

EXCERPT FROM STUDS TERKEL ON ORAL HISTORY

I have, after a fashion, been celebrated for having celebrated lives of the uncelebrated amongst us; for lending voice to the face in the crowd. This, I imagine, is what much of oral history is about. ... Who are they, these etceteras of history, hardly worth a footnote? Who are they of whom the bards have seldom sung?

Bertolt Brecht, in a series of questions, put it this way:

Who built the Seven Gates of Thebes...

When the Chinese Wall was built, where did the masons go for lunch?

When Caesar conquered Gaul, was there not even a cook in the army?

When the Armada sank, we read that King Philip wept.

Were there other tears?

That's what I believe oral history is about. It's about those who shed these other tears. Or who laughed that other laugh, during those rare moments of rebellious triumph. Consider some of these heroes of our day, whom I've had the good fortune to encounter. They are the arbitrary few I've chosen out of a multitude of such heroes.

■ From Studs Terkel, *Touch and Go: A Memoir* (2007)

Ode to Social Work: Of Whom the Bards Have Seldom Sung (Charlie Bruner)

They may be etceteras

In history books

Yet are the binding threads

That make the fabric whole.

Always known to kings and queens

Nursemaids, tutors, counselors

Trusted maids and bodyguards

They raised the Dalai Lama

To be just what he is

An essence of humanity.

Today, thanks to the middle class,

This helping role more broadly shared

Its dictum – "Do no harm"

Its charge – Help realize

Potential good within us all.

Our world would be

A better place

If leaders

Saw etceteras

As their electorate

And spoke, answered, to them.