2002]. It embraces an impossibly large topic: material culture, the things people produced, made, and consumed from the pre-Hispanic period until today.[7] Such a sweep may be daunting to young readers of this interview. They may have only nine months to carry out dissertation research, build theory, and write. You have encouraged your graduate students to avoid "filling a gap," without paying sufficient attention to how the specific research fits into a larger *problemática,* or a current, vital idea. Moreover, material culture seems quite a change from your earlier interests. How did you happen to get into this literature? And what do you say to graduate students who don't want to be squeezed into narrow topics?

Bauer: I took up my interest in material culture at the invitation of Marcello Carmagnani at the University of Turin, a friend from Chile days, who was putting together a two-volume book, *Para una historia de América.* He wanted to renew Braudel's notions of the historical *longues durées* and apply certain

5. Arnold Bauer, "Sociedad y política rural chilenas en un enfoque comparativo," *Proposiciones* 19 (1990), pp. 254–262.

6. Several of these essays were published in Bauer's *La iglesia en la economía de América Latina: siglos XVI al XIX.* (Mexico: INAH, 1986).

7. Published in translation as *Somos lo que compramos* (Mexico: Taurus, 2002).

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strands of this to an interpretation of Latin America.[8] Stuart Schwartz then wrote from Yale to ask me to write a volume for his New Approaches to the Americas series [published by Cambridge], to examine long-term features of material culture. I endeavored to do this by incorporating four interwoven schemes to explain them: supply-and-demand, the relationship between consumption and identity, the importance of ritual, and, drawing on the work of Norbert Elias, the notion of "civilizing goods." Such a hopscotchy work is not appropriate, of course, for dissertation work. I have the impression that graduate students today are much better at framing a piece of research— more conscious of the larger landscape of current intellectual issues when they plunge their research spade into the local garden.

Walker: Quite a few people in our business mention to me that they appreciate your writing style, and you do in fact have a nice pen. Where did this come from? You didn't grow up in a household where your parents were pulling Shakespeare or Henry James off the mantel. I know that I've benefitted greatly from your generous editing.

Bauer: It's kind of you to say that and, to the extent it's true, I have no explanation. I've tried to write in clean, unpretentious prose. I do remember in my San Francisco days when I was reading quite a lot, hanging out at Ferlinghetti's City Lights bookstore, talking with friends about "good writing," and wondering what that meant. An important step came when I read Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station*. There's not an awkward or ugly line in that wonderful book.[9]

Walker: You're now retired but it's obvious you've not stopped writing. I notice three new books in the past eight years. One of these, *Chile y algo más. Estudios de historia lationamericana,* accompanied your award of the Orden de Mérito Gabriela Mistral, but then you branched out in quite different directions.[10] Can you say a few words about your recent work?

Bauer: Perhaps we should call them my recent pleasures. *The Search for the Codex Cardona*[11] is a mystery involving a mid-sixteenth century Mexican codex of some 400 pages and many illustrations, presumably lost for over 400 years, that reappeared at the Crocker Nuclear Lab here at UC Davis for exam-

8. Arnold Bauer, "La cultura material," in *Para una historia de América. I. Las Estructuras,* Marcello Carmagnani, ed. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura, 1990), pp. 404–497

9. Edmund Wilson, *To the Finland Station* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1940).

10. Arnold Bauer, *Chile y algo más. Estudios de historia latinoamericana* (Santiago: Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos, 2004).

11. Arnold Bauer, *The Search for the Codex Cardona* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, Press, 2010).

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ination of the *amate* paper and paint. Having accidentally seen the item at the lab, I became fascinated, indeed obsessed, with its provenance. The book follows the search through two continents involving antiquarians, academic specialists, shady book dealers, charlatans, and dangerous traffickers. It's quite a lot of fun. And this past May, the University Press of Kansas published *Time's Shadow*, my account of coming of age within the larger story of the century-long rise and demise of family farms in Kansas.[12]

Walker: Let me finish with a personal view. As colleagues and friends, we've been averaging perhaps a coffee a week for nearly 20 years. I'd like to end the interview with some personal remarks, particularly aimed at people in our business who don't know you. You are known in Yolo County. You live in an unusual and attractive house that you built with your own hands; you have a small vineyard and for 30 years have made your own wine *Dos Patos*. Is this an outcome, a kind of synthesis of the Kansas farm boy and California bon vivant living?

Bauer: With my own hands? Yes, but with help of an architect and two students I met after class, one who knew more than me and the other less.[13] There's nothing Kansas about it. In 1972, I lived for two weeks in a former *contadino's* house in Tuscany with wicker-wrapped bottles of Chianti in the cellar that I thought were pretty cool. The house itself derives from my Chilean experience. From the beginning I loved the rural landscape of Chile, even before I began to write about it and before it became much more industrialized, as it is today. At every opportunity my wife and I explored the countryside, heading south from Santiago, getting off the main roads, driving down the stately *alamedas*, setting out the blanket to enjoy our *empanadas*, *pastel de choclo,* and *vino tinto*. Almost everywhere, you were aware of the tranquil murmur of small, nearly invisible irrigation canals that make of the central valley "a happy copy of Eden," as the national anthem puts it. The presence of the great snow-capped Cordillera, always within sight and seeming almost within reach, remains unforgettable. So that was my model for a house on a peasant holding with a vineyard in California's central valley. The wine, by the way, which most find acceptable and a few delightful, is a Syrah-Tempranillo blend.[14]

12. Arnold Bauer, *Time's Shadow: Remembering a Family Farm in Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012).

13. One of them was Ward Stavig (1948–2006), who worked with Bauer as an undergraduate and graduate student. Bauer published a loving obituary in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87:1 (2007), pp. 151–152.

14. The Dos Patos winery produces up to 300 bottles or 25 cases a year. According to the label, the grapes are "picked by voluntary workers and crushed and pressed in a spirit of *gai camaraderie*."

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Walker: Finally, I know that you're an admirer of Neruda's poetry. Can you think of an appropriate line or two that might serve to wrap up this interview? [Bauer rummages through his bookshelves a bit.]

Bauer: Well, here are some [selected] lines, in translation, from *Fin de Fiesta,* that give, at least, Neruda's sense of an ending:

> *". . . from land to land I went, exploring*
> *Estuaries, insufferable regions, I found no peace—*
> *What could I say without my roots?*
> *What could I say without coming to ground?*
> *Then, when I saw what I had already seen,*
> *And touched both earth and mud, and stone and foam,*
> *I said, "I am here. I stripped in the light,*
> *Let my hands fall to the sea,*
> *And when everything took on transparency*
> *under the land, I was at peace."*[15]

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15. Pablo Neruda, "Fin de fiesta," in *Selected Poems,* Nathaniel Tarn, ed. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1970), pp. 422–425.

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