

COMMITTEE ON THE FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURE
Annual Report, 2001-02

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

The Committee on the Faculty Research Lecture takes pleasure in recommending Professor Jonathan French Beecher of the Department of History as Faculty Research Lecturer for 2002-2003. Professor Beecher was selected from a group of nine candidates all of whom have over the years given much to their campus and to their disciplines and to the academic community at large.

Within a year of his arrival at Santa Cruz in 1970 Beecher published his first book, The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier, a collection of the writings of the nineteenth century French utopian socialist, which he edited and translated in collaboration with Richard Bienvenu. Reprinted in 1983, the volume has had a long life as a source book used in undergraduate and graduate courses in nineteenth century French and European history. The Utopian Vision helped establish Beecher's reputation as one of the country's leading Fourier scholars. That reputation was confirmed with the publication four years later of Beecher's monumental study, Charles Fourier: The Visionary and his World, a masterpiece that penetrates to the core of French Utopian socialism as none other has. Grounded in years of archival research, the book sets Fourier's personal story and his ideas in the context of the political, social, and cultural history of early nineteenth century France. Not only is Charles Fourier an exemplar of the historian's craft; it is also a wonderful example of the virtually lost art of history as literature.

In addition to highly laudatory reviews in professional journals, the Fourier book received one particular honor. In 1993 a French language edition was published. This was a signal achievement, given the difficulty that so-called "Anglo-Saxons" encounter in trying to get a hearing about French topics from a French academic audience. The publication of a French edition meant the arrival of Beecher as a serious scholar in French eyes. Other awards and recognition soon followed: in 1998 he was awarded the Palmes Academiques and in 2001 a Japanese language edition of the Fourier book was published.

In 2001 another massive volume appeared, Victor Considerant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism. This study of one of Fourier's disciples cemented Beecher's reputation as a leading scholar of nineteenth century utopian socialism. It resembles the Fourier volume in its control over a vast amount of archival material, its penetration to the heart of its subject, and its elegant prose. Moreover, as a believer in the genius loci, Beecher in the course of his research journeyed to Texas to explore on the ground the location of the short-lived Fourierist community that Considerant established there.

Throughout his long tenure at UCSC, Beecher has enjoyed a well-deserved reputation not only as a thoughtful, considerate, and supportive colleague but also as a superb teacher of both undergraduate and graduate students. In particular, he has been an inspiring lecturer whose courses in French History and in European and Russian Intellectual History draw large and enthusiastic undergraduate audiences. His receipt of the Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award in 1988 was a well deserved honor in recognition of the continuing high quality of his teaching. Among the History Department faculty no one has been his equal in the support and mentoring of graduate students.

Beecher is currently at work on a volume of essays on European intellectuals and the Revolution of 1848. This will be followed by a study of anti-utopian or dystopian thought and a possible volume on mid-nineteenth century American thought focused on Herman Melville. As these volumes appear they will confirm Jon Beecher's place as one of the world's leading intellectual historians. He is clearly in his prime as a historian and his choice as Faculty Research Lecturer is a signal honor in recognition of that fact.

Respectfully submitted,

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